



NEWS RELEASE

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SPS: Remote Learning to Start School

School Board to Vote on 2020-21 Plan in mid-August

SEATTLE – Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Denise Juneau today announced the district’s recommendation to use a remote learning model beginning with fall classes of the 2020-21 school year, and to continue the remote learning model until the risk of significant transmission of Covid-19 has decreased enough to resume in-person instruction.

The SPS Board of Directors will vote on the superintendent’s recommendation, and an associated plan for Fall 2020, during its regular board meeting on August 12, 2020.

The recommendation for remote learning is a shift from the district’s previous hybrid plan that included in-person/in-school learning and remote learning.

“Every recommendation regarding this fall has been made by taking into consideration the latest data and science,” said Superintendent Juneau. “The current trajectory of infection in King County and the most recent data and information from public health makes it clear that resuming school in-person this fall is impossible.”

Since the closure of SPS school buildings last spring, new research has become available, including additional updated health guidelines from national and state agencies, as well as additional data and information on school safety experiences from around the world. Countries that have managed to successfully reopen schools are those countries with declining infection rates. In King County, rates of transmission are rising.

The recommendation to use a remote-only learning model has been endorsed by both the Seattle Education Association (SEA) and the Principals Association of Seattle Schools (PASS).

“Given the increasing transmission rates, SEA fully supports opening schools this fall with remote learning only,” said Jennifer Matter, SEA president. “Returning in a remote learning model means our students, staff, and community can stay safe.”

“PASS believes it is of utmost importance that we prioritize and advocate for the health and safety of our students, families, staff, colleagues and communities,” said Rainey Hartford Swan, PASS executive director. “We appreciate Superintendent Juneau’s leadership and respect the thought and care that she has put into the decision to recommend a remote-only learning model and delay returning to our school buildings.”

Other elements of the recommendation include:

- Training for all educators in order to ensure synchronous (live), high quality remote instruction for students.
- Providing a predictable and consistent teaching/learning schedule on common platforms, using up-to-date resources.
- Ensuring that students receiving specialized services are provided instruction in alignment with their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 plans.
- Racial equity training for all educators focused on student belonging, family partnerships, and interrupting implicit racial bias.
- Working with the Seattle Council PTSA, City of Seattle, and other community partners to develop community-generated solutions for childcare and learning at home, and continuing to provide childcare in SPS buildings for essential staff, in partnership with the City.
- Providing meal distribution throughout the city for any students and families with need.
- Adapting, as necessary, as the environment and data regarding Covid-19 continues to shift and change.

“We are committed to doing whatever it takes to ensure every student can achieve their highest potential in any learning environment,” said Superintendent Juneau. “Our educators have been working so hard to adapt to these new teaching conditions, and I truly believe our students will be getting the very best in remote and online learning.”

The district will announce more information, including specifics around school schedules, as soon as possible.

In the meantime, the most up-to-date information, including FAQs for Fall 2020, can be found at www.seattleschools.org.

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Statement from SEA

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The health and safety of our students, families and members is the top priority for SEA. We want to return to in-person learning, but only when it is truly safe to do so. We simply are not there yet, and we support the District's decision to start the school year with a remote-only model. We appreciate that many of our students, families and members may be frustrated and upset to hear this news, while many others will be relieved. We have been working and will continue to work with the District to ensure that remote learning will be as robust, equitable and accessible as possible. In addition, we will continue to work with the District to explore options to phase-in possible in-person supports as soon as it is safe to do so.

Statement from PASS

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The COVID crisis has exposed and exacerbated pre-existing inequities in our system. Returning to the status quo is simply not a viable option. PASS is committed to partnering with Seattle Public Schools to seize this opportunity to create a new, better reality. Along with all of the social, emotional and education needs that we must meet, we also must continue to take definitive action to achieve the goals set forth in our District Strategic Plan to, "...dramatically improve academic and life outcomes for Students of Color by disrupting the legacies of racism in our education system." We can lead and advocate for change together.

Leading in a pandemic is unprecedented, and education has changed more in the last five months than in the last 20 years. PASS is confident that we will be able to continue to collaborate with Superintendent Juneau to create the change needed to help our students succeed and meet their goals. PASS is confident that together we can make the systematic changes that our schools and students need to be global citizens and the leaders of the future.