



NEWS RELEASE

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SPS to Return to Full-Time In-Person Instruction for All Students

Plan for 2021-22 School Year Announced Today

SEATTLE – Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Brent Jones today announced the district’s intention to resume full-time in-person instruction for all students beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

The plan, which district staff has already begun strategizing and planning for, will be implemented under full compliance with public health directives.

“Getting our students back into class is the single best thing we can do for their education and social-emotional health,” said Dr. Jones, who began his appointment as interim superintendent on May 1. “Fortunately for all of us, the pandemic is slowing and access to vaccinations continues to grow so we fully expect to return to traditional education in the fall.”

While the focus is on in-person instruction for all students, the plan does include a remote option for students who may be unable to attend full-time in-person for health-related or other significant reasons.

“I am excited about Superintendent Jones’s vision for the fall and his commitment to prioritizing the social and emotional well-being of our students,” said SPS Board of Directors President Chandra Hampson. “I look forward to our partnership as he prioritizes a culture of care, optimism, and joy.”

SPS began remote-only instruction in March 2020 to slow the spread of COVID-19. With the exception of a limited number of students receiving special education services, all students remained in remote-only instruction at the start of the 2020-2021 school year. A hybrid instructional model – part in-person, part remote – was phased in for all grades beginning in March of this year.

“Our educators have done a heroic job remaining focused on delivering exceptional instruction while navigating these unprecedented circumstances,” said the superintendent. “Likewise, our students and families have really done a great job, but in-person school is what we do best and it is best for our students. Our staff is committed to ensuring high quality instruction, welcoming classrooms and safe and healthy learning environments as the majority of our students return in-person this fall.”

Dr. Jones identified important areas of collaboration and partnership that will be prioritized as the plan is developed:

- Working in partnership with the SPS Board of Directors to approve the final plan for submission to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI);
- Working in partnership with the Seattle Education Association during development of the best possible instructional environment that will ensure the highest student outcomes;
- Including input from key stakeholders, community groups, students and families, with a particular focus on students and families furthest from educational justice.

With the return to full-time in-person instruction, Superintendent Jones plans a range of student and staff-focused supports:

- Focus on student mental health – SPS will use federal emergency funds to invest in additional mental health services, trauma-informed practice and working with families and staff to create a “culture of care” as students return to classrooms.
- Supporting student growth – Focus on each student’s individual learning path in collaboration with parents and caregivers. Additional academic supports, community partnerships, and learning opportunities will be in place to support those students with the most need.
- Robust wellness supports for SPS staff.
- Continuing to use new and innovative instructional practices that have evolved over the past year.

Fall implementation planning teams will be convening to design the plans for the full-time in-person model.

“The impacts of the pandemic and this last year on our children won’t fully be known for years to come,” said President Hampson. “As many more students transition to in-person learning, we must keep our hearts and minds open to their unique experiences, trauma, and growth. Some students will benefit by continuing in remote learning – an option we are committed to providing. The many reasons why students choose to stay remote will guide us in our own organizational growth. The vast majority of our students, however, will greatly benefit from a return to full-time schooling.”

The SPS Board of Directors will hold a special board meeting on May 26, 2021 to review the Washington LEA Academic and Student Well-Being Recovery Plan, which is required by OSPI.

On June 1, 2021, SPS will submit the board-approved plan to OSPI.

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