



Ellensburg School District #401

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Dear Parents and Students,

This week teachers began meeting virtually with groups of students. Though it doesn't compare to in person learning, it provided the important opportunity for teachers and students to begin connecting again.

For the foreseeable future, Zoom will be how we engage in virtual classroom sessions. Zoom is a virtual meeting platform that allows teachers to meet with their whole class or in small groups. Links to join the meeting will be sent securely to students/families prior to each meeting. We wanted to communicate some important things regarding Zoom.

First, the physical, emotional, and intellectual safety of our students is a top priority in ESD. We know Zoom has been in the news recently for "Zoom bombing," a form of hacking where an individual hijacks a meeting and uses screen sharing, video, or chat features to display unwelcomed and often inappropriate messages to the group. People hacking into Zoom meetings is a result of lax user practices rather than faults with the program, so ESD has taken steps to secure our meetings so these hijackings do not occur. Our teachers are requiring passwords to get into the meeting, but they are also enabling the waiting room feature, which gives teachers the ability to exclude people they don't know.

In addition to these safety measures, in order to restrict inappropriate behavior from students, teachers are shutting off screen sharing options for participants and removing opportunity for students to send private chats to other students (they will be able to chat with the whole group or with the teacher only).

Second, beginning next week, teachers will be using the video feature on Zoom. Using video gives teachers the chance to see their students and make a more meaningful connection, but it also gives students the chance to see their classmates, something many of them have been sorely missing. With this in mind, it is important for students/parents to consider the following when joining a Zoom session:

- If you do not want your child's video turned on, you may turn the video off
- Find a place for the Zoom meetings where the wall in the background is blank or contains nothing to distract other participants
- Attempt to find a quiet place where other people in the household won't interfere
- Keep yourself on mute unless the teacher requests you to unmute
- Remember, this is a learning environment, so avoid movement, actions, or noises that may distract from learning and connecting meaningfully

While the video feature will be turned on, these meetings *will not* be recorded. Likewise, **students/parents should not record or take photos of the Zoom session and share those via any platform.** Please keep the privacy of other students in mind.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

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