



# Ellensburg School District #401

1300 East Third Avenue Ellensburg, WA 98926, [www.esd401.org](http://www.esd401.org), Phone: 509-925-8000, Fax: 509-925-802

September 9, 2020

Welcome Back ESD Team!

In my “Back to School” Superintendent update [video](#), I shared my insights from this superb [article](#). What resonated with me about this article was that the feelings that many of us experience with the COVID-19 pandemic could be connected to the stages of the grief process. Being able to notice and name these emotions was helpful for me. I also appreciated how this article gave some suggestions about how to change some of our coping mechanisms during these times of “ambiguous uncertainty.” We have all been experiencing various types of loss. It is a huge disappointment to not be able to bring all of our students back for the first day of school. Given our current circumstances, we are asking for your grace and patience as we proceed forward.

We have been working hard throughout the summer to ensure that we are set to provide an engaging online experience for all students. Teachers are in the process of learning the technological tools of Schoology and Edgenuity. Our teachers are committed to providing high quality instruction. We also understand that it will take some time for our teachers to get up to speed with these two programs. I encourage you to stay in touch with your child’s teacher. Now, more than ever, we need to have strong partnerships between teachers and parents, and we look forward to supporting this important relationship.

One of the ways that parents can be more involved this year is to sign up to be a member of the new [Superintendent’s Parent Council](#). Parents on this Council will meet together with the Superintendent and other various ESD personnel to learn more about important projects that the district is working on, as well as, to learn about topics that are of interest to members of this Council. These meetings will be held on the first Thursday evening of each month from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm by Zoom, starting October 5th. I will be asking for parents’ input on various topics, and it will, therefore, be important to create some consistency with having the same group of parents attend most of these meetings. If you are interested in being a member of the **Superintendent’s Parent Council, please fill out the information on the form above. Google invitations will be sent out the last week in September.**

During the first four weeks of school, students (overall) will be engaged with online learning. Students who are in the Virtual Academy, as well as, the Hybrid Model will be logging into Schoology for their daily instruction. The revised schedules for both learning models are listed on this website. <https://www.esd401.org/covid-19/reopening-plans-and-communication>.

Tips for getting your students ready for online learning include:

1. Ensure that your student knows how to log into their Chromebook and how to access Schoology. (Parent videos for this process will be sent out soon.)
2. Provide a quiet space within your house for students to work when they are on Zoom sessions.
3. Limit the potential for background noises and distractions.

We understand that distance learning from home could be stressful. This article offers some great tips on how to prioritize relationships and build resiliency with students.

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/3-ways-reduce-stress-and-build-connections-during-distance-learning>

The Ellensburg School District No. 401 complies with all federal rules and regulations and does not discriminate on basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation including gender expression or identity, creed, religion, age, veteran or military status, disability, or the use or a trained dog guide or service animal by a person with a disability and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups. Inquiries regarding compliance procedures may be directed to the School District Superintendent/Title IX Officer, Jinger Haberer or the Director of Special Services/Section 504 Coordinator; 1300 E. Third Ave., Ellensburg, WA 98926 or by telephone at (509) 925-8000.



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So when will students be back in the buildings? Although the COVID-19 rate of infection in Kittitas County is currently within an acceptable level for bringing students back to buildings, we anticipate that the rate of infection could significantly increase, as the CWU students return to campus. This has happened in other college towns. ESD's four week waiting period also allows our teachers to become fluid in their use of Schoology and Edgenuity to support distance learning. Additionally, we will be bringing small groups of our special education students into our buildings in early September. We hope to bring other small groups of students into our schools, as soon as, we are safely able to accomplish this task. Kittitas County Public Health Officer, Dr. Mark Larson, also has been providing guidance on the safe opening of schools through this YouTube channel.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCyQzBwJLbkLj7WueKJ5w7mQ/featured>

If after the first four weeks of school, the rate of infection is at a level where it is safer to bring in larger groups of students, teachers will be given some lead time to prepare for implementing a full hybrid model. The exact amount of this lead time is yet to be determined. Our Instructional/Technology Committee is working on an amendment to the ESD Reopening Plan and will present their amendment to the ESD Board of Education on September 23rd.

Great happens here in Ellensburg! We will not be defined by the COVID-19 virus. Our ESD Team will use this as an opportunity to grow, embrace new ways of doing things and commit ourselves to teamwork that results in learning environments where all students thrive.

We've got this because we are ESD STRONG!

Sincerely,

Jinger Haberer, ESD Superintendent