

Dear Overlake Community,

Happy Friday. I hope you and your children are enjoying a short reprieve from school today and are finding time to be off screen. I wanted to share with you where we are in our thinking in regard to moving to hybrid instruction.

As we have since the start of the pandemic, we continue to follow the Washington State's school reopening recommendations as laid out by the Department of Health. Their guidance, which you can reference [here](#), provides us with direction for when we can pivot from online instruction, to hybrid instruction, to fully reopening school. Much of the decision matrix in their guidance uses three specific areas of COVID metrics; cases per 100,000 people, the R factor, measuring the virus' reproduction rate, and the percentage of positive COVID tests.

At the start of this month, these metrics were all moving in a direction that indicated to us to plan for hybrid instruction. The data provided by the King County Health Department on October 7th reported 51 cases per 100,000, a R factor of 0.6, and percentage of positive tests at 3%. This placed King County into the moderate phase of the school recommendations.

Unfortunately as recent news reports have mentioned, the data has taken a turn for the worse. Cases are now hovering above 90 per 100,000, the R factor is at 1.6, and positive tests at 3.2%. You can review current data [here](#). In a press conference given by the King County Department of Public Health last week, the reason for the recent increase is due to many more events occurring indoors in our cooler and wetter weather, and a population demonstrating general fatigue with COVID personal safety recommendations.

In looking at the calendar we have five weeks until we are on Thanksgiving Break. Our plan was to move to a hybrid model once we were in the lower end of the moderate phase as defined by Washington State. These metrics would need to be maintained for two weeks before bringing students to campus. All of this means that we would need to have a **significant** change in the next two weeks to bring students to campus before Thanksgiving.

Given this information and in consultation with our Health Director, our epidemiologist, our health and safety committee, and the administrative team, I have made the decision to remain online until at least our return in January from December break.

I realize such a decision will be met with a variety of opinions and feelings. Some of you will be relieved while others will want the school to return as they see the significant social and emotional challenges that online instruction has created.

As some of you have learned, we are planning to bring students to campus for retreat-like activities in early and mid-November. We want to create an opportunity for students to engage and build connection with one another in a low-risk way. We are working on the details of these retreats and will provide additional information soon.

Certainly the insights learned from our Athletic Department, which has offered limited practices on campus for several weeks, has helped us in creating these mini-retreats with a variety of protocols.

Finally, thank you for participating in our recent survey. By providing us with your insights we are able to continue to modify and enhance our program so we can ensure we are providing the best education available to your students, no matter what mode of learning we find ourselves in.

If you have questions, or would like to follow up with me, please don't hesitate to reach out. In the meantime, please take care and stay safe, and know that Overlake is here for you. We will get through these challenging times together.

Thank you for being Owls with us.

Warmly,  
Matt