

Mary M. Knight School District

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August 17, 2020

Mary M. Knight School District moving to Remote Learning to Reopen Schools for 2020-21.

Dear Parents, Students, and Community members.

It is with a heavy heart that I need to announce that the Mary M. Knight School District will need to start the 2020-21 school year with remote learning. I received notice from the Mason County Health Department that with the continued increase of positive COVID-19 cases in Mason County and the designation as “High Risk” as determined by the new decision making tree for school reopening and the COVID-19 risk assessment dashboard, that reopening schools in a traditional manner would not be safe at this time. It is the recommendation that we open school in a remote/distance model.

Back in late July, I had several conversation with the Mason County Health Department who approved our original plan to reopen in the hybrid A/B model. In just a few short weeks and with the increase of cases of COVID-19 in the county, it is not safe to reopen in a hybrid model.

My hope is that after a few additional weeks, and the case count in Mason County decreases to the “Moderate” level, it will be safe for us to implement the hybrid A/B schedule.

We still plan to hold parent/teacher conferences on August 26, 27 and 28. You will be contacted to set up a time to meet with your child’s teachers. We need to make sure that all students can be issued a Chromebook, school supplies, and instructional material to start the year.

We will have a remote teaching scheduled for each class and grade level, individual phone numbers for each teacher for contact purposes, and a schedule for meal delivery and the mobile Wi-Fi hotspots.

For those families who cannot meet during conferences, please call the school and we can arrange a different time for you and your children to receive the technology and supplies that they need.

We have invested in a limited supply of Verizon “hotspots” for those families who have no internet connections at their home. We plan, as part of our food delivery, to place hotspots in our district vehicles that can be used as part of the food delivery and will be stationed in parts of Matlock during the day so students can have access to mobile Wi-Fi hotspots.

Equal Opportunity Employer-Mary M Knight School District does not discriminate in any programs or activities on the basis of sex, race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, veteran or military status, sexual orientation, gender expression or identity, disability, or the use of a trained dog guide or service animal and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following employee(s) has been designated to handle questions and complaints of alleged discrimination: Civil Rights Compliance Coordinator Matt Mallery, Superintendent, mmallery@mmk.wednet.edu, Section 504/ADA Coordinator, Michael Marstrom, Principal, mmarstrom@mmk.wednet.edu, Title IX Coordinator Laurie Seymour, Business Manager, lseymour@mmk.wednet.edu. Each individual can be reached at 360-426-6767

This decision to start the year with distance learning is not how I expected to start the school year. I was anticipating at some point during the school year to have to revert to this model as COVID-19 cases increased during the winter months. However, we cannot do that at this time until there is a decrease of COVID-19 cases in the county.

We are dedicated to provide the finest teaching possible to your child during this unprecedented time.

Sincerely,



Matt Mallery
Superintendent.

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MASON COUNTY COMMUNITY SERVICES

Building, Planning, Environmental Health, Community Health

*From the Office of The Mason County Health Officer
Daniel Stein, M.D.*

415 N. 6th Street, Shelton, WA 98584 ♦ Phone: 360-427-9670, Ext. 582 ♦ Fax: 360-427-7787 ♦ Email: DStein@co.mason.wa.us

August 12, 2020

Dear Mason County School Superintendents:

First, I wanted to extend my gratitude to the education leadership for all the hard work that has been done in order to ensure the safety of our county's children. Unfortunately, currently Mason County has started to see a drastic increase in new cases. Over the past 3 weeks, the confirmed cases of COVID-19 in our county have almost tripled the total that we had over the previous 5 months. The age of the confirmed COVID-19 cases in our community has also been trending towards younger individuals. Multiple studies have recently been published indicating the impact of schools in the spread of COVID-19. The reduction in the spread of the virus can lead to a significantly reduced incidence of death throughout the community.

The Washington State Department of Health has provided guidance for reopening schools. This decision tree stratifies areas into low, moderate and high COVID-19 activity levels. The State considers any area with more than 75 cases per 100,000 individuals in a 14-day time period, an increasing trend in cases and a test positivity rate of more than 5% as high activity locations. In calculating our values, Mason County is currently at 169 new cases per 100,000 residents in the last 14 days, there is an increasing case rate and we have a more than 10% positivity rate over the past 10 days. These values clearly place Mason County into the high-risk category. The guidance from the State in this situation would be to "strongly recommend distance learning with the option for limiting in-person learning in small groups... for the highest need students..." This guidance continues that high-risk communities should "strongly recommend cancelling or postponing all in person extracurricular activities, including sports, performances, clubs, events, etc." Based on the activity level of COVID-19 in Mason County, along with the guidance from the State, I am recommending that all public and private K-12 education centers open only to distance learning options. Exceptions to this guidance would be to consider limited in-person education for those students who are unable to fully utilize distance learning options.

School administrators remain ultimately responsible for establishing the education services appropriate for their students. Cooperation and coordination with the local health department is essential to preserve the health and wellness of our county's youth. I recognize that changing our previous education strategy may have many unintended consequences for individuals and family members. I commit to frequently reassessing the state of COVID-19 in our community and will recommend opening to further in-person education as soon as it is safe to do so.



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In order to safely open, we must start to see a reduction in the community spread of this virus. It is the responsibility of everyone in our community to work on the mitigation strategies that we had previously laid out. I want to again emphasize the importance of maintaining social distancing, masking while in public, staying away from others when you are ill, and getting tested if you are exhibiting any COVID-19 symptoms. This is an unprecedented time. We must all come together to reduce the spread of this virus to protect our children and our community.

Sincerely,

Daniel Stein, M.D., Mason County Health Officer