Update on our return to buildings

We are disappointed to hear that our educators’ union, the Bellevue Education Association, is breaking our agreement to shift and support our second-grade students to in-person learning on Thursday.

To our eager second graders and families: we will see you in classrooms tomorrow. We will not pause our long-negotiated plan to return students to classrooms. If educators choose to not show up and teach and fail to meet their professional responsibilities, we will have substitute teachers, administrators and other qualified professionals ready and able to help ease students back in the routine of attending school in person with their classmates.

To all our students and families: We understand that as part of BEA’s action, none of our educators will be providing instruction for our nearly 20,000 students on Thursday and Friday. That includes our remote learning, all grades. This news is incredibly frustrating, as it only serves to punish our students by taking away their daily routines during these already challenging times.

To our educators: your safety has been at the forefront of every conversation we have had in the last ten months with BEA leadership. We have an agreement, reached in November, to return to buildings. Our buildings are ready. We have a plan in place that has proven to be effective. Since September, we have served almost 800 students in person, with zero in-building COVID-19 transmission. Our protocols are working. Other school districts are bringing their youngest learners – the ones least likely to contract COVID or transmit it – with success. We can too.

We know that vaccines are here, and we are excited about the news that educators might get them earlier than we first expected. But we should not delay our plan to return K-2 to school between Thursday, Jan. 21 and Feb. 1. We have the safety protocols in place, and we need to roll out in-person school to these students now. They need us to be in buildings, to welcome them back and help them transition to in-person learning. Many of these students have never set foot in one of our classrooms, most have never met their teacher in person.

We sincerely hope BEA and its members, our educators, will reconsider breaking the agreement with our district, honoring their professional and legal obligations. Our students need us -- the adults in our system -- to work together on their behalf to do what is right. And that is to be present and ready to educate on Thursday.

For more information, please visit our COVID-19 page and see our letter sent to staff and families on Tuesday.