I have heard from quite a few TEA members with questions and concerns about returning students to in-person instruction in January.  I want to share with you the issues so that we can work on having a district level plan to share after Break.  Each building will need to adjust the systems to meet building level needs and this will take time.  We must have the broad generalized plan set prior to Jan 4 so that each building has time to modify and adjust the details to meet their needs and then communicate with families to provide enough time for them to modify their schedules and adapt to this new structure.

I am including labor leaders from other bargaining units in this email because these concerns impact their membership as well.  Broad support and collaboration across labor units with the District will ensure all facets of the issues are considered and addressed.

Issues to address:

In support of the Whole Educator, please see the below answers in response to your email questions titled “Health and Safety Concerns for In-Person Return of Students dated December 22, 2020.

1. Documentation of each building’s safety committee - [https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-800-130](about:blank) this link provides the summary of the WAC for Safety Committees and [https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=296-800-13020](about:blank) this one provides details on establishing and conducting Safety Committees at each work site.  There should be documentation of each site’s Safety Committee membership, meeting schedule, and minutes.  Each committee should have employee elected members from each of the labor units at that site, so at least 1 custodian, food services staff, para, admin, and TEA member for most building sites.  There may need to be others.  These committees will need to determine how to ensure all the COVID safety protocols are in place.  Some items that need to be address by this committee are:
   * 1. Which students will enter/exit at each door to ensure social distancing and timely entry/exit?   This has been an ongoing expectation since schools opened for staff on the first day of school, and during operation supporting students with IEP’s, who have been attending school since October. This expectation will continue and will vary depending on the design and flow of each unique school building and their community’s needs.

While I acknowledge that we have had students in-person for months, the use of one entry as we expand into multiple grade levels will not be viable. What is the maximum number of students per entry/exit?

There must be a plan in place now for the full contingency of students PK-5. Students and parents need to know which entry/exit and this should not change as we add more students. We must have the details sorted before students begin arriving. If a family is dropping off more than one student will all students be allowed to enter/exit as the same location? Will this cause crossing of cohorts?

* + 1. Who will ensure each student has an attestation form submitted daily?  Without exception, every staff member, student and visitor must take the daily COVID-19 health survey (attestation) every time they enter a building. COVID Supervisors are responsible for examining the results.  
         
       Paper forms are available at the door for parents of students who have not completed the online version (students in grades 6-12 will soon be able to complete their own attestation.) A COVID Supervisor or site administrator can complete a health survey for a younger student, but they still must contact a parent to answer the questions.

I am fully aware of the process for submitting and who should do it. What I am asking is who will be checking these and when? If we have multiple entries/exits, then either more than one person will be needed to check these OR students will be allowed entry and later the forms will be checked. There are problems with both of these options but more with waiting to check than with multiple people checking.

* + 1. Who will supervise each door during drop off and pick up? Admin, para educators, or other staff appropriately designated by the principal and COVID supervisor, depending on the unique needs of that particular school.

If paras are supervising entry/exit, who will be supporting their assigned student(s) and/or teacher during this time? Does this mean that certificated staff who do not have assigned students in-person will be expected to be on-site daily? What system will be used to ensure that these assignments are distributed equitably across the district and within buildings?

* + 1. What is the flow of traffic through the building? Varies from building to building based on infrastructure. Typically, students and staff will follow walk down right side of hall in a socially distanced manner.

Has the MOU agreed upon signage for flow of traffic been posted in each building? Have safety committees reviewed this to confirm safety as students move to bathrooms, lunch, and recess?

* + 1. Where are the handwashing stations in addition to the sanitizer available? Restrooms and of course, there are also sinks available in some science rooms, food service and custodial areas depending on the school building.

Students and staff will have access to food service and custodial areas for hand washing? What about buildings where sinks do not function or do not have warm water?

* + 1. What is the protocol for handling a staff member or student exhibiting symptoms of COVID? Inform building COVID supervisor. If not available, then other building administrator or nursing staff.

Will each building have nursing staff at all times when students are on campus?

* + 1. What system is in place if a staff member or student refuses to wear their mask correctly or is choosing not to maintain social distancing?   Posters illustrating proper mask use are up around schools. If a staff member or student refuses to wear a mask, please alert the building COVID Supervisor. Follow-up will occur based upon whether the individual is a student or staff and whether or not the individual has an IEP, 504 or other accommodation for a medical condition.

Is there a system for anonymous reporting so that staff feel safe in reporting a colleague for this behavior?

* + 1. What are the daily cleaning procedures?  If deep cleaning due to exposure is needed, what is the process for requesting and ensuring this is done?

High-touch surfaces like doorknobs, faucet handles, check-in counters, and restrooms get cleaned and disinfected daily. By whom?

If groups of students move from one area to another in shifts, the guidance is to finish cleaning and disinfecting before the new group enters the area, then clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces each night after students leave. Again, who is responsible for this?

To ensure we can maintain a consistent cleaning routine, we ask that school staff not bring personal items such as chairs, couches, throw rugs, and toys to school.

Please note that all of the foregoing complies with the latest guidance received from the CDC and other health authorities.

**Additional steps in our cleaning protocol:**

* + - 1. Carpets are vacuumed daily (by custodial staff?). Disinfecting carpets is not necessary or recommended for respiratory viruses. Viruses do not live long on soft surfaces. This has not been past practice. Classrooms were typically vacuumed every second or third day. Has staffing increased to allow for this increased work load?
      2. Restrooms are cleaned and disinfected daily.
      3. Buttons, levers and surfaces of drinking fountains are clean and disinfected daily.
      4. We open windows often and adjust the HVAC system to allow the maximum amount of outside air to enter the program space. (There is no special cleaning or disinfection for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems.) Many buildings do not have windows that open and most windows open only a few inches. Also, where windows do open, is this appropriate during winter weather?
      5. We advise school staff to clean and disinfect hands-on materials often and after each use, with materials provided by TPS. We also advise staff to limit shared teaching materials to those that can be easily cleaned and sanitized or disinfected. Books and other paper-based materials are not high risk for spreading the virus.

When a school sends a person with COVID-19 symptoms home or learns a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19 has been on the premises, our process is to clean and disinfect all areas where the ill person spent time and the surfaces they touched.We alsoclose off those areas visited by the ill persons, open outside doors and windows, and use ventilating fans to increase air circulation in the area.

If it has been more than 7 days since the person with suspected/confirmed COVID-19 visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection are not necessary. This protocol has been developed with guidance from the Tacoma=Pierce County Department of Health and is subject to change based upon their guidance and any unique features of the particular exposure.

* + 1. How will PPE for staff and students be replenished, specialty items ordered, and monitored for use? All PPE is at school locations for staff to receive from their COVID Supervisor. COVID Supervisors work directly with district COVID supervisor and Environmental Health and Safety Manager to convey needs. Director of Purchasing oversees and monitors quantity. So building staff must monitor their use and request? How long does replenishment take? How long does it take to access specialty items like clear N95s?
    2. Has the workplace, work activities, and work tasks been assessed for level of risk using [Labor and Industries guidance](about:blank) to identify need for enhanced PPE and/or training to reduce risk of transmission?  Is the risk assessment documented and readily available for review by any staff member who requests it?

Before we brought students who require special education services back into schools, the district sought clarification from the state Department of Labor and Industries on the specific level of PPE masks required for the wide range of roles performed by district staff. As a direct result of that consultation, on Sept. 30 L&I in collaboration with OSPI and the state Department of Health, issued new, written school-specific PPE guidance to all school districts in the state.  [https://www.k12.wa.us/sites/default/files/public/communications/Employer-Health-and-Safety-Requirements-for-School-Scenarios.pdf](about:blank) Until that point, L&I had published only generic workplace guidance that didn't mention education, schools or teachers. We're grateful for the new, clear guidance and have been working since then to equip all our staff members with the required, proper PPE. The District has been following L&I’s direction and, of course, will continue to do so.

* + 1. Have all employees and volunteers who are working onsite been trained in the language they understand best about the best way to prevent transmission of COVID-19 on the first day of reporting in person and as necessary depending on need? All staff training is through SafeSchools. Translations are currently available in Spanish and Vietnamese. Dr. Hodge will support the necessity of translation for other staff when the request is made known.
    2. What is the process for reporting concerns and safety protocol violations to the Safety Committee and/or COVID Site Supervisor and how will this be communicated to all employees on site?

The district currently has 4 safety committees that meet when school is in session.

* + - 1. District Safety Committee – Led by Jeff Rogers with the assistance of Leslie Nohr from HR who monitors and reports the districts accident/ injury monthly report on behalf of the PSESD.

1a. An email with minutes and the accident/ injury report is sent to all schools’ office coordinators requesting they print-off and post on the school bulletin board.

2a. The meeting minutes are also posted in the school to district connection which includes

* + - * 1. Subjects discussed.
        2. Round Table Info.
        3. Accident injury Report
        4. District Committee Members
        5. All old Meeting Minutes are put in a binder and stored in the custodial archive at M&O.
      1. District SafeRoutes to School Committee – Led by Mike Rupert with the assistance of Carrie Wilhelme from the City of Tacoma. To include TPD, TFD, Tacoma City Maintenance, TPS Maintenance, TPS Planning & Construction, TPS legal amongst other TPS leadership.
         1. Subjects discussed.
         2. Round Table Info.
         3. New Schools and Street Modifications Report
         4. District Committee Members
         5. All old Meeting Minutes are put in a binder and stored in the custodial archive at M&O.
      2. EOC – Emergency Operations Committee per District Pandemic Plan meets weekly.

1a. Lead by TPS Superintendent Carla Santorno, District Covid Supervisor Thu Ament and District Nurse Administrator Shallae Hobbs.

2b. Communication is done through a Covid Supervisor weekly meeting

3c. Covid Supervisors are the school principal or a site appointed person whom brief the staff.

* + - 1. Building Safety Committee (governed by site council) are directed by Forrest Griek.

1a. Last week the District Covid Supervisor requested all site meeting minutes be placed in our Teams Covid folder due to limited personnel on-site. This request may not be completed until after the Christmas Break.

* + 1. Is the building report on indoor air quality available upon staff request and does it comply with American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), Department of Labor and Industries, and Health Department requirements?

Each School site is inspected by the TPCHD and a representative from the TPS school district every other year due to the size of our district. The indoor air quality is tested by DOH personnel and if any items of concern are found a request is made to maintenance by the TPS Environmental & Health department. All DOH reports of inspected sites are available. If issues cannot be repaired or adjusted by TPS Maintenance an outside district HVAC vendor is brought in for identifying the issue/ issues.

1. How will building schedules be structured to allow for transitions and bathroom breaks for both staff and students?
   * 1. If teacher planning time is scheduled at the beginning and end of the day, who will supervise students if they arrive early or are picked up late?  Regular loss of planning time cannot be a solution. Building administrators and/or other appropriate staff
     2. If teacher planning time is scheduled when students are on campus, who will supervise students during this time? Building administrators and/or other appropriate hourly/Para Educator staff
     3. Who will supervise students during student lunch?  Teacher lunch?  Recess? Building administrators and/or other appropriate hourly/Para Educator staff
     4. How will schedules be created to ensure that teachers are not expected to go 3+ hours without a break for personal needs? Building administrators will be mindful of needs. Based on current structure, this should not be an issue.
     5. If a teacher needs to use the restroom, who will supervise students?   Teacher may contact office to request support and building administrator will seek appropriate coverage
     6. Where will teachers go for lunch?
     7. Where will students eat breakfast and lunch?

All of the responses here concern me because the schedule set up in Sept does not provide for transitions. Planning time will be impacted by student drop off and pick up without adjustments. Staff will be in the position of not having clear access to regular breaks to care for personal needs. How will students be monitored if needing the restroom? The kinders have not attended school and are rarely accustomed to having to wait any length of time to use the restroom. However, making their way to the bathroom on their own and maintaining social distancing, handwashing, and being timely without touching every surface on the way is not reasonable. It also seems clear that meals have not yet been sorted out. Will students have access to school lunch? Will they need to bring their own daily? Puyallup just announced that families can pick up food weekly and send lunch with the student on days when in-person. Is that our plan? Do we have a plan?

1. How will cohorts be determined?
   * 1. A strict cohort A = last names A-M and cohort B = last names N-Z will not work given that few classes will have even (or nearly even) alpha splits
     2. Cohorting by alpha in each class – first half by alpha = Cohort A and second half by alpha = Cohort B will mean families may have students in different cohorts
     3. How will teacher and other staff input be used at the building and classroom level to ensure appropriate cohorts as we add grade levels?

There is not a one-size-fits all approach to Cohort placement. Equitable supports and learning opportunities for students are paramount within our Whole Child approach. There are many layers that go into identifying Cohort placement, including but not limited to: family schedule needs across schools, diversity of students within a Cohort on multiple levels, and transportation needs of students.

Earlier this fall, our district built a report in PowerBI that allows for student rosters by alpha with a “TOL” filter option. This report includes student demographics and needs so initial analysis of class lists can be considered at the building level.

As schools begin the analysis in early January, they’ll be encouraged to connect directly with families about their needs for Cohort schedule and teachers in regard to student considerations beyond the initial PowerBI report data. Access to translation services [will be provided](about:blank) to support these important conversations with families.

Ultimately, the building principal will be supported with making the final call on Cohort placement during Hybrid Learning just as the principal is responsible for traditional student placement across classrooms.

Will all PK-5 grade levels be determining cohorts immediately? If not, as we add students and grade levels, this could impact student cohorts.

1. How will special services be provided - Title, LAP, LRC, and ELL?  Will these continue remotely?  Will these special services be provided on remote days only?  Will special services like Title, LAP, ELL, LRC, etc. be pulling in-person students for services which crosses cohorts?

In partnership with buildings, the District is developing structures aligned with Section III of the MOU to support students through our programs that maximize potential, including Title/LAP, Student Services, Highly Capable, and English Learner. Services may be provided Remotely and/or face-to-face based on student needs and expectations articulated in grounding documents such as IEPs, 504s, and State or Federal regulations.

As guidance aligned with Section III of the MOU is further fleshed out, it will be communicated on the Hybrid section of the [Virtual Teaching & Learning website](about:blank). Additionally, the information will be emailed directly to educators impacted.

These decisions, along with clear guidance in making these decisions, must be made now so that staff and families can adjust to in-person if needed. If in-person services are provided by staff who work with students across classes and grade levels, how will appropriate cohorts be maintained? The “fleshing out” needs to happen now so that families can prepare.

1. How will specialist schedules work for students doing in-person classes?  Will students have weekly live PE and music lessons?  Will library be an option with in-person instruction?

## Music & Physical Education Learning during Hybrid Learning

Please see the guidance on the Virtual T&L website > Hybrid > [K-5 Music & PE](about:blank). As noted under the “Who to Contact” section at the bottom of the page, this guidance aligns with Section III H of the [TEA-TPS 2020-21 MOU](about:blank). For access beyond TPS to this internal content, please see the attached PDF version of the webpage.

## Teacher Librarians

During Hybrid Learning, students will continue learning Remotely through asynchronous, self-paced learning opportunities assigned by their teacher on identified days. Students will participate in face-to-face learning on other days. This model is outlined in Section III F of the [TEA-TPS 2020-21 MOU](about:blank). In early January, Teacher Librarians will engage in additional training so they can support students with navigating and engaging with learning on Remote days during Hybrid Learning in alignment with Section III G of the [TEA-TPS 2020-21 MOU](about:blank).

This answer does not address the question asked. I understand that these staff will remain remote. I asked about the schedule. Currently, schedules are set to work with full groups synchronously and allows for significant movement and signing. Once in-person instruction begins, the schedule will need to be adjusted. Will all synchronous PE and Music instruction happen in cohorts with those students on remote days? This will mean doubling the schedule of classes for grade levels that are in hybrid cohorts. Once we have K-2 students attending 4 days/week, how will synchronous PE and Music lessons be provided during the school day since movement, singing, and wind instruments are prohibited?

1. How will LRC teachers with some students in-person and some remote be handled? This will vary depending on the individual needs of the students, building, and educator.

Again, as in number 4, these decisions need to be made immediately so families can prepare. LRC teachers may need to amend IEPs. Schedules and cohort integrity must be considered.

1. Will self-contained SpEd classes shift from groups of 5 to 15?  When? Yes, in accordance with the five-day notice to TEA staff before we add grade levels The Student Services team is meeting the first week of January to refine the plan.
2. When will clear N95 masks or clear surgical masks to use with face shields be available for staff use?

That depends on the role of the staff member and level of risk of transmitting COVID-19, as outlined in the [Employer Health & Safety Requirements for School Scenarios dated September 30, 2020, from OSPI, DOH, and L&I.](about:blank) Generally, the guidelines are:

* Low-risk environments: The overall health risk for the typical K–12, in-person instructional setting is considered low risk, requiring a cloth face covering for staff. (Gaiters are not acceptable, according to guidance from the county and state health departments.) Other scenarios in the school setting could raise or lower the risk level.
* Medium-risk environments: You may be working in a medium-risk environment if you work inside a structure/office where at least six feet of distance is mostly maintained, but with job tasks that require several minutes of sustained interaction within six feet several times a day without sneeze guards or other mitigation measures. L&I’s longstanding guidance allows for several different protection options in medium risk environments, including a face shield plus a cloth face mask, a surgical-style mask, a hobby dust mask, a KN95 mask or a KN90 mask.
* High-risk environments: You may be working in a high-risk environment if you are working in a self-contained classroom or health room. N95 respirators (or equivalent) are required only in high-risk or very high-risk situations. If an employer cannot reasonably obtain an N95 or equivalent, a staff member may use a face shield plus an FDA-approved surgical mask, procedural mask, or KN95 mask until an N95 respirator can be obtained.
* N95 respirators are required for those performing aerosolized (suctioning and nebulizer) procedures. Only an N95 can be used these procedures; there is no equivalent.

This reply does not address the question asked which was about CLEAR mask options.

1. Will shifts in enrollment between TOL and Remote/hybrid be allowed?  How with this be handled?  Will this impact staffing in each program?  If shifts in enrollment will not be allowed, how will attendance and instruction be handled for students whose families choose not to send them in-person? While families have been encouraged to maintain student status with TOL through the trimester, or semester, TPS does offer open and choice enrollment when there is space in the potential receiving school of choice. Staffing changes will occur in alignment with CBA and MOU.
2. Are there enough face shield for those who want the extra protection with a cloth mask?  PPE is being distributed to staff on an individual basis, after an analysis of that individual’s job duties and any other relevant factors. If the evaluation determines that a face shield is appropriate, one will be provided to that staff member. The district’s purchasing department is procuring sufficient PPE for staff and student needs. If, after assessment of the staff member’s job duties, a face shield is not warranted but the staff member would like to wear one, the staff member may do so by bringing in their own personal shield.
3. Will ESA and other certificated non-classroom personnel be required on campus?  How will they provide services to students? When students are on campus, staff supporting them should be on campus unless an alternative is established through the building principal.
4. If no substitute is available, how will coverage be handled? In accordance with Section 50 of the CBA

While section 50 delineates coverage, it also sets up for elementary classes to be split between teachers or for a specialist or special services staff member to cover completely. Under the various COVID models, this will be problematic. A group cannot be split between classes given social distancing and cross cohorts. There are no specialists on campus. Staff providing special services will be serving both in-person and remote students so having them cover would require students on site and virtual losing access. There may be other staff who could cover but only if they are scheduled to be on site and can adjust their program of in-person and remote responsibilities to be available for coverage. Most elementary schools only have a single admin who serves as the Building COVID Supervisor and may not has the capacity to cover give the possibility of being needed to supervise the isolation room.

Shannon, the safety of our staff during this pandemic is very important to us.  Please know that the District’s leave process and reasonable accommodation protocols will continue regardless of what happens with the leave provided by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act.  The District is committed to complying with the Governor’s Proclamations 20-46, 20-46.1 and 20-46.2 which sets forth additional protections for high-risk employees.  The District has a robust accommodation process for any employee who is unable to work because of high-risk medical conditions.  Please see our COVID-19 Pay Status and Emergency Leave Options document on the Hub: [https://hub.tacoma.k12.wa.us/hr/Documents/COVID-19%20Pay%20Status%20and%20Emergency%20Leave%20Options.pdf](about:blank)

Furthermore, we recognize our mutual interest in communicating clearly and in a timely manner. Below is relevant information related to communication:

## Internal Communication in Support of the Whole Educator

Information pertaining to Hybrid Learning will be added to the Virtual Teaching & Learning website under the recently added “Hybrid” title across the top navigation. As additional guidance is added, it will be amplified beyond a News post through existing internal communication structures to the primary stakeholder group such as department e-Newsletters, District to School Connection, and/or The Innovator e-Newsletter.

Information that is important for all – or almost all – staff to know will be shared through The Innovator News posts and/or The Innovator email.

## External Communication

The [Return to School Guide](about:blank) on the Digital Campus website will be updated in early January, 2021 to include information for families. We understand bell schedules, transportation, Cohort considerations, health & safety, and other topics are at the forefront of the minds for our families. As information is updated, in the [Return to School Guide](about:blank), it will be amplified via the continued weekly email communication to families from our district and social media posts.

From TEA-TPS MOU Hybrid Section (in black) with my questions/concerns highlighted yellow:

1. Health screening forms must be provided in the home language of students’ families/ guardians – Do we have this in each of the languages for our students?
2. No employee in a high-risk category as that term is defined by the Governor’s proclamation shall be required or expected to assist with health screenings. How will Building COVID Supervisors be informed of this as they create entry plans? We will have staff who fall into high risk categories who are on-site due to the nature of their job.
3. Building COVID-19 Supervisors shall design entry and exit procedures that permit distributed flow of students. What guidance is being given about ensuring a distributed flow? How many students per entrance? What time is the earliest drop off? Have legally required Safety Committees been involved in the design creation? The specific entrance, earliest time of arrival, requirements for entry, and pick-up procedures must be shared ASAP with staff and with families.

Floors of offices and hallways will be clearly marked with signage and physical markings. Is this signage up or is it prepared to be posted?

Master schedules and bell schedules will minimize the number of students in learning spaces, hallways, and common areas. If in-person instruction impacts the current master schedule in any way, an SCDM meeting will be necessary and a Safety Committee meeting may also be needed.

District will provide signage around desk placement and flow of traffic in instructional spaces to ensure that appropriate distancing is observed, and instruction is not impeded. Is this signage up or is it prepared to be posted?

1. Once the student or staff member with COVID-19 symptoms is safely isolated by the COVID-19 Supervisor, the classrooms and other facilities used by that person shall be evacuated for immediate disinfection according to OSPI and state and county health department guidelines. Where will evacuated students go? How long will cleaning take? If students are moved to another instructional space, what materials and instructional tools can be taken with them?
2. Employees whose children are enrolled in Tacoma Public Schools would have priority access to apply for childcare through the partner organization if there is onsite childcare available. How will this be communicated? What has the District done to facilitate this?
3. To ensure effective coordination of instruction and instructional opportunities, any changes or adjustments to building level master schedules will be reviewed for feedback by SCDM. It seems clear that specialist and support services schedules will have to change. This is likely to impact the master schedule so an SCDM meeting will be necessary prior to communicating these changes to families.
4. The trained staff member will have access to the students’ classes within the LMS to align academic supports with assigned learning from the face-to-face teacher. Do those who will be supporting remote students have this access and is a system in place to support the classroom teacher in sharing their lesson plans and assignments with these supporting staff?

Additional Questions/Concerns:

If the concern is the Building COVID Supervisor, to whom do staff report their concerns? Is there a system for safely reporting issues to ensure confidentiality and mitigate against retaliation?

How will student restroom breaks be handled? Can students be given a hall pass to use the restroom? Who will supervise to ensure the student follows safety procedures?