WYOMING
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Superintendent Balow Releases Smart Start Guidance for Fall School Reopenings

July 1, 2020 (https://edu.wyoming.gov/blog/2020/07/01/superintendent-balow-releases-smart-start-guidance-for-fall-school-reopenings/) Uncategorized (https://edu.wyoming.gov/blog/category/uncategorized/) tgabrukiewicz (https://edu.wyoming.gov/blog/author/tgabrukiewicz/)

CHEYENNE – State Superintendent of Public Instruction Jillian Balow released the Smart Start guidance document Wednesday at a joint press conference with Wyoming Governor Mark Gordon. The guidance provides requirements, recommendations, and considerations based on three tiers of possible reopening and operating scenarios schools may face this fall.

"Our efforts to adapt to the COVID-19 environment have been immense over the last three months," Superintendent Balow said. "Today, as we look to open schools in the fall, I am confident that we will be successful and also transform our school system for the better."

Each school district will be required to submit their Smart Start plan to the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) by August 3, 2020. These plans must include how they will meet the requirements for all three tiers of operation in four focus areas: communications, safety and wellness, school operations, and instruction and technology. This preparation will allow districts to continue safely and effectively operating schools no matter which tier of operation they are in based on state or local health orders.

The Smart Start Working Group was created by the Governor's COVID-19 Education Task Force to develop guidance to assist school and district leaders in their efforts to reopen schools for the 2020-21 school year. The group consists of school district leaders and educators, health professionals, representatives from the Governor's Office, and technology partners. The Working Group is co-chaired by Wanda Maloney, Wyoming Department of Education Accountability Director and Stephanie Pyle, Senior Administrator of the Public Health Division with the Wyoming Department of Health.

"Now more than ever, school districts have the opportunity to strengthen community relationships by crafting reopening plans that include frequent two-way communication. Effective communication plans will be the cornerstone for successfully reopening school buildings and delivering a quality education to all students under any circumstances." said Communications Subcommittee Chair Lachelle Brant.

"Beginning in March, health and education had to come together in ways no one could have imagined just a few weeks prior," said Safety and Wellness Subcommittee Chairperson Janet Farmer. "Through the Safety and Wellness subcommittee, we have worked to make sure the school environment will be a healthy place."

The guidance document will help school districts define a foundation and framework to move forward with an eye toward adaptability.

"Our team's goal was to provide a blueprint of ideas to help districts develop school reentry plans to ensure a meaningful, equitable, and safe learning environment for all students," said Instruction and Technology Subcommittee Chair Brian Harms.

"School Operations undergirds all the critical work in a school district ensuring students get to school safely and on time, that they are fed nutritious meals, and that our students learn in safe and inviting environments," said School Operations Subcommittee Chair Paige Hughes. "Input from different-sized districts from all across the state has informed a targeted set of requirements and recommendations to help support district leaders in opening their schools in a way that allows optimal learning while keeping students and staff healthy.

Smart Start Guidance Document (https://1ddlxtt2jowkvs672myo6z14-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Smart-Start-Guidance.pdf)

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