

Updates from the Moscow School District Superintendent

December 1, 2020

My hope is that all of you had a safe and enjoyable holiday break. I finally had an opportunity during the break to enjoy a little bit of peace and quiet, which also gave me a moment to write this letter to update you on upcoming events in the district.

Community Chat with the Superintendent

This Thursday, December 3rd at 7:00pm I'll be having another "Community Chat with the Superintendent" Online Zoom meeting. The purpose of this chat is to provide updates regarding the impact of the COVID virus in the schools and answer questions from the audience. I will post an agenda on our website by Wednesday evening. Below is the Zoom login Information. For the next couple of months I plan to have these "Chats" every other week to help keep everyone informed.

Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device: Please click this URL to join.

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85772610350?pwd=VktuMjF1YTdMUk5uWDB4NnFqZWdrUT09>

Passcode: maGd5u

Or join by phone: Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):

US: +1 346 248 7799 or +1 669 900 6833 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 312 626 6799 or +1 929 205 6099 or +1 301 715 8592

Webinar ID: 857 7261 0350

Passcode: 520050

International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kdT5jtloPd>

We Need to Know Your Plans for Second Semester – Important Notice

If you plan to change from the model your child is currently in (Hybrid or Online-Only) for the second semester, we ask that you let us know by Wednesday, December 9th. Please contact your child's school office prior to this date. If you do not contact us by December 9th, we will assume that your child will remain in the model that they are currently attending. **(Please Note: There is no need to contact the school office if you wish your child to continue schooling in the model they have been attending.)**

COVID Case Report

I am no longer going to be submitting the COVID-19 Case Report in these letters. You can actually find the information at our website www.msd281.org under the Drop down Tab named, "COVID-19 Information for 2020/21 School Year. This data will be updated weekly.

Moving Towards Face-to-Face

The COVID-19 pandemic has been hard on everyone in some way or the other. I personally have found that there have been only three things that have been consistent during this pandemic. The first consistency is that each day seems to bring new issues that must be resolved due to the impact of the pandemic. The second is that

response choices to a problem are not what you would hope for in dealing with a situation. The third consistency is that no answer will please everyone.

As we started this school year the hope was that the hybrid and online-only models would be temporary. Just like many of you, our desire has always been to have our students back at school with their teachers every day. With this hope, we have continued to evaluate the ongoing impact of the COVID virus with the intent of bringing the students back. However, we also will stand firm in only making the move toward this change if we are confident that we can maintain a high level of safety for our students and staff.

We are aware that the positive COVID cases are still rising and are predicted to rise even greater through the holiday season, but we need to begin planning so when reduction of cases occur consistently over a time period we will be prepared to move to bringing back our students into the classroom.

First, here are many of the factors that will help in making the decision to fully return to face-to-face instruction.

- Numbers of transmissions within the school district
- Number of positive cases within the district
- Review of attendance trends
- Availability of substitutes
- Based on a 7-day moving average, new daily cases must be less than 1 case per 10,000 population (for Latah County that would be 4 or fewer new daily cases)
- Based on a 7-day moving average, the number of confirmed COVID-19 hospital admissions district-wide must be within the range of 0-5
- Testing access for staff
- Testing access for the community
- Test results must be reported in 1-4 days
- Written support by the regional Public Health Director
- Written support by the local Chief Medical Officer
- Be within either Stage 3 or better (State and Local)
- Staff support (Survey)
- Parent Support (Survey)
- Student Support (Survey 6-12)
- Board Approval

For transparency, concerns we have moving to Face-to-Face instruction include:

- The district will not be able to maintain six-foot distancing. The district will attempt to limit large gatherings whenever possible
- More people may be required to isolate if they are in contact with a positive COVID case individual due to the reduction in distancing.
- If more staff need to isolate due to close contact, or become ill, then there is a greater chance that the district may have to close school completely for a period of time due to not having enough substitutes to cover classes.

Note: Currently, we plan to continue to use Wednesdays as Distance Learning Days.

Benefits of moving to Face-to-Face instruction

- Increase face-to-face academic instruction
- Increase immediate support for students when needed
- Provide the needed oversight and support of students whose parents both work
- Improve social/emotional needs of students

Timeframe for decisions: We are still meeting with our pandemic oversight committee, as well as the school board, and a timeframe will be determined when surveys will be sent and the final date for a decision to be made. It should be noted that the earliest a change will occur will be the start of the second semester which is February 2nd, and notice of the change would be no later than two weeks prior to the February 2nd date. Hopefully, this will provide us enough time to see a decline in positive cases, but still provide enough time for all stakeholders to prepare for the change.

As stated earlier in this letter, moving back to four days of face-to-face instruction will only happen if we determine students and staff will be safe, and the stars align just right, but if we don't plan now we won't be able to take advantage of the opportunity if it presents itself. So please help us by providing your continued support. We have been able to keep open to this point due to the care everyone has taken in staying home when showing symptoms, as well as informing us when someone has tested positive. It has also been extremely important to our success that everyone has been wearing masks in school.

Sincerely,

Gregory J Bailey, PhD

Superintendent

Moscow School District #281