



UPDATE ON SCHOOL OPENINGS & LKSD'S COMMITMENT TO SAFETY

Dear parents, students, and the entire LKSD learning community:

I hope you and your families are safe and well. We are pleased to welcome returning and new families this school year.

All 29 LKSD schools opened on Monday, August 24, 2020, according to our Smart Start plan guidelines (<https://www.lksd.org/smartstart2020>), which align with guidance provided by the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development. Our plan prioritizes staff and student safety above all other considerations and outlines operations for low, medium, and high-risk category schools.

SCHOOL PARAMETERS FOR SAFELY OPERATING		
RISK LEVEL	DEFINITIONS OF ENVIRONMENT PER COMMUNITY	INSTRUCTIONAL MODEL
High	<p>Widespread community transmission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>High level of community transmission</u>: Outbreaks or increases in cases and recent laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the school's behavioral health region and/or town or municipality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-12: Distance / Remote Learning
Medium	<p>Some community transmission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Low to moderate level of community transmission</u> in the school's behavioral health region and/or town or municipality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PreK-6: Hybrid instructional model of in-person (cohort model) and remote learning Middle & High School: Remote / distance learning or cohort model if applicable Parent choice of full-time distance learning
Low	<p>No community transmission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Minimal to no level of community transmission</u> in the school's behavioral health region and/or town or municipality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> K-12: Cohort model Parent choice of full-time distance learning

It is important to understand that we are intentionally relying on a model that provides maximum flexibility and adaptability within the District, particularly given the complexities of our school district and the COVID-19 pandemic.

As such, we categorize individual schools as low, medium, or high-risk based on the current conditions in each school, the prevalence of cases in the surrounding community, and the guidance of local public health officials and the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation (YKHC). The LKSD/YKHC COVID-19 team meets regularly to assess the situation across the Delta, relative to our schools. Decisions regarding whether, or how, to safely open or close a school entail complex tradeoffs and judgments about a community's unique vulnerability to COVID-19. Low, medium, and high-risk operational zones are determined by LKSD in coordination with YKHC, and state public health officials. Continued flexibility will be important as conditions change. *Please know that school risk levels will almost certainly change as we continue to navigate the school year.*

Based on these considerations and our Smart Start plan:

- Nine (9) LKSD schools opened with remote learning only (high risk) and
- Twenty (20) schools opened with the hybrid model, which includes a mix of in-person and remote learning (medium risk).

We would like to remind parents that they may opt for their student(s) to learn remotely for any reason, regardless of their school's risk level. Each school will provide learning materials to students who are full-time remote learners and establish a plan for returning materials and providing feedback to students.

Commitment to Health and Safety

The health and safety of our students, staff, and community is and always will be at the center of our planning and decision-making process. LKSD is committed to making the best, most informed decisions we can based on guidance from YKHC and state public health officials.

Prior to schools reopening, we conducted two-week, District-wide in-service trainings and professional development workshops for all faculty and staff. These trainings helped prepare faculty to implement the Smart Start Plan and the accompanying safety protocols and plans for academic instruction. Custodians were also trained by the lead of the maintenance department on additional safety and disinfection procedures.

Our Smart Start Plan incorporates numerous health and safety protocols, including:

- Requiring face coverings in all District buildings and providing them to teachers and students.
- Teaching and reinforcing good hygiene measures such as handwashing, covering coughs, and wearing face coverings at all times.
- Providing hand soap, sanitizer, and disinfecting wipes to all schools.
- Partnering with YKHC on a comprehensive, targeted testing strategy for LKSD staff.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces at least daily and shared objects after use.
- Regular and frequent deep cleaning of schools.
- Spaced seating in classrooms and buses.
- Training staff, parents, and students to watch for signs and symptoms of illness. Those exhibiting symptoms will be required to stay home or be sent home.
- Limiting contact between groups of students.

In addition, the District has purchased electrostatic cleaners for each school, which effectively and efficiently disinfect any surfaces and hard-to-reach places. This is an extra step to keep our students and staff safe.

We are also taking precautions to protect vulnerable students and staff, including those with chronic conditions, special health care needs or disabilities, and continue to develop ways to accommodate their needs.

Access

LKSD has partnered with GCI to provide a robust Intranet system that will improve remote learning across our District. This system, which we anticipate having fully functional in the next few weeks, will enable students to send files to their teachers, download and upload course content, access PowerSchool, and participate in Zoom meetings with their teachers from their homes. Students will be issued all equipment necessary, at no cost, in order to access the Intranet system. This Intranet system will not interfere with their family's normal Internet data usage. Our plan is to roll out this system with tundra villages and Bethel first, and then expand it to other areas. We are also providing devices and food service for all students, whether in person or remote.

Counseling Resources

We recognize the stress and anxiety that changes may create for our students and their families. While our social workers and counselors will not be traveling to village communities categorized as medium or high risk, they will be employing numerous alternative strategies, including phone or video calls, to connect with students and staff and maintain important relationships and connections. Students and staff are also encouraged to contact social workers directly should they need additional support. The LKSD website has additional COVID-19 parent resources, including tips on managing anxiety and stress. (https://www.lksd.org/parent_resources)

Learning, Growing, and Thriving

As each school implements its Smart Start Plan, we are using the lessons learned to continually strengthen our programs, resources and safety protocols for students, staff, and their communities. We remain committed to supporting academic achievement and the development of literacy, math, career readiness and Yugtun and Cugtun fluency. In the face of this unprecedented challenge, our educators have shown true dedication and determination to

better the lives of our students, and they have gone above and beyond to maintain meaningful connections with the students they serve to ensure a high-quality learning experience. Teachers are piloting new types of learning experiences and building upon established effective teaching strategies that we will continue to use and adapt. Likewise, our students have shown remarkable resilience and a commitment to continue to learn and grow that should make us all proud. Thanks to these efforts, learning will not only continue in LKSD – it will thrive.

Please do not hesitate to contact your school if you have questions or need support. We welcome and encourage parents to provide thoughts and feedback about the upcoming school year by calling (907) 543-4800, writing, emailing, or messaging us or their teachers and site administrators. We have also reached out to families with a survey to determine their individual needs and concerns (<https://www.lksd.org/portals/Parent%20Portal>). Site Administrators and school leaders will continue to check in weekly to address any concerns that may arise and provide support and guidance when needed.

A successful school year requires that we all have patience, adapt to changing conditions, recognize the challenge in front of us, and continue to work together for the benefit of our students and our communities.

Thank you for your continued understanding and support through these challenging times.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Hankins', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kimberly Hankins
Superintendent