

Dr. Bishop's Mataupu Fou i le Oगतotonu o le Masina-Fa'aliliuga Faigofie
11/13/2020

O la'u filifiliga aua le tolopoina o le tatalaina o a'oga sa faigata ae tatau ona o tu'utu'uga mo le afioaga atoa.

Ua faia e faiaoga ni galuega ofoofogia i aoa'oga i le initoneti fa'atasi ai ma le fesoasoani a tamaiti aoga ma aiga. E ui lava i na mea lelei o loo tutupu e sili atu lava le lelei o le a'oa'o i totonu o falea'oga. Ua ou naunau e toe fa'afo'i tamaiti a'oga i falea'oga i se taimi vave e mafai ai.

Ou te le'o tu to'atasi na'o a'u i lea mataupu. Na ta'u atu e le Kovana Dunleavy i le Pule Aoao i itu uma -o le a'oa'o ina a tatou fanau e tatau ia te'i tatou ona fa'amuamua.

O le to'atele o tagata tomai fa'apitoa mo le soifua maloloina ua malilie o a'oga o se nofoaga sili ona saogalemu mo tamaiti a'oga ma le a'u faigaluega.

O le a fa'aauau pea le fuafuaina o se auala fa'asolosolo e le ASD. Ua faalateleina polokalama o vaega laiti. A'apa atu i lau a'oga e saili ai e uiga i avanoa e a'oa'o ai tagata taitoatasi.

O lo'o faia e faia'oga ni galuega maoa'e e tu'uina atu ai lu'itau o le a'oa'o mamao atu i le taimi nei, o nisi aiga e mafai ona filifili e fa'aauau pea le aoaoga i luga o upega tafa'ilagi. Ae peitai, o le feagai ai ma le a'oa'o ina i totonu o falea'oga e taua mo a'oa'oga. O le toe aumaia o tamaiti a'oga i le a'oga e manaomia ai le lautele o le alalafaga atoa ina ia avea a'oa'oga ma mea e ao ona fa'amuamua. O le a fa'aauau pea ona talanoaina e le Fono Fa'atonu le taimi e toe foi ai fanau e a'oa'o ina i totonu o falea'oga, 11/16/2020.

Fa'amaoni,

Dr. Bishop
Pule Aoao

Dear ASD Families and Staff,

My decision earlier this week to postpone the start of in-person school for students in Pre-K – Grade 2, self-contained special education classrooms, and the Whaley School was difficult but necessary given the conditions across our community.

Our educators have done tremendous work this semester partnering with students and families as we launched our online model of instruction. Through their efforts, learning is happening. However, it is not equitable for all students. Despite all the good things taking place, learning is more meaningful, and achievement is greater in a face-to-face learning environment. It is with this in mind that I remain committed to getting all of our students back into school buildings just as soon as possible.

And I am not alone. Governor Dunleavy told superintendents across the State yesterday that in calling for greater measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, his intent was to ensure schools and businesses can open and remain open. His message was clear – educating our children should be a priority for all of us.

Many health professionals agree, with the widespread transmission, schools may be some of the safest places in the community for our staff and students. When mitigation plans are followed, schools are not the super spreaders we once believed. It is apparent that within our community, the conflicting opinions and dialogue about schools returning children to classrooms have reached nearly every dining room table in our city's homes (which consequently are serving as classroom desks too).

The questions I face every day are similar to these conflicting positions as we consider the health threats of going back to face-to-face learning versus the educational, mental, and emotional consequences for kids and the economic impact of being out of classrooms on families. From my educational vantage point, our children are carrying too much of the pandemic burden by not being given the opportunity of in-person school.

A recent report from the World Health Organization (WHO), shares there have been few outbreaks reported in schools since early 2020, and in those few outbreaks, it was more likely that the virus was introduced by adult personnel. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, 90 percent of affected children have been household contacts of previously affected adults. The Washington Post reported yesterday that casual, in-home gatherings are most likely the culprit in driving the current COVID-19 spike. Hence, new guidance from the CDC as well as a request the Anchorage mayor have encouraged us to keep our holiday celebrations small, with limited guests in our immediate “bubbles.”

In the meantime, ASD will continue planning for a phased-in approach to getting all students back into school buildings. The small-group programs we currently offer in our schools are being expanded. Also, our middle and high schools are offering in-person tutoring for English language learners, students with individual education plans, and students struggling with on-line learning. Please reach out to your school to learn more about what programs they offer for small-group, in-person learning.

With all the attention focused on our youngest learners in recent weeks, I want to acknowledge that this break from in-person learning has also been extremely difficult on our middle and high school students. The entire community should be proud of the independence, patience, and resilience our secondary students have shown this fall considering the experiences they've lost during the pandemic.

Again, our teachers are doing a phenomenal job given the current challenges of teaching remotely, and some families may choose to remain in a virtual setting. However, as a whole, face-to-face learning is essential to a quality education and getting students back into schools will require the entire community to make education a priority. Although we cannot yet put a firm date on the calendar, the School Board will continue to deliberate Monday when to allow students back to school. I am optimistic that with the community's help, we will resume in-person learning.

Sincerely,

*Deena M. Bishop, Ed.D.
Superintendent*