

NEWS

Inslee: K-12 schools can reduce COVID-19 social distancing requirements

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OLYMPIA (AP) — Washington Gov. Jay Inslee on Thursday reduced the COVID-19 social distancing requirements for K-12 classrooms in the state from 6 feet to 3 feet as more schools in the state begin to open up.

At a news conference Inslee said the new guidance was consistent with direction from federal health authorities and that, for now, schools had the option to maintain the 6-foot rule.

And he said middle and high school students who aren't in isolated "cohort" groups should still be placed at 6 feet apart in places where the number of people infected is still above 200 per 100,000 population.

However, the Democrat said by this summer and fall no classrooms should still be at the more stringent standard.

Inslee has for weeks been pushing to return students to the classroom, saying remote learning hasn't worked for many children.

He had previously said all public schools in Washington will be required to offer students an in-person learning option by April — with school districts having to meet an average of at least 30% weekly in-class instruction by April 19.

The proclamation allows for a staggered start, with all kindergarten to sixth-grade students being provided an opportunity for hybrid remote and in-person learning by April 5, followed by all other K-12 students by April 19.