



WEA
WASHINGTON
EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION

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January 27, 2021

Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of Washington

Dear Governor Inslee,

I am writing this letter on behalf of WEA's Board of Directors and the 90,000-plus school employees in our state who, as we navigate the pandemic, are working with students in a variety of settings including distance, hybrid, and full in-person modes.

Last month, you urged the expansion of in-person learning beyond existing levels, based upon what you said at the time was robust data that justified this move. The Department of Health revised its guidelines upwards, allowing a significant increase in cases per 100,000 people, and saying that it was safe to return more students and educators to in-person education.

At that time, you were clear that it was incumbent upon districts to meet the state Labor and Industries requirements for workplace safety. In many districts this is working well. Where our locals have had disagreements about expanding on-site instruction, it has been because districts have moved with haste, motivated more by bringing students back quickly rather than by taking the time and effort to improve safety, communicate plans and build trust and confidence with staff, students and families.

In regards to data, imagine our dismay when reading in the [Seattle Times](#) that it wasn't data, but concern regarding other issues, which yes are important, but are not life-threatening to over 100,000 educators, 1.1 million students or their families and communities.

The lack of data is troubling on many levels. Students and educators who are in school buildings now are at risk. There is a lack of testing, inadequate contact tracing, and non-existent COVID data collection protocols for schools. The ability and interest of districts to meet Labor and Industries requirements varies and is inconsistent. Increasing the numbers of students and educators gathering in our buildings has the very real possibility to spread COVID-19 in and beyond our schools into the larger community.

It is puzzling and frustrating that you are pushing to expand in-person education without having solid science to back your decision. We don't have the virus under control. Case numbers are at or near an all-time high. The new, more contagious and deadly variant has been identified in our state. Given these facts, it makes no sense to expand in-person gatherings at school and increase the risk of transmission, illness and deaths.

Dr. Vin Gupta, pulmonologist, public health and nationally recognized COVID expert has been in traditional and [social media](#) saying it is unwise to require educators to put themselves, their students and our communities at risk. He urged governors to follow [Gov. Kate Brown's](#) lead to vaccinate educators.

Earlier this month, the WEA Board passed a [resolution](#), which we shared with you, asking for educators to be prioritized for the vaccine. Governor, we are asking that those who are currently working in buildings, and those who are soon to return, be offered the vaccine immediately. We estimate this to be about 20,000 educators, a number which will grow as districts return to more on-site instruction.

As you well know, WEA is not alone in this position. The [labor education unions](#) sent you a letter last month supporting vaccines for staff. The [associations for school administrators, business officers and principals](#) also support this position.

You have prided yourself on using science to guide pandemic-related decisions, and as a result, Washington has fewer cases and deaths per 100,000 than most states. We encourage you to take that same strong science-based stance when it comes to the health and safety of public-school students and educators.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Larry Delaney", is centered on a light gray, textured rectangular background.

Larry Delaney
President, Washington Education Association