

Dear school partners,

As you are aware, the [Governor’s Office implemented new restrictions](#) this week. While K-12 schools and childcare are exempt from these restrictions, this has a major impact on the broad environment in which they operate. Leading into what for many is a season of holidays, this is a lot to process. We are here beside you as we all navigate this new chapter in the pandemic. We share our gratitude for the grace and leadership you continue to show during this time.

This week’s Public Health—Seattle & King County (PHSKC) Schools and Childcare Task Force sector email includes the following topics:

1. Key indicators of COVID-19 activity
2. Please share your COVID Coordinators’ contact info with PHSKC
3. Increasing COVID-19 cases in King County
 - a. What does that mean for schools?
 - b. Testing capacity
4. Stipends for workers to isolate or quarantine
5. Mental health resources for educators and families
 - a. Community wellbeing postcards project
 - b. Difficult conversations this holiday season
6. Air Quality Resources from the Environmental Protection Agency

1. Key indicators of COVID-19 activity

The following chart includes King County data aligned with key indicators of COVID-19 activity outlined in the [Decision Tree for Provision of In Person Learning among K-12 Students at Public and Private Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) released by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH). The following is data as of **November 18, 2020**. This data is available and regularly updated on the PHSKC [COVID-19 data dashboard webpage](#).

Current King County COVID-19 Activity Level:		HIGH
Education Modality:	Strongly recommend distance learning with the option for limited in-person learning in small groups, or cohorts, of students for the highest need students, such as students with disabilities, students living homeless, those farthest from educational justice, and younger learners.	
Extracurricular:	Strongly recommend canceling or postponing most in person extracurricular activities, including sports, performances, clubs, events, etc. with the option to allow extracurricular activities in small groups of 6 or fewer students.	

Activity Level Key:	Low	Moderate	High
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Indicator	Target/Range		Current Status
Cases/100K/14 days ¹	High	>75 cases/100K/14 days	294 cases/100K/14 days
	Moderate	25-75 cases/100K/14 days	

	Low	<25 cases/100K/14 days	
Trend in cases and hospitalizations ²	Flat or decreasing		Cases: Increasing Hospitalizations: Increasing
Test positivity ³	<5%		6.1%

¹Total number of cases for the last 14 days per 100,000 residents.

²Total number of cases for the last 14 days per 100,000 residents **AND** Rate hospitalization per 100,000 residents in the past 14 days compared to the prior 14 days.

³Percent of COVID-19 tests with positive results over the past 14 days

2. Please share your COVID Coordinators' contact info with PHSKC

To ensure that we are reaching staff critical to your schools' COVID response efforts, [please respond to this survey](#) to provide their names and contact information. This will be helpful in our ongoing efforts to keep you and your staff informed and updated during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will also facilitate easier follow-up and collaboration when cases are reported in your buildings. Thank you for taking the time to respond!

3. Increasing COVID-19 cases in King County

a. What does that mean for schools?

As you are aware, the Governor issued [new guidance](#) to slow the spread of COVID-19 cases throughout the state. Please note that K-12 schools and childcare (including informal learning pods) are exempt from the new restrictions. PHSKC released [the following](#) in October as case rates in King County rose to the "high activity" category of the DOH decision tree (>75 cases/100,000 residents/over the previous 14 days). **These recommendations still stand.** We continue to monitor the situation closely and will follow up if our recommendations change.

At our current level of COVID-19 transmission, the [DOH decision tree](#) recommends distance learning for the vast majority of students, with limited in-person instruction to be considered only for those with the highest need, such as students with disabilities, students living homeless, those farthest from educational justice and younger learners.

For schools that have already brought back some students in-person, PHSKC does not advise rolling back those measures at this time, provided schools are taking the precautions recommended by state and local health officials. This includes wearing masks, physical distancing, improved ventilation, enhanced sanitation and grouping kids in cohorts to limit their exposure. Furthermore, if your school has already widely communicated return plans to families, we are not advising rolling back. Continuity for kids and educators is one important factor that school districts need to weigh before making quick shifts to all distance-learning, particularly for early grades. This being said, we would not encourage making further plans to re-introduce in-person learning for additional students at this time.

The community COVID-19 incidence rate is just one of the factors school districts need to consider in making decisions about in-person learning. Schools must also be able to meet COVID-19 health and safety requirements, and have a plan for monitoring and responding to

any potential cases in their buildings. And crucially, input from families, staff and teachers will factor into decisions for every school and district.

b. Testing capacity

Please share with your networks! Early testing is important to help prevent COVID-19 from spreading to friends, family, and the community. If you have a [sign/symptom of COVID-19](#) or were exposed to someone with COVID-19, please get tested. King County [testing sites](#) are available to anyone who cannot access a COVID-19 test through their regular healthcare provider, regardless of immigration status.

Due to high demand at King County test sites, we encourage everyone to register online before going to the test site. To register for a test, select the highlighted "Make reservation online" link below your preferred testing location at [KingCounty.gov/covid/sites](https://kingcounty.gov/covid/sites). *Online registration is available in English and Spanish. For other languages, or if you have difficulty registering, call the King County COVID-19 Call Center at 206-477-3977 (open daily from 8:00 AM – 7:00 PM).* If you need an interpreter, please tell us in English what language you need.

4. Stipends for workers to isolate or quarantine

Please share with your networks! The Stipends for Workers to Isolate and Quarantine (SWIQ) Program will launch soon. Information on the program is available in 20 languages at [KingCounty.gov/covid/stipend](https://kingcounty.gov/covid/stipend).

The program provides direct cash stipends to help eligible workers and their families with expenses when they can't work during isolation and quarantine. The program provides eligible workers with a one-time stipend to cover some expenses for 2-3-week isolation and quarantine periods.

5. Mental health resources for educators and families

a. Community wellbeing Postcards Project

Please share with your networks! The Postcards Project aims to increase connection and reduce loneliness among our community. Being seen, feeling cared for, and receiving positive thoughts help us all weather hard times. Handwritten postcards sharing simple messages of caring, even from people we don't know, can increase hope and inspiration.

The Project is seeking art that inspires belonging, connection, hope, small joys, and love. They encourage images that represent different cultural beliefs and prioritize art submissions from youth, young people, and people most impacted by COVID and racism. Those interested can submit a digital image (.jpeg, .png) or digital photo of their art to wellbeing@kingcounty.gov by **November 23**. Additional information available in attached flyer.



KC Postcards Project
Art Submission Criteri

b. Difficult conversations this holiday season

With case counts on the rise, it is safer to celebrate Thanksgiving with just your immediate household this year. Making that decision is hard, and it can be even harder to tell your

family what you have decided! But during COVID-19, saying “no” to some events can be an act of caring, especially if our loved ones are at [high risk of getting very sick](#). So, how can you say “no” to an event or get-together in a way that doesn’t hurt anyone’s feelings? Read this blog post from the DOH on [how to navigate these difficult conversations](#) this year.

6. Air Quality Resources from the Environmental Protection Agency

The [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) has a variety of resources to support indoor air quality in K-12 schools. A recent webinar titled “Indoor Air Quality in K-12 Schools: Addressing the Concept of Layered Risk Amidst COVID-19” may be of particular relevance. A recording will be available on their website soon. Check out the webinars section on the right side of their [website](#).

In health,

The PHSKC Schools and Childcare Task Force