

## **1. How is the Sitka School District actively planning for the start of the 2020-21 school year?**

The Smart Start Task Force group made up of educators, administrators, community advisors and district leadership has been meeting regularly since June 26, 2020 to re-open Sitka schools. This group has been focused on safety, curriculum, instruction, special education, transportation, nutrition services and operations.

## **2. How is school opening in Alaska?**

The Sitka School District (SSD) has been working with Alaska's Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) and the Department of Health and Social Services throughout the COVID-19 pandemic response. With their assistance, school districts across the state have been focused on school re-opening under the '[Alaska Smart Start 2020: Restart and Reentry Framework and Guidance](#)'. The framework has guided SSD's efforts for school reopening.

## **3. Why can't we start school with all students in school if there are not a lot of cases in Sitka?**

We can't start the school year with full classrooms and maintain the health guidelines that the CDC, DHSS and DEED have provided. The district is developing plans to have all student in each building as much as possible with mitigation plans in place for low, medium, and high conditions.

## **4. Why are other states opening at full capacity?**

The Smart Start Team and Continuity of Learning Team have researched many other states to study how they are opening. Limited capacity, hygiene, static groups, CDC guidelines, state guidelines, state frameworks, etc. are guiding all reopen/restart plans.

## **5. Will SSD require students to wear masks?**

The district is requiring all staff and students K-12 to wear masks or cloth face coverings in all school buildings at both the Green/Low and Yellow/Medium Risk Levels. Students riding the bus will be required to wear a mask or cloth face covering.

## **6. What about after school and high school activities?**

As we progress, if we are stabilized in low risk level over time, we will consider slowly expanding school-based learning opportunities. This could mean having visitors and volunteers in buildings, field trips, small after school activities, etc. At high school, ASAA will be providing guidance on ASAA sanctioned activities. District related staff and student travel is restricted at yellow and red risk levels and will require approval in green risk level. SSD 1. will communicate the expectations related to activities as we get closer to the opening of fall seasons. Currently some programs are engaging in summer activities per the ASAA guidelines and districted approved mitigation plans.

## **7. Can all staff and students be tested before school starts?**

The school district is not planning to require mass testing for students. The CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics is not recommending this at this time. However, schools will be using a number of other mitigation factors including physical distancing, face coverings, hygiene, disinfection and symptom free requirements. The district is working with SEARHC to establish a staff testing program. All district staff will be tested on August 15<sup>th</sup> prior to teachers returning to school on Monday August 17<sup>th</sup>. All district staff will be tested every two weeks from that point forward during the school year.

**8. Will travel quarantine be required for families and staff who have been traveling?**

Yes, the State of Alaska has issued travel requirements that all residents and visitors must follow.

**9. What should I do if my student does not have access to a computer and/or internet?**

With the partnership of Sitka Tribe of Alaska and the STEPS Grant, the district will be providing tablets for all K-8 students and laptops for all high school students. Internet access cards will also be available for families that need internet access.

**10. What about our students with special needs? Those who don't type, who are nonverbal, who need questions rephrased, etc.?**

Special Education teachers will be working with students and families to provide services in accordance with student individual education programs (IEPs).