

Superintendent Update on In-Person Learning and District News

Anchorage School District <noreply@asdk12.org>

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To: Anchorage School District Recipients <recipients@asdk12.parentlink.net>

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Dear ASD Families,

This week marked another significant step in phasing our students back into classrooms after nearly a year of online learning. On Monday, elementary schools across the District welcomed grades 3-6 back face-to-face, bringing excitement to students, school staff, and parents.

I've been impressed by how everyone has embraced the new safety protocols. While we have had to transition some classrooms to online learning due to positive COVID tests or close contacts, our mitigation measures are working as intended. The amount of cooperation among families, schools, and the District has been fantastic and reflects everyone's commitment to in-person education. To view the operating status of your school, please see our online dashboard which is updated daily.

The District continues providing the COVID-19 vaccine to eligible community members. With the State's announcement yesterday that all education staff are now eligible, we will continue our vaccine clinic with an eye on quickly and efficiently providing shots to our employees who choose to get one.

Traditionally, schools open their doors in February for in-person tours to highlight their programs for community members who are new to the District and those wanting to explore different programs for their students. Because of school mitigation measures, Visit Our Schools events will take place virtually between February 22 and March 5. Principals continue to do a great job with community outreach and are looking at alternate ways to engage families who want to learn more about their programs. I encourage anyone interested in learning more to contact the respective principal at any time.

We continue to plan for middle and high schools to be back for in-person learning the week after spring break. March 15 will be an orientation day for first-year students new to their school. Depending on the school, this includes grades 6 or 7 for middle school and grade 9 for high school. The other secondary students will begin on March 16.

On Wednesdays, secondary face-to-face students will continue to learn at home online. This arrangement provides additional support to students who need it and for any students in quarantine who need to catch up. Lastly, this plan allows for a hybrid option for families who are not ready to return to face-to-face learning. This schedule provides the flexibility to meet the multiple needs of all our students. More information on the fourth-quarter schedule will be forthcoming from Secondary Education.

We recognize that a number of staff and students intend to travel out of state during the break, and it remains to be seen where the State and Municipality will be in mid-March with regards to COVID-related quarantines or isolations. In that context, it is possible that in-school education could be impacted due to inadequate staffing immediately following spring break. Should we experience unplanned closure days due to inadequate staffing, we will communicate closely with you. I want to be up front with our staff and parents about the possibility of additional Zoom learning days or changes to the school calendar.

Finally, I want to share some good news regarding the budget for next school year. The combination of state and local funding supplemented by federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief funds mean that ASD will not have to make any significant staffing reductions next year, allowing us to concentrate on fully reopening all of our schools next fall. The preliminary budget will allow ASD to focus on School Board goals and continue the mission of educating all of our students for success in life.

Looking toward the long weekend, I hope families can get outside and enjoy their favorite winter activities before spring begins to bloom. Have a safe and enjoyable holiday weekend!

Sincerely,

Deena M. Bishop Ed.D.

Superintendent

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