



January 29, 2021

An Open Letter to the Greater Skagit Valley:

It is with great hope in what lies ahead and in the confidence that we can get the students of Washington back to a position of wellness soon that I send this correspondence. As an institutional leader, I fully acknowledge that we have had to operate, make decisions, and plan for things in an environment that has changed day to day. We have learned a great deal over the past year about COVID-19. We have learned who is most vulnerable to the virus, how to mitigate the spread of the virus and how to best treat the virus. Rather than looking back and second guessing, I am hopeful we can all now look forward and do what is right.

On March 13, 2020 Governor Inslee issued Proclamation [20-09](#) closing all Private and Public K-12 schools. Most understood that it was necessary and temporary as we were in unprecedented times and did not have a full understanding of COVID-19. On June 11, 2020 the Washington Education Association (WEA), in conjunction with OSPI, DOH and L&I issued a [recommendation](#) to open schools for in person instruction in the fall of 2020 and OSPI issued a 52 page [District Planning Guide](#) on the same date. Since that time, other guidance and support has been provided to schools in order to assist in the design and implementation of plans to conduct both remote and in person instruction for the students of Washington Private and Public Schools. Most recently the Governor and DOH provided new metrics for opening schools. In spite of the guidance, and over ten and a half months in order to plan for students to return to school, very few Washington students have the opportunity to attend school in person in a meaningful way. Even the most recent efforts only provided the lowest grade levels about 12-15 hours of in person schooling a week. The current plans do not meet the needs of our students or community and they do not reflect the current understanding of students, the virus or the risk to educators.

I have included below many different links to organizations, research articles, and experts in the field of child development and education. The data makes evident the negative effects of isolation on school age children, the inadequacies of remote learning during this time and the health risks for school age children due to this prolonged absence from the school setting. Furthermore, the data from faculty, staff and students who have attended school in person clearly points to a safe learning environment when proper mitigations strategies are in place. We have operated MVC fully in person every school day since September 1, 2020 with only one positive case confirmed during the school year which was contracted from community exposure. No other students or adults in that cohort tested positive for COVID-19 and we have had zero school related exposures.

The State of Washington along with the WEA have asked those least vulnerable to COVID-19 to make the greatest changes to their daily lives and routines. We have removed the most important social networks, institutions and activities from those in our communities who need them the most. Washingtonians between the ages of 5 and 18 have had their daily routines



removed, their workplace (schools) closed, their in person social networks disabled, and their physical activities and outlets shut down since March 13, 2020. It is time for all of us to work together to get all of these areas back up in running sooner rather than later.

All students and school personnel who are most vulnerable to COVID-19 should be given the option to attend and work virtually. All schools have had sufficient time since June 11, 2020 to put into place a viable plan for in person education with proper mitigation measures in place. Governor Inslee, has used his position and authority throughout this pandemic to issue Proclamations closing schools, businesses, churches, restaurants, parks, gyms and recreational areas. I believe that allowing local districts to control and work through this process is the best approach. I am not advocating a Proclamation to open all Washington K-12 schools. I am advocating that we work harder and faster to get our local schools fully open as soon as possible.

This extended and unnecessary delay in bringing students back to school in person has negatively impacted all areas of the school setting including, early learners, special education, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, music programs, drama programs, school activities and school athletics. I am asking you on behalf of the current Classes of 2021-2033 for the opportunity to begin in person learning now. This will allow students the opportunity to finish well.

It is time to put aside past loyalties and affiliations and look out for the children of the State of Washington. It is time to let them learn, to let them grow, to see them flourish rather than flounder. It is time to let them play.

Respectfully,

Jeffrey A. Droog, Superintendent
Mount Vernon Christian School

[The School Superintendents Association](#)
[COVID-19 testing locations](#)
[Governor's Dashboard](#)
[UPDATED OCT 16 Department of Health Decision Tree](#)
[Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction](#)
[State Board of Education](#)
[Washington Department of Health Covid-19 Dashboard](#)
[World Health Organization \(WHO\) CoVID-19 Dashboard](#)
[Center for Disease Control](#)
[National Institutes for Health](#)
[American Academy of Pediatrics](#)



[New York Times Crisis Article](#)

[Children's Hospital Mental Health Missing Milestones](#)

[Remote Learning Impact on Mental Health](#)

[Distance Learning and Excessive Screen Time](#)

[Lack of Engagement in Distance Learning](#)

[Academic and Social Development Slip](#)

[New York Times](#)

[Vegas Schools Clark County](#)