



## NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Tim Robinson, Lead Media Relations Specialist

206-465-5404 c

[tirobinson@seattleschools.org](mailto:tirobinson@seattleschools.org)

[SPS Newsroom](#)

### **Vaccine Priority for SPS Educators, Staff Urged** *Supt. Juneau sends letter to Gov. Inslee, state, county health depts.*

**SEATTLE** – Seattle Public Schools Superintendent Denise Juneau today called on Washington Governor Jay Inslee and key state and county leadership to give higher COVID-19 vaccine prioritization to educators and other school district personnel.

As recently announced, SPS will resume in-person instruction on March 1, 2021, for approximately 10,000 students in Pre-K, kindergarten, first grade, and specific Special Education grade bands. The SPS Board of Directors approved the plan last month.

The superintendent is urging prioritization of vaccinations for the following personnel who will be providing in-person instruction and services:

- Preschool educators
- Kindergarten educators
- First grade educators
- Special education educators\*
- Principals
- Assistant principals
- Safety & Security personnel
- Nutrition Services personnel
- Custodial personnel

\* For students receiving moderate to intensive in-person special education services and students who require in-person services to meet goals outlined in their Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Superintendent Juneau is making her request in a letter sent today to:

- Governor Jay Inslee
- Dr. Umair Shah, Secretary, Washington State Department of Health (DOH)
- Dr. Jeffrey Duchin, Health Officer, Public Health – Seattle & King County

“Prioritizing vaccinations for public educators and critical support staff will send a strong message of the state’s commitment to public education and care for our public educators in a time when so much is uncertain,” the superintendent wrote. “This action will help build trust in our collective commitment to recovery.”

DOH recently announced vaccine prioritization guidance beginning with essential medical personnel in the first group, Phase 1A-1.

Superintendent Juneau is requesting that all SPS personnel involved with in-person learning this March be included in the second broad distribution, Phase 1B-1, which generally prioritizes people 50 years old and older, along with people in other specific categories.

In her letter, Superintendent Juneau said “It does not make sense to have an age limit of ‘over 50’ for educational professionals. Our top priority must be to keep our staff, students, and communities physically safe, as well as mentally and academically healthy.”

In addition to requesting vaccine prioritization, Superintendent Juneau also offered SPS buildings as sites where health care providers could administer the vaccination to SPS staff and the larger community.

Right now, SPS is preparing schools, providing the required PPE training, and starting negotiations on new working conditions with the Seattle Education Association (SEA).

For more information about the plan for in-person return, please see the [SPS website](#).

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**A copy of Superintendent Juneau’s letter follows:**

January 8, 2021

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Governor of the Great State of Washington

Dr. Umair Shah  
Secretary of Health for the State of Washington

Dr. Jeffrey Duchin  
Health Officer for Public Health-Seattle & King County

Dear Governor Inslee, Secretary Shah, and Dr. Duchin,

On December 17, the Seattle Public Schools Board of Directors approved an in-person reopening plan for PreK, Kindergarten, and first grade students, as well as students receiving intensive special education services and students who require in-person services to meet goals outlined in their Individual Educational Plan (IEP). Staff across the district are preparing our schools, providing the required PPE training, and starting to negotiate new working conditions with the Seattle Education Association (SEA). We plan to provide in-person instruction to our approximately 10,000 PreK, Kindergarten, and 1<sup>st</sup> grade students beginning on March 1.

This decision aligns with Challenge Seattle's request on November 19, 2020. Their letter to you outlined a six-point recovery plan for what they believe are short-term and longer-term needs. One of the points states, "**Commit to a plan to reopen schools in January if COVID rates fall** . . . This can lay the foundation for the even broader work that will be needed to address the learning loss of our state's students, with an emphasis on those disproportionately impacted." However, observing and working with other urban districts across the country and knowing that we need to put as many safeguards in place to provide in-person learning, it is imperative that our educators, school leaders, and school-based staff are vaccinated.

**I am requesting that ALL Pre-K through first grade and special education educators who will provide in-person instruction, our school principals and assistant principals, as well as the nutrition, security, and custodial staff who have been and will continue to serve our students in buildings, move to Phase 1 B1 and allow this group of educators and staff to receive their vaccines this month.** It does not make sense to have an age limit of "over 50" for educational professionals. Our top priority must be to keep our staff, students, and communities physically safe, as well as mentally and academically healthy. Prioritizing vaccinations for public educators and critical support staff will send a strong message of the state's commitment to public education and care for our public educators in a time when so much is uncertain. This action will help build trust in our collective commitment to recovery.

I would also like to offer Seattle Public Schools buildings to health care providers to administer vaccines to SPS staff and the larger community. Please let me know how I can support these much-needed efforts.

Thank you for your consideration, continued support, and understanding of the true value of public education in this state and the nation.

With respect,

Denise Juneau, Superintendent  
Seattle Public Schools

CC: Chris Gregoire, CEO, Challenge Seattle

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For more information about **Seattle Public Schools**: [SPS webpage](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#)

For more information about **Superintendent Denise Juneau**: [SPS webpage](#), [Twitter](#)