

Dear Audubon Community-

This past week, we heard of changes from the governor's office, county officials and then from our district administration announcing options for in-person learning. At the same time we are excited about the return of students to the building, there is fear and anxiety about how to do school in a new way that ensures safety and continuity and progress.

#### PATHWAY FORWARD...RETURN TO SCHOOL

As our Superintendent, Dr. Jon Holmen, announced this past week, a limited in-person model will now be offered for our students beginning with kindergarten and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students. Hopefully you have received the email that provides a general overview of the plan and sends you to the survey asking whether you prefer that your child do a hybrid (in-person/online) or continue with the full remote model.

It is vitally important that you fill out this survey as it will determine how we will be staffing our classrooms.

Some frequently asked questions:

- Will in-person classrooms and/or remote classrooms be staffed by current Audubon teachers?
  - As much as possible, we will staff our classrooms with current Audubon staff, but it is likely that we will need to add teachers to our hybrid or remote learning sessions.
  - Teachers will be building-based meaning that they will be working as a member of the Audubon staff rather than some being moved to an 'online campus' as was originally proposed back in the Fall. This will help us with continuity of instruction.
- Will my child have the same teacher?
  - We cannot guarantee that students will be placed with their current teacher initially because of a mismatch between hybrid or full remote, and secondarily because class sizes will need to be re-balanced once choices are made. We will make every effort to keep a child with their current teacher, but this can't be guaranteed.
- When will students be in-person?
  - It is expected that classroom sessions for K-1<sup>st</sup> grade students will be Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 8:50am-12:20pm with remote learning in the afternoon. They will have a snack time and one recess, with lunch options available to take home. Wednesday will continue as an asynchronous learning day. Classes are limited to 15 students.
  - For 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students, they will participate in two sessions during the week from 8:50am-12:20pm on either Monday and Thursday, or on Tuesday and Friday. They will have the same snack/recess/lunch/asynchronous afternoon-Wednesday. Classes are limited to 15 students.
- Is it safe to come to school?
  - Of course, this is a very big question that is difficult to answer. The advantage of being at home is that you have the ability to limit exposure to other people. The advantage that we have at school is that we have much larger spaces to work with and department/personnel resources in support.
  - We are learning from schools who have been in session from the beginning of the school year, some on a limited basis in our school district, private institutions and schools in other countries. Our school nurse, Annette Fechenbach, has been supporting students at her other schools and she has firsthand knowledge of how to handle these cases.
  - Protocols and procedures will be in place to limit exposure (primarily through social distancing and personal protective equipment) and through screening devices such as daily attestation, cleaning, hygiene, etc.
  - In the event of a COVID concern, we have planned for quick, safe (and compassionate) isolation of staff or students. And our first line of defense starts at home by asking that you accurately assess your child before they leave each morning.

- Our model will limit the number of students in school on any one day to a level that we think will be very manageable.
- Why are we changing the model at this time?
  - The general answer is that the district is responding to guidance provided by the governor and King County Health.
  - The current model allows for a choice between continuing in full remote along with a hybrid in-person model.
  - While vaccinations have appeared more quickly than expected, it still takes times for them to work their way to each individual—ensuring an extensive delay to in-person opportunities. I am sure that waiting until this was done was considered, but these are decisions made at the state and district level so I will need to defer to them for this answer.
  - We know that the lack of in-person opportunities has been particularly devastating to certain students and families.
- What about lunch?
  - Lunch and lunch recess are particularly difficult to manage safely during a pandemic since it requires that a student be ‘un-masked’ in relatively close proximity to each other with limited access to bathrooms for cleaning. (Think about what a typical lunch room looks like!) Both of these activities are highly social as well.
  - Lunch options for a ‘Grab and Go’ lunch will be made available for students to take and eat at home.
- Will district transportation be available?
  - Yes, but they will need to employ social distancing and ventilation requirements meaning far fewer students will be on the bus at any one time.
- Would you (the principal) send your child to school for in-person learning?
  - I would...and will, with my high schooler when that opportunity is offered. BUT that is because I have weighed the value vs. the risk and realize that my situation is unique based on the age of my child, my own age, the age of my parents, and relative health of those in my family. I cannot know your own personal circumstances and therefore are not in the position to determine what is right for you and your family.
  - Please be assured that we will do everything possible to support your child, their safety and their learning no matter what you decide.
- Is this the model that will be used for the remainder of the school year?
  - Yes. This is expected to be the learning model for the rest of the year.
  - (But as with anything that seems definitive, 2020 has taught me it is best to ‘stay tuned’...)

Remember that the survey closes tomorrow at noon. We thank you for taking the time to complete this so that we are able to continue with the next phase of planning for the return of children to in-person learning.

Sincerely,

J. ‘Kimo’ Spray, Principal

Audubon Elementary