



Skagit County Public Health

Jennifer Johnson, Director
Howard Leibrand, M.D., Health Officer

July 31, 2020

TO: Skagit County Public K-12 Superintendents
Skagit County Private School Administrators

SUBJECT: Education Planning for Fall 2020

As the Health Officer of Skagit County, I am directly aware of the active and effective partnership local Public School Superintendents and Private School Administrators have fostered with our Public Health Department, and this collaboration has been particularly strong during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the fall 2020 schedule approaches, I am fully supportive of schools implementing plans that provide the highest educational experience for students under current conditions, while addressing the health and safety of students and staff, as well as the families of each group, and the community at large.

As of today, the most recent data from the Washington State Risk Assessment Dashboard notes Skagit County has had 99.8 new cases of diagnosed COVID-19 per 100,000 population over the prior two weeks of state data confirmation. This rate is well above the state-established goal of 25 new cases per 100,000 people. The current rate represents a steep, rapid increase in COVID-19 transmission as in mid-May Skagit experienced a number of days with no new cases. This increased transmission trajectory poses very real risks of cases and outbreaks within schools. Such outbreaks can further lead to dire health outcomes within the Skagit community, especially among people who are medically vulnerable.

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and the Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) have provided guidance to schools regarding COVID-19. Meeting such recommendations will present significant barriers to on-site, in-person learning for many schools, based on facility and staffing limitations. I realize such barriers may result in opening in the fall 2020 with primarily distance learning and I support you in implementing this option to secure overall health and safety. Some schools may find that they can provide in-person learning when circumstances allow. I fully support in-person options when DOH and OSPI guidelines can be met. For some buildings, in-person learning may be limited to smaller groups of high-need students and younger children.

Public Health will be working with other local public health jurisdictions and DOH to further inform our guidance and the support we provide to schools. We look forward to our continued partnership and high level of communication and collaboration.

Sincerely,

Howard Leibrand, MD
Skagit County Health Officer

cc: Skagit County Board of Health
Trisha Logue, Skagit County Administrator

