



March 17, 2020

Dear Superintendents and Labor Leaders:

We face an unprecedented challenge as we battle the impacts of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. We cannot get through this without mutual cooperation and mutual sacrifice. The initial response from school communities has been coordinated and incredibly responsive to our families. The creativity demonstrated by local bus drivers delivering meals and student learning materials are examples of how you are already pulling together to serve families. These examples of local solutions will set the clear direction as Washington moves forward.

This letter is intended to highlight priorities to be addressed as you identify local solutions for serving your communities in response to the Governor's proclamation and guidance from the Department of Health (DOH).

I implore you to focus your efforts first on the following five priorities, while also considering the health and safety of your staff and communities:

- 1. Ensure the provision of school meals** (including breakfast and lunch) to students who need them. Ensure that social distancing strategies are planned for and in place as you deploy. More guidance will be provided. I encourage you to share strategies and plans with other communities and learn from each other.
- 2. Develop plans to be a childcare provider of last resort** in response to the Governor's call to action last week. OSPI is working with the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and Department of Health (DOH) so this can be done safely for staff and families. These services must be prioritized for children of employees in the healthcare workforce and first responders. Solutions must address safety measures, including consideration of social distancing and will involve the need for some staff to provide direct services on-site. OSPI and DCYF understand that not all districts provide childcare in their existing programming and DCYF and OSPI will work together to determine where the childcare gaps may exist for health care workers and first responders.

As you consider the staffing needed to provide childcare, please exclude those who are at high risk, including those over 60, pregnant, and those with underlying health conditions. Additional guidance specific to childcare will be provided by Wednesday, March 18.

- 3. Provide graduating seniors the content they need** to meet their graduation requirements and to support their post-secondary transition. This will likely involve certificated employees and paraeducators working from home making direct contact with seniors by phone, email, or video technology. Additional initial guidance on this will be provided by Monday, March 23.
- 4. Offer learning opportunities for students and continued professional learning.** Districts and their labor leaders should work together to consider modifications to the educational program, calendar, and employee responsibilities so they can deliver educational services to our students to the greatest degree reasonably possible. This will include considering how to satisfy graduation requirements and ensure equity in the delivery of services. This can include identifying solutions that include online or paper packet supplemental learning materials for students. Professional learning among district staff will look different and should continue during this period of closure. Additional initial guidance on this will be provided by Monday, March 23.
- 5. Continue payroll for all employees** as you develop meaningful work and professional development plans over the next week. Please adhere to the following guidelines:
  - a. Employees over the age of 60, pregnant employees, and those with underlying health conditions should NOT be expected to come to a school building.
  - b. Employees not needed to deliver childcare and other direct services should be encouraged to continue work activities, including instruction and professional development, from home.
  - c. Employees providing direct services, including childcare, need to be able to do so safely, considering social distancing measures and DOH guidance. We are working with DOH and DCYF, and will provide additional guidance by Wednesday, March 18.
  - d. Provide professional expectations for certificated employees, including meaningful professional learning and collaboration at a distance, as well as some student engagement and extended learning opportunities for students. Innovative local solutions include email, video, phone, or online platforms.
  - e. I also want to make clear that, while we are seeking state and federal funds to backfill the impacts of this public health emergency, there is no guarantee that additional funds will come.

Thank you for putting your shoulder to the wheel. There is no playbook for this; only the mutual commitment to protect our communities, our students, and our employees.

Please demonstrate the flexibility that will be necessary to achieve success in this uncertain time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris P.S. Reykdal".

Chris Reykdal  
Superintendent of  
Public Instruction