

# **Overview Safe Return to School**

## **LOPEZ ISLAND SCHOOL DISTRICT**

August 17, 2020

### **Lopez School District will follow the San Juan County Health Officer's recommendation to start the school year with distance learning**

In a [letter to schools 13 August](#), San Juan County Health Officer Dr. Frank James recommended that all San Juan County schools utilize distance learning as their delivery model starting this fall until the disease is better controlled in our state and nation. If and when risks decrease, he recommended transitioning to a hybrid approach starting with the youngest children first and finally expanding to in-school education for all. Orcas, Friday Harbor, Shaw and Lopez Island school districts are all following the County Health Officer's recommendation and starting this fall with distance learning.

In arriving at this recommendation, Dr. James noted the following:

- While San Juan County has had few cases to date, that number could change quickly in our small county.
- We still know relatively little about the transmission of the disease in the school setting. Experiences from school districts that have already opened across the United States is very concerning.
- It is unclear if children have resistance to the infection, or if they are infected but do not develop symptoms. In order to ensure the safety of our community, we must assume that children have infection patterns similar to adults until proven otherwise.
- It is now clear that between 30-40% of those infected do not show symptoms, but are just as infectious as those who do. It is my belief that these numbers apply to children as well. We also now know that most infections transmitted with individuals are either asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic, making this a very difficult disease to control without medications or a vaccine.
- There is increasingly clear evidence that the illness may spread through aerosols, which means the disease may spread faster, easier, and farther than was first understood. This is especially concerning for buildings that have traditional HVAC systems without sophisticated air filtering capabilities.
- The high likelihood of infections increasing when in-person schooling resumes will inevitably be coupled with the practical and logistical challenges of schools quickly shifting from in-person to remote schooling.

Dr. James encouraged schools to partner with community organizations to find creative, thoughtful and out of the box ways to provide opportunities for socialization, a safe space while parents work, and provide nutritional meals.

### **LOPEZ SCHOOL VIRTUAL LEARNING PLAN OVERVIEW:**

**School will be back in session this fall, but learning will look different than it did before the COVID-19 pandemic.**

- The School District has made the decision to start school with a virtual learning model, augmented with experiential learning opportunities and special accommodation for students with the highest needs.
- The health and safety of students and staff is our top priority in addition to providing a quality virtual education.
- Lopez starts school for our 1st-12th grades on September 8 and kindergarten starts on September 14.
- Community partnerships are being worked out for further support to families.

**Lopez staff continue to work on a virtual learning plan.**

- We'll have a Village Square session scheduled for August 18 at 5:30 pm and more information will be coming out. There will be an opportunity to submit questions before the session.
- We learned important lessons from our experiences with remote learning in March through June of the 2019-20 school year. Those lessons have helped to inform the conversation about returning to school in the 2020-21 school year and adapting our practices to create more robust online learning opportunities.

### **NEW AND IMPROVED ONLINE LEARNING PLAN:**

- Educators will provide a more robust and accessible remote/distance learning model for the 2020-21 school year with daily attendance and traditional grading based on engagement and assignments.
- The feedback from parents, staff and students helped us to:
  - Focus on our virtual platform: Google Classroom (note: some teachers may be piloting new platforms such as: Canvas, Seesaw and Classtag.)
  - Develop a simplified school schedule (one for both Elem & Sec.) that will be published on our web page and emailed to families. The learning blocks are scheduled for the morning hours before lunch. The schedule will be finalized and posted in a few weeks.
  - Make investments in remote learning infrastructure that support internet connections, updated devices and online-friendly curriculum for students. This support equity in our community and special situation will be set up to support families in need. We encourage those families to reach out to us and we can assist;
  - Set up small group interactions for academic and social/emotional support
  - Provide additional training on best practices for remote instruction;
  - Work to deliver education with clearer expectations, accountability of instruction, and assignments and grading on a more reliable schedule.

### **ELEMENTARY PLAN OVERVIEW**

In the elementary grade levels, virtual learning will support a balance of learning time with social/emotional support. The plan identifies the learning blocks in the mornings for five days and teacher support in the afternoons. Each grade level will have a small block of class meeting time to support social emotional learning and take attendance. Then a small group session will engage with students and specific learning needs. This is supported by both teachers and paras in a small group setting. Then a mid-morning academic learning block will focus on the learning activities for the day. In addition, each teacher is individually working hard to create and integrate experiential learning opportunities for their students. These experiential learning opportunities will have learning components for students that balance student learning with outside learning. An outline of the tentative learning blocks will be posted on the school's web page soon and each grade level schedule will be normed to support a healthy and appropriate virtual learning experience for that particular grade level. In addition, the elementary teachers would like to meet with each student and their family during the first two weeks of school, thus creating a collaborative connection and building a positive relationship with our families. More information and further details will be provided to families as we get closer to the start of school.

### **SECONDARY PLAN OVERVIEW**

Theory of Action: If we can minimize the moving parts in a student's schedule this year, we believe that students will be more successful in their academic and social emotional learning.

The secondary plan is to break the yearly schedule down into seven 5-week blocks, with one class (G period), plus the Common Sense Media digital citizenship program and productivity skill development offered during the first block, and three classes (a rotation of A, B, C and D, E, F) for the other blocks. This plan can flex between virtual learning, face to face learning, and a hybrid model. It minimizes the moving parts for students by providing greater opportunity to focus on a limited number of classes, and makes space for one-on-one tutoring, social-emotional support, and organizational skill development.

## **MEALS**

The school will be delivering meals, similar to this last spring, at the bus stops. Meals will be offered to enrolled students and normal payments will be in place, as identified by the state.

## **SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

School and school activities will look different for a while to protect the health and safety of students, staff, and families.

- Activities requiring lots of contact, such as athletics, orchestra, and MMPACT will be offered in a different way or possibly not at all. We are working to get approval of small groups learning options with the county Health Official. This option will be based on our conductivity ratio.
- In addition, the district is pursuing partnerships with the Public Library, Family Resource Center, and San Juan Conservation District to provide in-person activities in an outdoor environment.
- The Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) has modified its sports schedule to delay certain, more high-risk sports to the spring.
- Lopez is scheduled to participate in sports in 2021. The new sports schedule will occur in a new four-season calendar and more information will be shared later. A draft of the tentative season is below, this is subject to change by WIAA Sports seasons under the new WIAA calendar are as follows:
  - **Season 1:** The San Juan County Schools are not scheduled to participate in the WIAA's season one. A modified option is being worked out.
  - **Season 2:** Competition: Jan. 4-March 6: Basketball
  - **Season 3:** Competition: March 8-May 1: volleyball, soccer (option)
  - **Season 4:** Competition: May 3-June 26: Baseball, soccer (option) track and field, golf, tennis

## **VIRTUAL LEARNING**

The Virtual Learning model is recommended by San Juan County Health Official, Dr. Frank James, who supports students in a virtual learning setting to help the reduction of exposure in our communities. It is in collaboration that the San Juan Island school districts and San Juan County Health Department creates a safe return to school plan for our students.

In closing, I hope this overview was helpful. A full copy of the Safe Return To School Plan can be found on our webpage shortly. We want to acknowledge that this will be new for all of us and we are committed to problem solving the unforeseeable challenges during this time. It will be through our supportive and collaborative relationships that Lopez School will get through a national pandemic and become stronger for it.

In partnership,

Brian Auckland