

PSD shifting to hybrid learning for PreK-elementary

Dear PSD families and community members,

First and foremost, I want to thank you for your lasting partnership. What you've been through is so difficult. Your lives have been upended. Many of you have been worried about loved ones, friends and neighbors. Your kids are probably asking you questions you don't have answers to. Nothing has been the same – school included.

Like you, I want this to be over, but this pandemic is not over yet. More than anything you and your kids probably want consistency amid the chaos so that you can plan and make this situation work for your family. Even though we can't give you all the consistency you crave, we can continue to give you support. That will never change.



[**VIDEO: Superintendent Dr. Sandra Smyser announces shift to Phase 3 education**](#)

I have remained cautious while considering a shift to in-person education, [closely monitoring Larimer County Department of Health and Environment's \(LCDHE\) COVID-19 data](#), particularly the 14-day case rate per 100,000 or 14-day average and COVID-19 test result turn-around times. We have continued consulting closely with Larimer County Public Health Director Tom Gonzales and his department, which has answered our questions around the clock and reviewed and approved each iteration of our plans. [Learn more about the data PSD pays attention to here.](#)

Recently, LCDHE has reported positive trends in its data. Lagging test result turn-around times were chief among the reasons PSD started the school year in remote education. Contact tracing, one of the most important tools public health officials use to stop outbreaks, was ineffective because LCDHE wasn't getting test results back quickly enough to conduct its investigations. Diligent work by LCDHE with its partners, including the state health department and Colorado State University, has resulted in a significant shift: On Aug. 4, the day I announced that PSD would start in remote education, only 27.1% of test results were coming back in two days or less; as of Sept. 5, that total climbed to 68.1%. LCDHE expects to continue seeing improvements in these test result turnaround times.

As a result, I have decided to move to hybrid education, which includes both in-person and remote learning. Our county health department partners supported our Phase 3 plans earlier this

school year and approved them once again. **Our updated, comprehensive plan is forthcoming. In the meantime, here's what you need to know:**

Plans for Early Childhood Education:

Preschool students will return to in-person education Oct. 5. Early Childhood Education will communicate more information directly with their families.

Plans for elementary:

Remote education continues to be most challenging for the youngest of our elementary students. For that reason, K-2 students will make the shift to hybrid education (a combination of remote and in-person learning) two weeks earlier than originally planned. As you will see in the schedules below, we are NOT bringing 100 percent of PSD students back at once for in-person learning five days a week. We will follow a phased approach, bringing in different grades over time in our [Phase 3 – Hybrid in-school/remote learning](#) model. I believe it is important for us to return to in-person learning with a smaller number of students in our buildings so that we can monitor the impact of this transition on our students, families, staff and community. This approach allows us to be as responsive as possible and to take the appropriate steps to respond should we see case outbreaks as a result.

Here's what elementary families can expect:

- **Oct. 5 – 16:**
 - Grades K-2 in Phase 3 Hybrid In-Person/Remote Learning (*see schedule below*)
 - Grades 3-5 in Phase 1 Remote Learning
- **Oct. 19:**
 - Grades K-5 in Phase 3 Hybrid In-Person/Remote Learning (*see schedule below*)

Phase 3 schedule

All students have been assigned to an A or B group. Please check [ParentVUE](#) for your student's assignment.

- "A group" attends school Mondays and Wednesdays (full days) with remote learning Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays.
- "B group" attends school Tuesdays and Thursdays (full days) with remote learning Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.
- On Fridays, all students in remote education.

Plans for middle/high school:

We continue to target Oct. 19 to begin in-person learning for our secondary students and will share more details the week of Sept. 28. As with our elementary schools, we plan to return to in-person learning at the secondary level in a phased, hybrid approach. [More info about PSD phases of education here.](#)

Health and safety protocols for students and staff:

Face coverings: Staff and students **will be required to wear face coverings** in school.

- Parents/guardians are responsible for providing face coverings (which must [follow county guidance](#) and cover the nose and mouth).
- “Mask breaks” will take place periodically and outdoors for health department-approved time without face coverings.
- Students will be allowed to take their cloth face masks off for recess, following public health guidelines.
- There may be rare instances when students with disabilities or some medical conditions may be exempt.

Important safety protocols will be in place at all schools to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Among those are:

- We expect all students, staff and families to follow all health and safety protocols, guidelines and procedures this school year to keep everyone as safe as possible.
- Families must check their student(s) for [COVID-19 symptoms](#) daily and not send them to school if they are ill or have a fever of more than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit.
- All staff are required to use the [COVID-19 Daily Screening app](#) and must get a "green light" from the app to work before entering a PSD facility. Staff who are sick must stay home.
- Staff or students experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or are otherwise sick should report to the nurse's office where they will be evaluated. Parents/guardians will be contacted and asked to pick their student up from school, if it is determined they are [too sick to be at school](#).
- Follow the three W's: Wear a mask, watch your distance, wash your hands. Separate students into cohorts, as possible, to reduce close contact (LCDHE defines as less than 6 feet and more than 10 minutes) and possible COVID-19 exposure and to allow for contact tracing as necessary.
- Enhanced cleaning of high-touch surfaces and sanitizing of buildings and restrooms

- No visitors or volunteers will be allowed in schools until January 2021.
- Field trips for all grade levels are canceled until January 2021.
- There will be no clubs or extracurricular activities in-person at the elementary level. Secondary grades may offer some athletics, clubs and extracurricular activities that follow public health protocols.
- PSD buildings will feature common health and safety signage.
- Learn more on [PSD's Health and Safety web page](#).

If there is a case:

We anticipate there will be cases and outbreaks in PSD that will lead to quarantines of classrooms, school closures and shifts back to [Phase 1 – Remote education](#) – likely with little notice. PSD follows current health guidance, including from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and Larimer County Department of Health and Environment. LCDHE guidance is subject to change per state orders.

- Review the [most-recent CDPHE guidance for cases and outbreaks in schools](#) that PSD will follow.
- Review the [most-recent LCDHE guidance for schools](#) that PSD will follow.
- PSD's COVID-19 contact tracing liaison works closely to evaluate possible exposure to and positive cases of COVID-19 among PSD staff and students in partnership with LCDHE contact tracing experts assigned to PSD.
- LCDHE [conducts contact-tracing investigations](#) in partnership with PSD. Answer the call: It's imperative that our families, students and staff answer the health department's call and share timely, accurate information to help minimize outbreaks in our community. LCDHE and PSD maintain confidentiality.
- For each case, PSD works with LCDHE to communicate (i.e. LCDHE notifies people if they are close contacts and need to quarantine) to targeted staff and/or parents/guardians.

Meals:

PSD will continue to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students (18 and younger). Kitchens will be open at elementary schools, to serve elementary students on the days they are at school for in-person education. The district is finalizing distribution plans for secondary and PSD Virtual students, as well as elementary students on the days they are not at school. More information will be shared as soon as possible.

Transportation:

PSD is determining how transportation services will be delivered, to whom and starting when. More information will be communicated as soon as possible.

More than ever, we need your support. To keep everyone healthy and for in-person education to remain an option, wear your mask, watch your distance and wash your hands. Be forthcoming if the local health department contacts you to talk about a case you or your student may have had contact with. Do your part to help our community and help our schools stay open.

As I said, I will monitor the impact of this transition to hybrid learning on the community throughout our shift to Phase 3. If we start to see increased community spread or other risk factors emerge, it is possible PSD may return to [Phase 1 – Remote learning at home](#). We know we will see cases in PSD that prompt classrooms or schools to quarantine and close, due to public health guidance, and are prepared to operate in the educational phase that makes the most sense given current community health conditions.

Thank you for what you've been doing; we hear how hard you're working to support the children in your life. We know many of you want your kids to return to in-person learning and we are looking forward to having them back in our school buildings. This is a big step in that direction.

I appreciate your continued partnership, flexibility and patience.

Sincerely,

Sandra Smyser, Ph.D.

Superintendent