



NKSD welcomes back 3rd-5th graders

By Ken Park

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After a successful first week back to in-person learning, North Kitsap School District is setting its sights on bringing back grades third through fifth in February.

In a districtwide newsletter NKSD laid out when it hopes to bring back the rest of its elementary school students.

“In alignment with the most recent Department of Health guidance we are now preparing for the return of our students in grades 3 to 5. As we shared before, we plan to think big, start small and go slow,” Superintendent Lauryn Evans said.

The plan is for third-graders return Feb. 1, fourth-graders on Feb. 8 and fifth-graders on Feb. 22. The gap between the return of fourth- and fifth-graders is because of the shortened week of the 18th due to Presidents Day.



“This also allows our schools a few more days to refine any procedures and protocols before all grades are in the building,” Evans said.

The first two weeks that school has been back have gone exceptionally well, and students, teachers and parents are happy to be back, the school chief said.

“We are proud of how well our youngest learners have adjusted to the new protocols and how incredible our teachers and support staff have been in providing a safe, healthy and nurturing learning environment – from the moment a student boards the bus to the moment they arrive home at the end of their day,” said Jenn Markarayan, NKSD communications coordinator.

“We recognize that the transition to in-person learning has been met with a variety of feelings from excitement to anxiety and/or worry. The first day of school was definitely filled with a lot of excitement by families, students and staff. When our students entered the building, you could see the smiles on their faces, even through the masks.”

The district is following DOH recommendations by returning the remaining elementary grades one at a time.

“Bringing back students one grade level in grades 3-5 allows us to slowly introduce students in smaller groups to the protocols and practices each school has for staff and student health and safety. This plan also gives us a week between each group to monitor plans and make any adjustments needed as more people are in the buildings and on buses,” Markarayan said.

The protocols for the older students will be the same as those for the younger ones. Students will need to bring their attestation forms every day showing that they have no signs of COVID-19 symptoms. The students will be spilt into morning and afternoon cohorts, allowing for a two hour break for lunch and class room sanitization in-between.

As for the return of middle and high school students, the logistics are more complex due to increased movement throughout the schools, as well as classes that have grade level overlaps.

“The DOH recommends adding the upper grades as cases drop and stay below 200 cases per 100,000,” Markaryan said.

Tuesday that number had dropped to 165.7 positive cases per 100,000 in



the county, after being in the mid- to high 200s in previous weeks.

NKSD is committed to bringing all of its students back for the remaining school year, but the current pacing of the return begs the question if it will be worth it to bring secondary students back for a only a few months or if it's better for older students to finish out the school year online.

“We know our students want to come back to school in-person, and we want to see them back in-person,” Markaryan said.

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