

Ketchikan Gateway Borough School District

333 Schoenbar Rd. • Ketchikan, Alaska 99901

Ph. (907) 247-2109 Fax: (907) 247-3820

Elizabeth Lougee, Superintendent • Katie Jo Parrott, Business Manager

Catherine Alilin, Human Resources • Terri Crofcheck, Special Services • Alonso Escalante, Curriculum



Ketchikan Gateway Borough School Board Superintendent Report

Dear KGBSD School Board,

School officially ended on June 4, 2020. Students, teachers and staff have started summer vacation after ending what will forever be known as “an unprecedented time in history”. I wish everyone rest, relaxation and also a thank you for navigating through the time of unknown. However, as one school year ends we begin the preparation for the next school year, which will also be starting with preparing for many unknowns to the best of our abilities. The following letter was sent to our community and staff on June 4, 2020.

June 4, 2020

LETTER TO PARENTS & THE KETCHIKAN COMMUNITY

I know that there is a lot of concern about how we move into school in the fall, and I have been receiving many calls, emails, texts, and other inquiries regarding the District’s Smart Start plan. I also know that some misinformation is circulating that has caused some concern. As a result, I am providing additional information to you and the community about our current status, and some of the plans we currently have in place. This is a communication that is going out a little earlier than planned, but, with consideration for the understandable angst the unknown creates for many of our families, I hope that it will help you understand the process the district is going through to determine how to operate in the fall.

KGBSD SMART START PLAN

KGBSD has a SMART START framework and plan in development that is built upon three risk levels: Low, Medium, and High, with an additional Minimal Risk plan that provides for a smooth transition to normal operations. The Minimal Risk plan is built upon regular school operations while continuing to coordinate with local health and EOC officials to monitor the community’s status. Our plan provides four options for continuing education according to the level of COVID risk in our community. It incorporates CDC guidelines for schools and is directly aligned with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development’s (DEED) guidelines and framework.

The detailed plan is still under development, and I have coordinated a Smart Start Team charged with completing the details of SMART START plan development over the summer. All of the District’s plans have built in flexibility to be able to move quickly from one model to another based on levels of risk, i.e. the presence of COVID in Ketchikan. The timeline put in place for the beginning of the school year provides the necessary training to achieve this with minimal disruption to education moving from one risk level to another. Changes in response to the level of risk will be a cooperative decision between District leadership, public health officials, the Ketchikan EOC, and DEED.

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Regardless of the final SMART START plan, we are committed to working with individual families to accommodate specific needs during this time, which includes supports for at-home learning and providing for the health & safety of students while on-site.

The District will work with individual families to make adjustments based on the student's needs. If there are students who may not be able to be physically present in the fall, the District still has the obligation to provide a well-rounded education and to find ways of addressing those barriers. Likewise, for students who will be on-site, the District has an obligation to provide for the health, safety, and well-being of all.

Parents and students will have a variety of options through the District to access online and distance learning options and coursework based on their individual wants and needs. Those options are currently Fast Track, Digital Academy/Edgenuity courses, and the State of Alaska sponsored Alaska Virtual Statewide System. We want to make sure that parents have plenty of opportunities to have students engage in an education plan that works for them.

CURRENT RISK LEVEL

The following definitions of risk levels are provided in guidance from the State of Alaska and Public Health:

LOW RISK: No community transmission, and no laboratory confirmed cases within the last 14 days.

MEDIUM RISK: Low to moderate level of community transmission with a minimal amount of laboratory confirmed cases.

HIGH RISK: Widespread community transmission, and outbreaks or increases in case with recent laboratory confirmed cases.

MINIMAL RISK: Low to no risk of COVID cases. CDC guidance for social distancing and other precautions removed, and health mandates lifted.

Based on guidance provided by the State just yesterday, we are able to move our community status from Medium to a Low level of risk. At the Low Risk Level, if school were to start tomorrow, the District would be proceeding with the corresponding Low level SMART START schedule and plan (attached).

Here is where we need your help.

We need you to help us protect our community's great progress against the COVID-19 pandemic by strictly following the guidelines provided by the CDC and public health. We must do everything within our power over the next few months to keep COVID under control and allow us to stay in a low level of risk so that we can proceed with a more robust on-site program.

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This is a task we cannot do alone! In order to accomplish this, we need every person to adhere to social distancing, frequent hand washing, monitoring of symptoms, testing when appropriate, and quarantining after travel. As of today, Alaska's COVID cases are again climbing by double digits. Let's decide right now that this will not take place in Ketchikan.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

We hear you and completely understand your concerns expressed through the many emails, phone calls, and online comments. While the District is working around the clock to address each challenge that comes our way, we recognize the need to keep you in the loop even though some of our plans are still coming together. Therefore, beginning today June 4th, the District will be providing weekly status updates to students, parents, and the public. These updates will include the current risk level, as well as any notable changes to plan details or upcoming topics.

ADDITIONAL PLANS

Here are a few items we would like to make you aware of:

- 1. ACTIVITIES: The District commenced with student activities according to the ASAA guidelines beginning on June 1st. These guidelines align to the current risk level of the community (see attached). ASAA will be providing further guidelines for each fall activity on July 31st. At that time, we will release those guidelines and our updated plan to the public.*
- 2. EXTENDED LEARNING OPTIONS: We are currently working on plans, in partnership with other community organizations, for providing additional on-site opportunities for students on days they are not scheduled to be on-site in school buildings. These options will assist students in maintaining their academic progress as well as assisting working families in adjusting to the fall SMART START schedule.*
- 3. SUMMER SCHOOL: As many of you know, we are offering an expanded summer school available to all students. The final details of this plan based on the community's low level of risk, with consideration for parental requests for a variety of educational settings and options for students. An updated model of summer school options will be provided on Tuesday June 9th.*
- 4. SCHOOL SUPPLIES: We will not be requesting any school supplies be provided by students, parents, or families this fall. The District will be coordinating the supplies needs of each school and purchasing those on your behalf. We may have specific needs for certain supplies based on our risk level. However, we also know that many of our community members are suffering significant financial strains right now, and we want parents and families to be able to focus on your personal health and well-being, clothing, shoes, backpacks, etc.*

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“NOT” PLANS

There is a rumor circulating that the District intends to move to a four-day school week. This is not true. There is no plan nor intention to move to a four-day school week as part of a regular school schedule. The only changes to the school schedule being discussed and planned for are as part of our tiered Smart Start COVID response and recovery plan.

Furthermore, under most risk levels distance learning opportunities in the fall will be in addition to on-site instruction through asynchronous lessons utilizing our online learning management system Canvas. Zoom meetings will only be for student and teacher check-ins, as a way for staff and students to stay in contact outside of on-site instruction. The District has no plan to permanently move any of our core educational programming to online or distance learning.

FINAL THOUGHTS

We know that this is a very difficult time for the community, and we join you in wanting to return to our normal lives. As I have previously stated, we miss our students and want nothing more than to be back together learning again!

We must also ensure the health & safety of every person we serve. As the second largest employer in Ketchikan, employing over 400 permanent employees, 160 temporary substitute employees, serving over 2,200 students and their families, and managing some of the largest and most heavily used public facilities in our community, we have a tremendous responsibility to take into account health, safety, & well-being in our plans. It would be a dereliction of our duty, values, and strategic goals to fail to have a comprehensive plan in place that prioritizes this.

Consequently, we want to keep the curve flat for Ketchikan. We refuse to be the source of an outbreak that prolongs the need for strict measures and dire economic impacts, and are doing everything within our power to prevent that from happening in Ketchikan. We will continue to make adjustments to our plans as new guidance comes out, incorporating the advice of our local, state, and national experts as well as you, our parents and partners in education.

Responding to this once-in-a-century scenario has brought with it once-in-a-century complications, concerns, and challenges. During this unprecedented time in our history, we are having to do things we've never done in ways that have been untested in modern society. Yet, we are moving forward with the central goal in mind: educating our students.

As always, please feel free to contact me at beth.lougee@k21schools.org.

Very sincerely,

*Superintendent Beth Lougee
#KGBSDTogether*

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Just as there are endings and beginning to school during unprecedented times there is also the business of the school district that continues to move forward. Tonight there are five contracts on the agenda for approval for two occupational therapist positions, two speech and language positions and district wide administrator/mentor for teachers and administrators. The contractors have all been with our district in the past years and even though not full time throughout the school year they have established relationships and routines with students, parents and staff. The SLP contracts have been adjusted to accommodate student needs and maximize services either on site or through Telespeech services. Mr. Bob Hewitt, is being offered a second year contract to provide mentoring to teachers and administrators as well as perform district wide administrative duties as needed.

In addition to the contracts the new boiler replacement at Kayhi bid schedule is as follows:

Invitation for Bids Issued:	6/3
Pre-Bid Conference & Site Visit:	6/10, 3:00 PM
Deadlines for Questions:	6/15
Bids Due:	6/24, 3:00 PM
Notice of Intent to Award:	6/25
Deadline for Appeal:	6/30, 3:00 PM
Approval by School District:	7/8
Notice of Award:	7/9
Substantial Completion:	10/31
Final Completion:	11/30

Welch Whitley will have the IFB finalized this afternoon. We'll have it advertised in the KDN on 6/6, 6/8 & 6/10.

As we move forward with replacing the boiler the second boiler at Kayhi is also in need of major repair or replacement. We are entering into our fourth year of replacing parts to an old boiler and reviewing the best options with current funding. The district in the past years and currently continues to discuss funding options through different grant opportunities. Al Jacobson, Director of Maintenance, visited with Karen Peters, Alaska Energy Authority, as recent as May 14, 2020. According to Ms. Peters there are possible funding sources entering into the second phase of funding for energy use projects across Alaska (Biomass being specifically named). At this time Ms. Peters does not have actual dates of funding sources but will continue to call or email with specifics as she receives the updates. Mr. Jacobson and I have visited at different times regarding the history, how a biomass boiler would be used and benefits to the district and community and funding the project. It is my understanding that the biomass boiler costs approximately \$1,000,000.00. Mr. Jacobson and I will continue to update the school board and borough assembly as we receive updated information.