

From Washington State Superintendents

August 18, 2021

Re: In Response to July 28, 2021 Department of Health Update

Dear Honorable Governor Inslee and Washington State Department of Health:

OUR STUDENTS NEED HOPE. Coming off an unmasked summer of Washington State being “fully open”, our students are now going to be coming back to our schools with a continued mask mandate and other mitigation strategies. We are not health care professionals, and you have never made it clearer than you have now that the updated guidance holds the power of law. Further, Superintendent Reykdal has made it clear to us that if we do not follow these requirements our funding apportionment will be withheld, and further, that this is not a local decision in any way. Schools play a crucial role in the health of our communities, and being educators and not health care professionals, **we will follow these requirements as best we can in the midst of a very challenging situation.** We did our very best last year, and in the midst of a continued pandemic and impactful Delta variant, we will continue to do our best heading into this school year.

With all of this said, we have said for years in education that we are going to focus on the “whole child”. We know from talking with our students, surveying our students, and analyzing the state-wide COVID-19 student survey (6/28/2021) that **many, and in some cases the majority, of our students are struggling deeply with their mental health and well-being.** Given this, we are asking that you seriously consider:

- Any time you hold a press conference or update schools on data around COVID/Delta Variant, you include multiple metrics on the status of mental health and well-being of school aged children.
- Any time that requirements for schools are updated, include current mitigation strategies on the mental and emotional impact this pandemic is having on our students.
- Establish a specific metric to apply to LOCAL communities establishing a benchmark for when the masks can come off and other mitigation strategies are no longer needed. **This will provide HOPE for our students** and will give our communities a goal to rally around.

Thank you for your serious consideration of this request. We appreciate all that you are doing, as well as your ongoing leadership, as you help us navigate these difficult times.

Sincerely,

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Superintendent
Reardan-Edwall School District

Mr. Bob Rogers
Superintendent
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