



SOUTH KITSAP SCHOOL DISTRICT

SKSD slowly bringing kids back into a classroom setting

The return of high schoolers has been delayed, however

By Bob Smith

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PORT ORCHARD — South Kitsap School District is slowly transitioning from a fully online learning model instituted during the COVID-19 pandemic to a model of instruction it has labeled SK Flex — a mix of online and in-person learning for its 9,000-plus students.

But that doesn't mean the deployment of the hybrid learning model hasn't been without its share of problems, the latest being a delay in the return of high schoolers to physical classrooms. High school students were scheduled to return on Feb. 8; a new date hasn't yet been determined.



South Kitsap School District Superintendent Tim Winter told school board members Monday that the delay in returning ninth through 12th-grade students isn't because of safety issues, but rather because of difficulties in modifying the SK Flex plan to accommodate students with the variety of academics they're accustomed to.

On Jan. 25, the district welcomed back to the classroom — at least on a part-time basis — students in grades 3-5. That transition followed the return of kindergarten, first and second graders to campus on Jan. 11. Students at the middle-school level — sixth, seventh and eighth graders — who have chosen the SK Flex hybrid option will return to school buildings on Feb. 8.

Flex students will receive instruction on campus two days a week, with three days of learning each week done remotely.

Winter told board members that the state health department has consistently recommended bringing students back slowly in phases, starting with the youngest students and moving up through the system with older learners.

“We are on schedule as far as what is recommended by the Department of Health to move slowly and get students back in,” Winter said.

He told board directors in the special Monday evening meeting that SK Flex students will be divided into two groups: students with last names beginning with an A-K letter will attend periods 1-6 on Mondays and Thursdays, and L-Z names will attend periods 1-6 on Tuesdays and Fridays. The remaining days of the week will be taught asynchronously online.

Winter said Wednesdays will be an asynchronous online day for all students electing to attend Flex and online.

The superintendent said high schoolers will return to the classroom in an SK Flex configuration when the middle-school transition is completed. Just when that will take place hasn't been established, he said.

Winter told board members that while the district is anxious to get all students back into the classroom setting, “we need to ‘go slow to go fast’ in order to make the transition is working well.”

Dave Goodwin, principal of South Kitsap High School, sent out a letter to student families on Jan. 22 reminding them that implementing the SK Flex



option “is extremely complex due to many factors, including the wide array of course offerings at SKHS, the large number of families that are opting to remain in online learning, social distancing requirements, and restrictions on staffing.”

Goodwin acknowledged that the flex model of instruction is not ideal, but he said the limitations it presents can’t be avoided.

“Probably the biggest parent concern we heard during the survey period pertained to whether online students would have the same access to the same programs taught by the same teachers,” Goodwin’s letter stated.

“This plan addresses that concern but it does not come without a required change to the instruction schedule when comparing it to what students are currently experiencing in full remote learning.”

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