



NEWS RELEASE

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Start of In-person Instruction Moved Later in March

SPS and SEA agree to new timeline

SEATTLE – It is in the best interest of our students, staff, and families that Seattle Public Schools (SPS) and Seattle Education Association (SEA) are unified in our approach to a return to in-person learning. We are committed to returning students receiving special education services in Intensive Service Pathways and our youngest learners to classrooms first. We are partnering to ensure equity and safety across our school buildings as we continue to plan our phased-in approach to in-person learning.

SEA and SPS have been bargaining an increase to in-person learning for students enrolled in Special Education Intensive Service Pathways (Focus, Moderate/Intensive, Social Emotional Learning, Distinct, Medically Fragile, Bridges, and Developmental Preschool) and PreK-1st grade students since January as directed by the School Board in the [December 17 Board resolution](#). We are close to a tentative agreement (TA) on the return of Intensive Pathways and preschool.

Today, Washington State Department of Labor & Industries and an independent HVAC contractor, together with SPS and SEA leaders, reviewed the readiness of multiple SPS school buildings. While this was not a required reopening step, it was an important one to help ensure staff and families are confident in the district's adherence to Washington State Labor & Industries, Washington State DOH, Public Health – Seattle & King County, and federal CDC guidance and recommendations.

At the conclusion of this walk through there were no major issues identified. However, SPS and SEA together agreed that school staff could benefit from additional time to prepare to offer the safest, most equitable in-person learning environments possible in every SPS building. SPS and SEA's bargaining teams are negotiating in good faith to reach an agreement this week and allow the time needed to ratify the agreement. Together, we commit to bargaining an agreement so students enrolled in Special Education Intensive Service Pathways and preschool can begin in-person learning services on March 29. Families will still have the option to stay in a 100% remote learning model. In response to this joint commitment, SPS is rescinding its order from February 25 designating additional staff as "essential."

As part of this joint partnership, staff that support preschool and Intensive Service Pathways will return to buildings as early as March 22 to receive health and safety training, set up classrooms, and prepare for students. These extra weeks of preparation will help build confidence in the district's approach and provide an opportunity for school staff to engage with families and students prior to the first day of in-person instruction.

The district and SEA will continue negotiating the return of K-1st grade students as directed by the School Board on Feb. 25, 2021.

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