Aug. 28, 2020

Dear Pierce County School Partners:

We continue to appreciate your partnership and dedication to our community, families, and students. Thank you for meeting with us virtually yesterday and again today with a smaller group of representatives.

As the school year rapidly approaches, we appreciate your input on how to clarify a few items in the Department of Health decision tree. The consensus at our meetings was:

- Pre-kindergarten is included in the same category as child care, DCYF licensed programs, ECEAP, and preschool. The DOH guidance for Child Care, Youth Development, and Summer Day Camps During the Covid-19 Outbreak should be followed. These programs are not subject to the small group size of 5 under high COVID-19 activity levels and are not included in the Decision Tree for Provision of In Person Learning among K-12 Students at Public and Private Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

- “Younger learners” encompasses kindergarten through fifth grade. Under high COVID-19 activity levels (>75 cases/100K/14 days), the decision tree provides the option for limited in-person learning in small groups, or cohorts, of students for the highest need students, such as students with disabilities, students living homeless, those farthest from educational justice, and younger learners. Small groups means groups of five or fewer students. We recognize that some elementary schools include grade levels above fifth grade which might require additional discussion with the Health Department.

A third topic was not resolved:

- When we cross the threshold to moderate COVID-19 activity levels (<75 cases/100K/14 days), what should be our community approach to transitioning to safe in-person learning?

- We discussed the waiting period between data reports and the confidence that rates will stay low and stable. We discussed the planning timeframes for schools, and desire for flexibility vs. coordination.

- We agreed to meet next week to continue the conversation and resolve these issues.

You may have seen our case counts dropped below 75 cases/100K/14 days today. This is because of all your hard work and we are extremely grateful for the messaging that has been sent to our community members and the actions being taken. We published a blog post you can share that explains how this and other metrics are part of what we will consider to reopen schools.

We are cautiously optimistic our numbers will improve. The next couple of weeks will be crucial in reopening Pierce County schools and we hope you will join us in solidarity on this journey.

Sincerely,

Anthony L-T Chen, MD, MPH
Director of Health