



DISEASE PREVENTION & RESPONSE

Planning Guidance for Expanded In-Person Learning in Secondary Schools

This document is intended to provide guidance to schools/districts planning to offer in-person learning in secondary schools. It provides predictable phase-in timelines, options for cohort group design, and class schedule recommendations for cautiously and safely bringing middle and high school students back into classrooms. It also includes special considerations for school athletics and specialized classes, such as Career Technical Education (CTE), science and STEM. This guidance is intended to be independent of elementary school reopening plans and current levels of quarantine in secondary school buildings.

Considerations for In-Person Education

Secondary in-person instruction is contingent upon:

- Appropriately staffed COVID-19 Teams
- Compliance with the data collection criteria/metrics (as detailed in [K-12 COVID-19 Response Team Performance Criteria](#)) and [SRHD K-12 Cohort Guidance](#)

Secondary in-person instruction is not contingent upon:

- The schedule of elementary school re-opening
- Current levels of quarantine in the district or in specific buildings

Additional Decision Elements:

Prior to expanding in-person learning, WA State Department of Health and SRHD recommend consideration of rates and trends in COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and test positivity in the community, vaccine availability, expanded testing capacity, and other health and education risks and benefits to children and their families.

Phase-In Timelines

Phase 1 – February 1, 2021:

- Begin **hybrid in-person** instruction for all grade levels with four cohorts who attend school one day per week (A, B, C and D).
 - o Preferred option would have A on Monday, B on Tuesday, remote day on Wednesday, C on Thursday, and D on Friday.
 - o Alternate options include any option with a remote day not on Wednesday.
 - o Rationale for support:
 - Attendance only one day a week minimizes the risk of being infectious in school down to three out of seven days in a typical week.
 - A one day a week hybrid start allows cautious movement forward to in-person instruction even in settings of high community incidence rates and small class sizes reduces the risk of in-school transmission.
 - Accommodates the learning curve for training and orientation of new COVID Team members.

Phase 2 – March 1, 2021:

- **Combine pairs of A/B cohorts** together to result in students attending in-person twice per week. (Alternate day options can be considered.):
 - o Preferred option for lower risk has cohort A on Monday/Tuesday and cohort B attending on Thursday/Friday with a remote only day on Wednesday.
 - o Alternate A/B options include:
 - 1st Choice – Cohort A on Monday/Friday with Cohort B on Tuesday/Thursday with a remote only day on Wednesday.
 - 2nd Choice – Cohort A on Monday/Thursday with Cohort B on Tuesday/Friday with a remote only day on Wednesday.
 - o An acceptable option for the remote only day includes having that day being utilized for in-person instruction with the day rotating every other week between cohort A and B.

Phase 3 – April 5, 2021:

- Move to **full in-person instruction** combining all cohorts for Monday-Friday in the school.
 - o This is contingent on classrooms being able to accommodate all students with appropriate physical distancing.
 - o To help reduce community transmission, all schools/districts are encouraged to eliminate a full week of spring break and perhaps substitute with two or three long weekends between April 5 and the end of the school year.

Secondary Education Schedule Recommendations

- 1st Choice – students would move between classes as a cohort or with students staying in a room and teachers moving between class cohorts. The focus would be to reduce the number of possible exposures and number of students quarantined if a person is identified as being infectious in the building.
- 2nd Choice – utilize block scheduling when transitioning to 2 or more days of in-person instruction.
- Last Choice – traditional class scheduling.

High School Athletics

- In-school athletics should not precede in-person instruction.
- Follow the WIAA [COVID-19](#) guidance and Governor's [Sporting Activities COVID-19 Requirements](#) guidance for low/medium risk sports to allow participation once a school begins in-person instruction. Note: The Governor's guidance determines when competition is allowed.
- Move basketball and wrestling out of Season 2 to Season 3 or 4, based on risk.
- All students will be required to wear face coverings while in practice and in competition.
- Quarantine guidance for athletics will follow the same criteria used in classrooms:
 - o In sports where participants are able to wear masks in both practice and competition, two cases in a team during a two-week period will result in a quarantine of all participants with the team during the exposure period.

Specialized Classes (STEM, Science Labs, CTE, etc.)

- Defer bringing in these classes into the school until the February 1st start of secondary in-person instruction.
- Prioritize needed collaboration with students from other cohorts on the Wednesday or whichever day is not a cohort day.