

Dear Members,

On Wednesday Governor Inslee and the DOH announced updated [school guidance](#) for in-person instruction, including revised metrics for determining if in-person learning is safe and an expanded “toolkit” for districts to use [when planning for in-person learning](#). Further he added 3 million dollars to support the needs of financially compromised districts in meeting these requirements.

According to Inslee, emerging research indicates that in-person learning can be safe if all health and safety measures recommended by DOH are implemented with fidelity. In addition, school districts like LWSD will need to win the trust of all families and staff in order to successfully open schools for in-person learning during COVID, and not rely solely on any remaining good will of educators or the eagerness of some to “return to normal”. The truth is that in the absence of the vaccination of teachers, schools will need to rely on health and safety efforts to keep people safe.

### **So where does that leave us?**

The announcement by Inslee and DOH yesterday doesn’t change substantially the content of the bargaining work in which we are engaged.

We continue to make progress on our K-1 bargaining. In most areas of interest, we are finalizing decisions and creating language to support those agreements. Your representatives remain focused on health and safety and manageable workloads. LWEA and LWSD have been bargaining since late September around topics ranging from involuntary transfers and leave policies to instructional models to masking and ventilation, all in relation to the work terms and conditions of certificated educators.

**No one wants to be in classrooms as much as educators, but it must be safe for all – on that everyone agrees.**

Outside of the K-1 bargaining effort, we recently negotiated a process by which LWEA members can provide SEL support to students in-person through the use of [equity hours](#) (sections VII.A and F.5 of our LOU). Please review the [message from Matt Gillingham and explanation from LWEA](#), forwarded to you by your building reps late last week. We continue to seek solutions to provide safe in-person student-educator interactions.

Please rest assured that

- Washington state, and LWSD, continue to make decisions based on science, even when it changes.
- Gov. Inslee’s State of Emergency [proclamation](#) requires that anyone “at increased risk” is granted accommodations and does not need to risk their life to work in-person.
- All members have [options for leave](#), including unpaid leave.
- Any school district that operates in WA state **must** implement [DOH health and safety measures and LNI requirements](#).
- Our district’s [COVID Safety Plan](#) details LWSD’s implementation of these requirements.
- LWEA will continue to meet with LWSD and advocate for the needs of members. We will educate our members on the details of any negotiated agreements once they are finalized.
- You can find all [our past bargaining updates](#), including information on who makes the call on reopening schools (it’s the superintendent and the school board) on our website.

The LWEA leadership team wishes you a safe and relaxing Winter Break.