



June 11, 2020

OSPI School Reopening Process FAQ

WEA will update this FAQ as new information becomes available

What has happened so far?

WEA members represented 21 of the 125+ educators, parents, and community members at the table for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction's workgroup on the opening of school this fall. Discussions focused on several key issues, informed by member focus groups and frontline lessons from what has worked and hasn't since schools closed in March. Our focus:

- Protecting the health and safety of students, staff, and the community
- Ensuring economic security in the form of full and adequate staffing to ensure equity for students, and meaningful learning in a new environment
- Implementing state guidelines that allow flexibility to address local needs but still ensure consistency and predictability for parents and educators.

The underlying foundation for those discussions continues to be health and safety, economic security, and flexibility for our educators and our school communities. We shared with the OSPI workgroup that members are divided – some of us are ready to return to the classroom while others may need to or prefer to stay at home.

What is the recommendation?

OSPI in consultation with the Department of Health and Labor & Industries has determined that schools should open this fall, if they can do so safely and if they meet several minimum requirements, including:

- Students, staff, and community members must maintain 6 foot social distancing
- Everyone in the school building must wear cloth face masks
- Anyone coming into the school must be screened for COVID symptoms on each shift
- It is the employer's responsibility to meet all L&I safety requirements.
- DOH guidelines/requirements ensure student safety.

School districts may determine an instructional schedule that best serves their community within the parameters provided by OSPI.

What do we have to work out with our district?

- Final decisions on instructional schedules.
- Specifics of health and safety, including responsibility for social distancing in classrooms and common areas, staffing for additional cleaning, processes for addressing students who are ill, procedures when outbreaks occur in a school, and more.

- Strategies to address the unique challenges for students of color, low-income populations, immigrants and English language learners, Special Education students, homeless students, foster youth and others for whom this system is not working.
- Staffing decisions including the role of ESPs in a partially online learning environment and how to redeploy resources to best meet student needs.
- Additional planning and professional days along with training and resourcing for effective distance learning.

WEA will be providing bargaining support for our local unions on these issues.

What is the new schedule for instruction?

The OSPI guidance didn't determine a schedule; instead, it set parameters for student instruction, with three options. It's up to districts to work with us to determine a schedule that will work best for our communities. Some districts will have the staff and space to bring students in every day of the week and adequately socially distance, while some districts will be looking at alternating days or other solutions.

What if I am at risk? What if I want to work from home?

Staff should not have to decide between their health and their job. The law requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for staff with health conditions. If accommodations are not possible, staff may have access to paid leave or medical leave. Local unions can discuss this issue with their districts.

What about childcare?

With educators in the classroom, we need childcare for our kids. Districts should be incentivized to solve this problem because only by addressing our childcare issues will districts have the full staff they need to reopen. Additionally, many of our students' parents will have childcare gaps depending on each district's rotating in-school schedule. While the OSPI guidance does not touch on childcare, this is a community-wide issue that will have to be solved holistically.

Will I be required to teach both in-person and digitally, and how do I find time to prepare for two kinds of teaching?

We as educators know we clearly can't have two jobs – one online and one in the classroom. Through increased planning and professional days, training in effective distance learning, and resourcing to do distance learning effectively, we can ensure a reasonable workload that doesn't duplicate curriculum. Local unions can bargain over this issue and other workload concerns.

What if my work requires me to be within 6 feet of my students?

The guidance from Labor and Industries recommends the use of additional personal protective equipment when 6 feet of distancing isn't possible. This can include gloves and face shields, which the employer is required to provide.