

PSD shifting to Phase 1 remote Nov. 23

Dear PSD families,

With COVID-19 cases increasing in Larimer County at an alarming rate, PSD will shift all grade levels to Phase 1: Remote Learning starting Monday, Nov. 23 through winter break.

- PreK-12 students will remain in Phase 3 hybrid learning the week of Nov. 16.
- The first day of [Phase 1](#) learning starts Nov. 23 for all grades.
- PSD Virtual students will continue 100 percent online learning without change.

We will update the PSD community about our plans for Jan. 5 and beyond as we monitor the situation through December.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h_mPKr2gWdw

Why the shift?

COVID-19 cases are taking a toll on our system as staff members shift remote or quarantine, and it is increasingly more difficult to do the work of teaching and caring for our children. Although some schools and departments have yet to experience the challenge of responding to COVID-19 cases, many have become strained. With community cases surging, our teams are struggling to maintain capacity to conduct contact tracing investigations with the health department.

Numerous classes of students and staff are moved into remote learning daily for case assessments, and many are later quarantined as close contacts to slow virus spread. Twenty-nine confirmed positive cases, back-to-back assessment periods and staffing issues forced us to shut down our largest high school, Fossil Ridge, on Thursday and, at the current rate, we had expected more to follow.

We hoped to remain in Phase 3 for as long as it was determined safe to do so. The time for a shift is now.

With this announcement, we launched a new PSD data dashboard, accessible on the [School Status and Information web page](#), and plan to add more metrics in the future. Between Oct. 5 and Nov. 12, there were 154 confirmed and 80 presumptive positive cases in PSD, with 66 of the confirmed cases being logged in the past seven days.

Communitywide spread is limiting our ability to provide in-person education. All four comprehensive high schools now have school or classroom outbreaks, as defined by the state health department. And although we have started to see evidence of minimal in-school, student-to-student spread, most of the cases we are seeing are linked to a positive family member or sibling, a weekend get-together, Halloween party, or a student or staff member who presented with symptoms during the school day.

Key COVID-19 data indicators continue to tell us we are struggling to control the virus from a community standpoint. In addition to case trends in PSD, we have been monitoring county data through the lens of the [Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment COVID-19 Dial](#). The Dial consists of five levels to help local communities make decisions to balance

economic and social activity while ensuring capacity to contain the virus. **Larimer County is currently in Level Yellow: Safer at Home.**

Dial levels are determined by the three key metrics below. **These have been trending toward the Level Red: Stay at Home benchmarks since mid-September**, with rapid rate of growth since the last week of October. Although the county's metrics change daily, the trend has not been in the right direction -- at Level Red: Stay at Home, the Dial recommends remote education.

Key metrics as of Nov. 13:

- **New cases in the community:** The county has 531 cases per 100,000 people. This exceeds the cutoff point of 350 for Level Red by 181.
- **Percent positivity:** The test positivity percentage is 9.4%, more than doubling from 4.6% two weeks ago. The cut point for Level Red is 15%.
- **Impact on hospitalizations:** 62 COVID-19 patients are currently in the hospital. The county dashboard sets 65 as the High-Risk level, and there were 65 in the hospital last Friday. There has been a significant increase in hospitalizations since Nov. 2 and, if the trend holds, Larimer County hospitals may be near or at full capacity in the coming weeks.

Help PSD and help us to once again return to in-person learning by doing your part, once again, to flatten the curve. Wear a mask, watch your distance, wash your hands and keep your get-togethers small and with only one other household group, as advised by public health officials.

What to expect in remote learning:

- Learn more: [Remote Learning: What to Expect web page](#).
- PSD continues to work on how best to support our most at-risk students in any phase of learning, including as part of this shift.
- Students and parents will continue to access online learning applications, access assignments, communicate with teachers and more through Teacher Landing Pages.
- PSD will continue to distribute meals. We will share more information soon about how meal distribution will look due to the shift.
- If your family does not have reliable access to the Internet, please notify your student's teachers or call the school office. Access to technical support and resources are available in the [Community Tech Portal](#). For additional help, email covidtechhelp@psdschools.org or call the student/family support line at 970-490-3339.
- Schools and departments are working quickly to adjust to this shift and need a little time to do so. Please don't expect further communications from your school until next week.

Sincerely,

Sandra Smyser, Ph.D.

Superintendent