

Preparing for or Expanding In-Person Instruction & Services

Introduction

On June 11, 2020, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) published the [Reopening Washington Schools 2020: District Planning Guide](#). As school districts across the state began the 2020–21 school year, most started in remote learning based on the health and safety guidance of their local health jurisdiction (LHJ). Consistent with this guidance, OSPI is taking the actions and next steps described on pages 20–21 in the Planning Guide.

This update on instructional hours and days is timed to support the transition from remote to serving more students through fully in-person or through hybrid delivery.

While we are not able to predict the path/trajectory of how the COVID-19 pandemic will impact the ways we are able to serve students, we can put structures in place to revisit plans and flexibly shift from remote to hybrid or fully in-person instruction in a manner that results in accelerated student learning. Efforts to engage students and families are critically important, irrespective of remote, hybrid, or fully in-person instruction.

The following four themes guide OSPI's work on instructional hours and days. Districts should consider and implement consistent with all four of these themes when shifting into schedules for hybrid, fully in-person, or continuing with remote schedules:

1. Scheduling and empowering educators for meaningful student and family engagement;
2. Balancing synchronous and asynchronous learning that maximizes the decision-making of the professional educator to address the varying needs of students;
3. Continuing focus on teacher collaboration and professional learning that supports ongoing, job-embedded anti-racist practices; and
4. Flexibility in achieving 1,027 average instructional hours, honoring adjustments needed for student learning and following safety requirements in remote, hybrid, and fully in-person schedules.

1. Scheduling and Empowering Educators for Meaningful Student and Family Engagement

As school districts prepare to serve larger numbers of students in person, they should provide or maintain explicit opportunities for meaningful family and student engagement. Planning should follow health requirements. The Department of Health's [K–12 Schools Fall 2020–21](#)



Guidance provides details about health and safety for establishing cohorts of students. These cohorts should remain consistent from day to day and should not be combined or mixed. Staying in small groups limits the amount of contact between individuals. It also allows one group of practitioners to be focused on one group of students; supporting relationships, community building, and family engagement.

Some districts are providing such opportunities during and outside of the traditional school day in order to respond to the needs of students and families, many of whom are completing work on evenings and weekends. How time is used should be developmentally appropriate and should support student learning based on the modality of instructional delivery.

2. Balancing Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning to Maximize Academic and Instructional Decision-Making of the Professional Educator to Meet Student Needs

Student school days should involve synchronous and asynchronous learning and provide opportunities for independent study. As districts are preparing to introduce larger groups of students to in-person instruction, planners should review and adjust schedules to accommodate the need to balance how instruction is being delivered.

To be developmentally appropriate, student schedules should not look the same at every grade level. There is an important balance between continuity and consistency within a system and the need for supporting the educators' ability to make instructional decisions within the district's approved continuous learning plan based on knowledge of students, content, and research-based best practice.

Classroom educators are best positioned to determine how to modify lessons and instructional activities for students consistent with school and district improvement plans. Research-based practices that attend to the social and academic needs of students should be used in both synchronous and asynchronous instruction to foster engagement. Strategies that support relationship building, peer-to-peer interactions, and collaboration serve as foundations to supporting academic learning in remote, hybrid, and fully in-person learning. Classroom educators may determine the need for additional synchronous or asynchronous instruction based on student need.

3. Continuing Focus on Teacher Collaboration and Professional Learning that Supports Ongoing, Job-Embedded Anti-Racist Practices

Remote, hybrid, and fully in-person learning environments require intentional educator collaboration to gain information about students' learning and discover what is working in

other remote classrooms. As OSPI indicated in the [Staffing Enrichment Workgroup Recommendations report](#) to the Legislature in 2019:

“School schedules should allow for embedded time for educators with their peers that is collaborative and job-embedded, of sustained duration, and with opportunities for feedback and reflection as recommended (Darling-Hammond, Hyler, et al., 2017). Darling-Hammond also asserts that collaboration can help buffer against the emotional exhaustion that can lead to teacher burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011) which is even more critical in this demanding shift to virtual or hybrid learning. Time for teacher professional collaboration is a characteristic of high-performing education systems (Darling-Hammond, Burns, et al., 2017).”

OSPI's *Reopening Washington Schools 2020: District Planning Guide* states:

“Building anti-racist school cultures requires educators to collaborate and shift the way they plan, instruct, and assess student learning; build the climate to accelerate student progress rather than remediate; utilize authentic, productive diagnostic assessments to guide and engage learners; and employ Universal Design for Learning (UDL), which embeds Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and Culturally Responsive (CRE) practices to support students both virtually and in person.”

It is important to attend to the mental health and social-emotional well-being of students and staff as they adjust to the demands of synchronous and asynchronous learning.

4. Flexibility in Achieving 1,027 Average Instructional Hours, Honoring Adjustments Needed for Student Learning and Following Safety Requirements in Remote, Hybrid, and Fully In-Person Schedules

Student engagement will look different in remote, hybrid, and fully in-person schedules. Districts should adapt schedules to improve student learning, taking a whole child approach focusing on both academics and social-emotional learning. Time should be dedicated for educators to work with families and students for engagement and collaboration to support student learning.

The Department of Health's [K-12 Schools Fall 2020-21 Guidance](#) provides details about health and safety for establishing cohorts of students. As more students are scheduled to be in buildings, consider block schedules to minimize the mixing of cohorts. Multiple cohorts of students may use the same facility as long as they are in limited contact with and physically distanced from other cohorts.

Consistent with [State Board of Education rules](#), districts will be in compliance with instructional hours requirements when implementing all of the following strategies:

- ✓ Direct instruction, including large and small group delivery
- ✓ Independent student work and formative and summative assessment of student learning
- ✓ Planning for instruction, collaboration, and professional learning
- ✓ Two-way communication with families and students, along with other engagement strategies

Activities such as transition times and recess are included in the instructional hours, the same as they were before the pandemic. Flexible schedules may be organized differently and may differ between levels.

In summary, in collaboration with building principals and teachers, districts should develop schedules for hybrid and fully in-person instruction that:

- Provide the most personalized and engaging instruction possible;
- Design flexible instructional time in ways that challenge, support, and engage students (including longer periods of fewer subjects);
- Offer tailored, integrated support to each student to address social-emotional needs, physical health, and family well-being;
- Attend to the mental health and social-emotional well-being of students and staff as they adjust to the demands of synchronous and asynchronous learning; and
- Make decisions about teachers that support pedagogical quality and racial equity.

As Superintendent Chris Reykdal stated in the June reopening guidance, OSPI is confident that basic education funds are stable. OSPI supports school districts to identify hybrid schedules which include best practices. School schedules should promote student learning and reflect the knowledge of students possessed by professional educators and school leaders.