

Dear Superintendent Duran and members of the Bellevue School District Board,

On December 14, elementary educators were informed of Bellevue School District's plans for in-person learning to resume in January 2021. Today, after considering current case metrics in King County, new developments in epidemiology (including the emerging variant strain detected in British Columbia and in the US), and reviewing a reopening plan that is inadequate and unsafe, **Jing Mei Elementary educators reaffirm their readiness to continue providing remote instruction and stand in opposition to the expansion of in-person learning.**

The following are critical indicators that must be considered:

- As of 1/11/2021 - **King County is at 313/100K cases** for the previous 14 days. According to the CDC's Indicators for Dynamic School Decision-Making, rates over 200/100K indicate the highest risk of transmission in schools. Studies show that **high Covid rates in schools are linked to prevalence of the virus in the community** - a conclusion echoed by the recent Epic Education Policy Study that includes data from Washington State.
- Effective reproductive number (Re) of 1.0 indicates an **outbreak in King County that is currently growing.**
- King County is currently not testing quickly enough and not meeting the target of testing within two days of symptoms starting. **BSD's Back to Buildings Plan does not include testing for students or staff despite research showing individuals without symptoms play a significant role in transmission.**
- **83.4% of hospital beds are occupied** in King County. Evergreenhealth Medical Center in Kirkland currently has 92% of adult inpatient beds occupied, 11% of which are Covid patients. Governor Inslee has written that "hospitalization projections are scary" and notes that the stress on our medical system will have a significant impact. Reopening schools unsafely will add further stress along with the strong possibility of the new variant reaching King County.
- According to current research, **SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7 is 24% more infectious in children under 9, and 14% more infectious for children 10-19 years of age. Physicians, epidemiologists, and scientists recommend reconsidering in-person learning until educators and staff receive the vaccine.** Dr Duchin (King County Public Health) notes that the new B.1.1.7 strain must be taken seriously and cautions individuals to "beware and prepare" as this variant spreads more rapidly and is more contagious. He also calls for limiting engagements outside of the home, minimizing contacts, and focusing on ventilation indoors. **BSD has provided no hard data on ventilation in its elementary schools to staff.**

- **Washington State does not collect or report coronavirus data specific to schools. BSD has not released information on how cases and outbreaks will be reported to the community.**

Bellevue educators believe in safe learning for students. **We oppose BSD's Back to Buildings Plan and call for a phased reopening aligned with the prior metrics used to guide decision making.** Teachers also stand in solidarity with classified staff and by colleagues currently providing in-person services to our most vulnerable learners. **We propose that BSD expand protections by providing data on ventilation and contact tracing plans, implementing a testing protocol, and developing a system for reporting cases and outbreaks as recommended by countless organizations focused on safe schools including the CDC and WHO.**

BSD's Back to Buildings Plan, developed without consideration of the concerns raised above - does not serve students, staff, or the Bellevue community. **As educators who are honored with the responsibility for students' learning and well-being, we oppose the expansion of in-person services at this time.**

Respectfully,

Sixteen Concerned Jing Mei Educators