

Stanwood-Camano School District

Family Communication November 13, 2020

We know that many of you have questions about the district's decision-making process regarding COVID. It is confusing, multi-faceted, and relies upon multiple data and guidance sources. I hope the details provided in this email will help.

Things we'd like you to know:

- We attend every briefing with the Department of Health and monitor their website regularly.
- District administrators and lead nurses meet weekly with the Snohomish and Island County Health Districts. During our Tuesday meeting with Dr. Spitters, he shared the following:
 - He acknowledged that there is a lot of anxiety due to the increase in cases.
 - There is a great deal of dissension within members of the school community. Some families want schools to open. Some families want schools to close.
 - Our schools' current mitigation measures such as screening, masking, social distancing, handwashing, not sharing items, cleaning/disinfecting, and cohorting reduce the risk to nearly what it would be if all of our students were in remote learning (for K-5 students in particular).
 - Household transmission and social connections are the main causes of increased transmission. Students are more likely to get COVID in their social interactions outside of school than at school.
 - The increase of cases is because of what is happening with individuals in our community. People are carrying on as if there are no restrictions. They are traveling, meeting with friends and families, not wearing masks, etc.
 - The health district is deeply concerned about an impending crisis and we should be concerned, too.

More specifically, Dr. Spitters stated, "My request of you is simple, if not difficult. But any mandatory restrictions will be far more difficult to bear." Dr. Spitters' message is as follows:

Holding gatherings is a threat to all. Stop it. Plain and simple, just stop the gatherings.

- Make a bubble of the same five-or-fewer social contacts outside of your household, and stick to that.
- Wear a mask around people you don't live with.
- When is more ok? Not at all in the immediate future.
- Reduce socializing and other non-essential activity. If it's not for work, school or medical purposes, the safest bet is to skip it. Don't attend gatherings. Period.
- Avoid contact with people and businesses who don't follow the guidance.

So what do we do now?

Our families need to be part of the team that's trying to flatten the curve, if they want students to return to in-person learning. We must all follow the guidance above from Dr. Spitters. We all have the power

to keep students in school and begin to bring more students in for face-to-face learning, if we all follow his advice.

We anticipate new guidance from the Department of Health before Thanksgiving. Remember, this is a "novel" coronavirus. Scientists continue to learn things about the virus. For example, we were originally told that we wore masks to protect others. The CDC has now stated that it protects the mask wearer as well.

So what would it take to close us down again?

- 1) The state could shut us down just as they did last spring. Governor Inslee/DOH could say that we are all going remote.
- 2) The health districts could say that because of the hospitalization rate (or some other metric), that schools should move to remote learning or they should pull back.
- 3) The district could look at our local infection rates/school data and make a decision to close or pull back.

We will not bring back 4th and 5th grade students unless the trend is flat or going down. We will examine new data on Monday, meet with Health District leaders and let families know as soon as a decision is made.

We wish our circumstances were different. Thank you to our families who are remaining vigilant, following guidelines, and keeping our school and community safe.

Reminder: There is no school on November 20 due to Conferences. There will be no in-person classes on November 25 and it is an early release day. There is no school on November 26-27 in observance of Thanksgiving.

Please stay safe and take care.