

Port Townsend School District will go to online learning next week

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The Port Townsend School District will pause in-person learning in light of rising local COVID-19 infections starting Monday, Nov. 30.

In a message sent to families at about 11:30 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, district officials said, “After careful consideration and weighing the risks and benefits of keeping schools open for blended in person learning, we are announcing that we will pause our in-person blended learning and we will begin district wide distance learning after Thanksgiving Break.”

Despite numerous safety measures and new protocols instated in reaction to the ongoing pandemic, district officials said the benefits of students being physically present in classrooms was not worth the risk at this time.

“With the significantly increased rate of community infection, our blended in-person learning model is vulnerable to frequent disruption due to out-of-school exposure of students and staff, and we are making the decision to transition now in a planned and organized way,” the announcement said.

Those who may doubt the district’s ability to reach students effectively via virtual means were reassured.

“Our staff have a clear plan to provide high quality distance learning for students, including the Playlists on the eLearning webpage, Google Classrooms and SeeSaw, Zoom, and pre-recorded lessons,” officials said. “Attendance and grading procedures will remain the same. If you are unsure of your student’s distance learning schedule look for communications from your teacher or school and find Zoom links in the class playlists.”

“As a community we can all support one another through careful and thoughtful actions and behaviors.”

Teachers can also be contacted directly with questions.

Several important services will continue unaffected despite the change, including five-day-a-week food service delivery and pick up at Salish Coast Elementary, YMCA childcare services, technology support for all school-issued devices, home internet support for low income families, and limited in-person services for some students receiving special education or intervention services.

Officials said Saturday students who receive special education and other intervention services will be contacted individually with a schedule for in-person services.

No expected return date for in-person learning was specified.