

**Dear NTEA Members,**

We look forward to the day when every one of our students can safely walk through the doors of our school buildings excited to see their friends, teachers, coaches, and all the school employees who create safe, academic and nurturing space for our students.

As you know, our students are our number one priority. Their safety, education, and emotional well-being are the driving forces that keep us in this profession. Additionally, many of us are parents of school-age children. We know the challenge of homeschooling. And, like many of you, some of us care for elder family members or family members with compromised autoimmune systems. We worry that the next trip to the grocery store might be the one that introduces a potentially deadly virus into our household.

North Thurston School District administrators have announced the plan to begin hybrid learning for preschool and kindergarten students the week of Jan. 25 without clear plans in place for the educators who are responsible for their safety and wellbeing. This unilateral decision violates our interpretation of our Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The plans to safely implement more in-person learning is complex and encompassing. It is our belief that more preparation is needed to create a plan that will serve all our community health and educational responsibilities.

Just a few of our concerns include:

- Inadequate transportation resources to facilitate pickup and drop-off of students.
- Inadequate plan for students to eat lunch safely in district facilities.
- Inadequate staffing to assist students who fail to complete health attestations before arriving on campus.
- Individual building plans have not been finalized, approved, or communicated to staff
- There is no clearly established instructional model for hybrid learning.

As difficult as things are, we must remember that we are living through a critically dangerous pandemic. Until we are confident that we can return to school with Center for Disease Control (CDC) recommended and L&I required safety precautions in place, we will continue to bear the burden and hold these challenges because the health of our students, your families and our own families is the only way we will get through this unprecedented time together. We continue to negotiate with the district on the above issues to ensure that we can return to in person learning safely. Until we negotiate the safety precautions that must be in place, we want the community to know that we are not in agreement with the Jan. 25 opening for our youngest students.

As we continue to survey our membership to hear your concerns and level of comfort on the issues surrounding reopening, we find a diversity of perspectives and are working to find balanced and flexible approaches that take all stakeholder needs into account.

Here is an updated copy of our most recently agreed upon MOU. Please read and compare carefully with any reopening plans and processes that are presented to you, and reach out to building reps, NTEA leadership, and administrators with your concerns:

<https://www.nthurston.k12.wa.us/cms/lib/WA01001371/Centricity/Domain/95/MOUCovid-19Final1.7.2021.pdf>

We are in this together! For our students, for each other!

NTEA Executive Board and Bargaining Team