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November 19, 2020

Dear Chimacum Students and Families:

We are continuing to see a significant rise in COVID-19 cases in Jefferson County (now an infection rate above 100 per 100,000 population). I have decided to pause our hybrid, in-person learning model and transition to our remote-only learning model for almost all of our students.

This transition process will be determined by our health department's infection rate data that I will review along with other Jefferson County school leaders, as of late Friday, November 20th. If the infection rate is spiking dramatically; we'll move to remote-only learning beginning Monday, November 23rd. If the infection rate increase is gradual; we'll move to remote only learning after the Thanksgiving break, November 30th.

We will not be closing schools as abruptly as we did in the spring. We will still offer limited in-person support for some students receiving special education or intervention services.

With our transition to distance learning our families can expect the continuation of:

- Meal delivery and pick up
- Current grading practices
- Daily attendance tasks
- Google Classrooms
- Technology support for school issued devices
- Home internet support for low income families

The duration of this remote-only learning model will be dependent on our community infection rate. I will be monitoring this health data and will communicate with you on a regular basis. Our goal is to return to in-person learning once the infection rate stabilizes well below the current level (now at 100 per 100,000!). The holiday season is upon us and our behavior during these next few weeks will determine the trajectory of the infection rate. I will keep you informed as we move forward.

I have considered the serious impact this will have on our students and their families. With a significantly increased rate of community infection, our hybrid in-person learning model is vulnerable to frequent disruption due to out-of-school exposure of students and staff. This high community infection rate impacts both our learning model and the safety of students and staff. On balance, I understand that moving to a remote-learning model is necessary. It remains, however, a difficult decision.

I will continue to monitor the situation as we navigate the holiday season. When it is clear that the current, escalating COVID infection rate has begun to subside and stabilize; we'll begin preparations to return us to an in-person learning model. In fact, we'd like to return to a more robust in-person model, if

at all possible, in our second semester. We'll have time to plan for that.

I am weary of this pandemic; as I'm sure each of you are. In fact, it appears that pandemic fatigue is part of our problem. It seems that we've let our guard down locally. While we once enjoyed a remarkably low infection rate relative to our neighbors; it looks like we're moving quickly to a very unsafe level of infection as reflected in state trends. We can take actions to control this community spread; but it requires continual vigilance and making good decisions.

On a hopeful note, it appears that we will soon have a vaccine that is safe and effective. However, the distribution and uptake of that vaccine will pose challenges. It's probably optimistic to expect any relief much before April, 2021. Still, there is light at the end of the tunnel!

I wanted to end with a note of hope! Thank you for your continued flexibility as we adjust to this changing situation.

Sincerely,

Dr. David Engle
Acting Superintendent