



Return to Play Guidelines

School Sponsored High School Athletics

(These guidelines apply to all school sponsored and co-sponsored school athletics)

Introduction and Purpose

During the 2020-21 school year, Bellingham Public Schools plans on providing activities and athletic experiences to our students within the district and state guidelines to keep our students and staff safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a district we recognize the importance of high school athletics and activities in developing the physical, social and emotional growth of our students through participation in athletics.

Our plan for return to play began on September 28 and allows coaches to work with student athletes. Initially we are starting in a 100% remote/online environment while continuing to plan for in-person outside training/conditioning and skill development and other phases until our anticipated start of our “winter” season which begins on December 28 as defined by WIAA. For this school year, ASB fees have been waived and therefore will not be a requirement for participation.

This document was created to provide guidance for implementing a return to play (RTP) framework within Bellingham Public Schools. This plan was developed as a component of the district’s Reconnect Plan (see below) using the most recent guidance from the Governor, Superintendent of Office of Public Instruction (OSPI), the National Federation of High Schools (NFHS), the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association (WIAA) and our local Whatcom County Health Department.

A supplement (Appendix A) is the Sport Specific Considerations for Return to Play which is updated regularly and is based on the NFHS and WIAA guidelines. As of October 1, Whatcom County was in Washington State’s Phase 2 and therefore the guidelines for participation must be aligned with Phase 2.

Based on the changing conditions and guidelines, our plan will need to remain flexible and be able to be modified to meet any necessary requirements. Updates will be communicated through school websites and FinalForms.

Our Reconnect Plan for the 2020-21 school year outlines five stages for a return to in-person instruction at school based on safety and equity.



Stage 1 – 100% Remote Learning

All students and staff participate in daily remote, at-home learning. Real-time, live lessons mixed with independent, supported learning. Schools closed for access to all students and most staff.

Stage 2 – Nearly 100% Remote Learning

Most students participate in daily at-home learning as in previous stage. In-person learning provided for some identified students if the safety of the students and staff can be maintained. Some staff able to be on-site.

Stage 3 – Hybrid Learning with Early Childhood

All students from stage 2 and our youngest learners will be provided in-person instruction. All other students remain in daily at-home learning as in previous stages. Some staff able to be on-site.

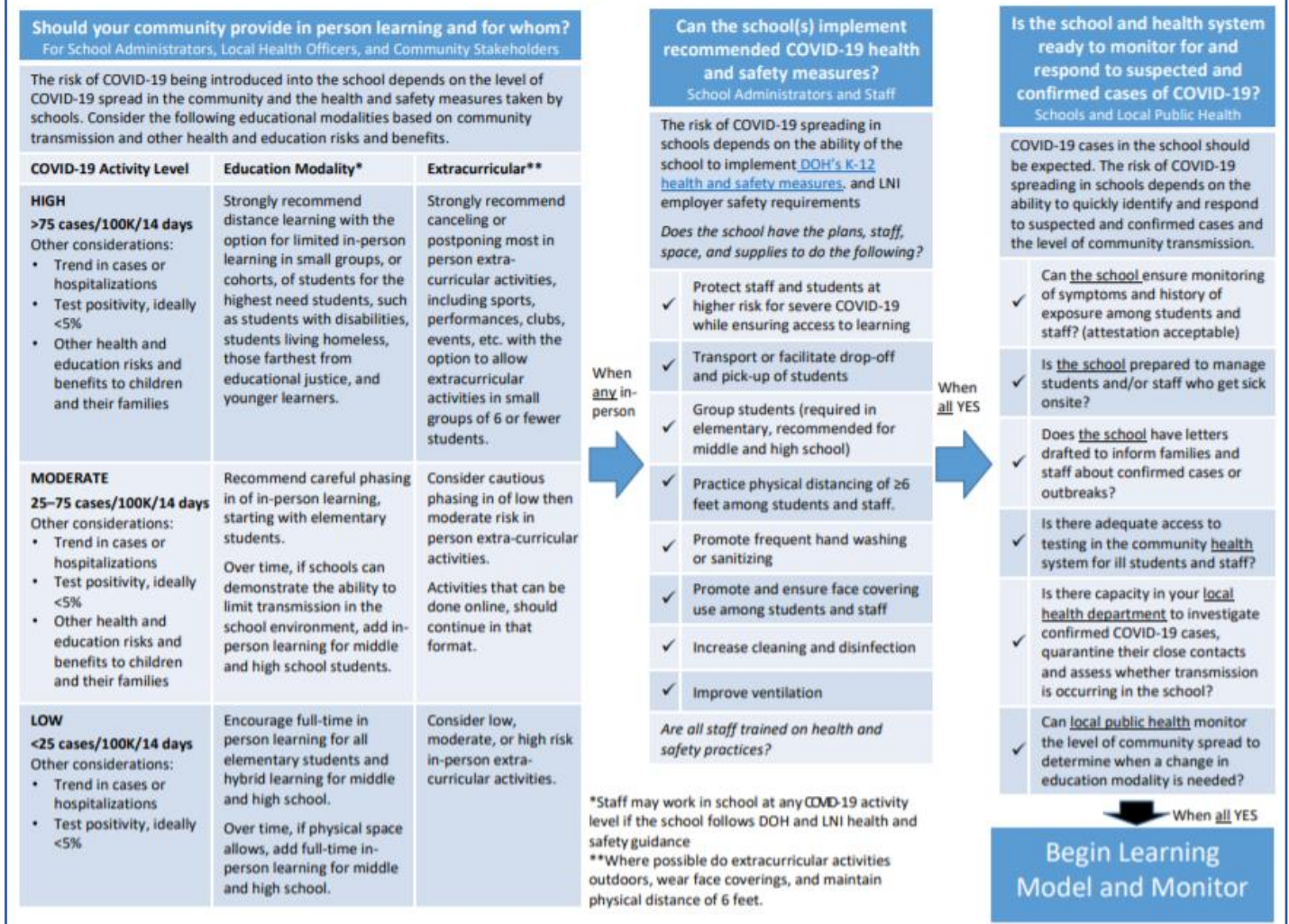
Stage 4 – Hybrid Learning

All students in stages 2 and 3 will continue in-person. All grades will participate in both in-person and remote learning in a hybrid, cohort model. (Approximately 25% to 50% of students on-site at a time.) Families can still choose for students to be 100% at home. Staff able to be on-site for delivery of instruction.

Stage 5 – Fully In-Person

All students return to school for fully in-person instruction.

Decision Tree for Provision of in Person Learning among Public and Private K-12 Students during COVID-19



Decision Tree updated 11-9-2020

Thanks to all our work group members and their input in the creation of our return to play guidelines:

Patrick Brown, Colin Cushman, Chad Larsen, Erin Fraser, Joe McAuliffe, Bonna Giller, Maggie Hite, Steve Chronister, Ronnie Weston, Greg Holmgren, Nikki Lockhart, Pam Behee, Taylor DeWitt, Miguel Perez, Simone Sangster, Jessica Sankey, Bob Kuehl

Plan for Return to Play

Remote Open Coaching Period – Starting September 28

The remote open coaching period allows coaches to work with student athletes in a 100% remote/online environment. Coaches may develop individual training, skill development and workouts which will be shared or posted online. Workouts and engagement by our student athletes are strictly optional.

Each school will communicate with students to sign up and complete clearance through FinalForms. No ASB fees will be collected at this time. It is recommended to have a current physical on file to be prepared for any future in-person practice/training or sport seasons.

Each high school activity/athletics coordinator will organize and host coach meetings as needed to coordinate remote open coaching period expectations and guidelines. Online/remote contact with students will be consistent with the district's remote learning guidelines.

Family and student communications will be developed and made available on each high school website and updated as needed.

Outdoor Practice/Training – October 26 through December 19

This open season is primarily a time to connect with all student athletes and give opportunities to engage in outdoor healthy activities. We will ensure all students receive opportunities to fully participate.

The focus of outdoor practice and training is for coaches to work with student athletes in the development of overall training and conditioning and prepare them for the anticipated sport seasons. Specific sport skills development is also allowable during this outdoor practice/training time.

All activities during this time will conform to the sport specific guidance by WIAA (Appendix A) and the [Employer Health & Safety Requirements for School Scenarios](#) issued on September 30, 2020. View this guidance document for future releases and updated information.

During this phase, coaches may work with student athletes in pods of five students each. The student pods must remain consistent throughout the practice. Coaches may supervise more than one pod during a practice if they are wearing a facial covering and remain at least six feet from the student/athletes. A thirty-foot separation must be maintained between pods. Coaches are required to wear facial coverings at all times. Student athletes must also wear face coverings unless they are participating in aerobic conditioning and can ensure at least six feet of separation. During this time, a facial covering needs to be readily available to be worn if separation of six feet cannot be maintained.

Within a consistent pod, student athletes may engage in drills or practice such as 2 on 3 scrimmage that includes brief close contact. Activities such as this are intended to allow for training purposes and should be brief. A typical scrimmage in basketball is considered to have extended close contact and is not allowed. The student athletes shall wear facial coverings at all times during these drills. During any coach instruction, the student athletes shall return to a six-foot spacing with facial coverings and no huddles. At no time should practice plans include activities that initiate student-to-student contact such as blocking or wrestling drills.

All student athletes must be cleared through each school using FinalForms. This includes an annual update including parent and student electronic signatures.

Prior to any coach meeting in person with athletes, each coach is required to complete applicable district training related to COVID procedures and review all PPE guidelines. All necessary PPE supplies will be provided as needed. During this outdoor practice/training season, volunteer coaches and spectators will not be allowed to participate.

Mandatory training and information include but are not limited to:

- A review of [these resources, including videos and links](#) before beginning any coaching work or responsibilities.
- Sports specific guidelines for each individual sport and phase in Appendix A and Appendix B.

Each high school will develop a plan and communicate to student athletes the following:

- Procedure for mandatory attendance and attestation for each participant and coach;
- Define expectations for facial coverings, social distancing and other safety precautions aligned with WIAA, district and local health department guidelines;
- Develop a schedule for each sport or group that prioritizes sharing multisport athletes between sports seasons and prevents student athletes from overtraining;
- Outline specific parking areas for participants and ensure there are no gatherings or loitering in the parking areas. Locker rooms will not be available. Students will need to arrive for practice dressed appropriately for their participation;
- How to access the fields and/or practice areas;
- Outdoor restroom(s) will be available and procedures for use will be established.

See each school's plan in Appendix B.

During this time, our athletic trainers and/or athletic training facilities will not be available. If a student is injured or needs medical attention, coaches will provide necessary care, including emergency services and contacting parents as necessary.

Parents or students will provide transportation to and from these voluntary practices. If a student cannot secure transportation to these voluntary practices, please contact the coach or athletic coordinator to examine options.

Indoor Practice/Training – November 16 through December 19

Indoor sports which include basketball, volleyball, wrestling, cheer, dance and swimming will be allowed to practice in the gym or mat room with the following guidelines:

- Masks must be worn at all times;
- Students must come dressed and ready to begin practice;
- A 30-minute gap between program practices will be mandatory. Doors will be open during this time to increase air circulation;
- Students will enter and exit through one door/location at each site and not be allowed in any other location within the school building. Direct outside entrance to the gym or mat room will be used whenever possible;
- Drills shall not include activities that initiate student-to-student contact;
- Locker rooms and training rooms will not be available;
- Bathrooms will be available and use will be limited to one person at a time;
- Students should bring their own water bottles. Water access may not be available except for hands-free “filling stations.”

Pod sizes and additional practice guidelines for indoor sports are shown below. **Drills shall not include activities that initiate student-to-student contact.**

- Basketball – Pods of six allowed. Only six hoops (six hoops on baselines for BHS and SQHS, four hoops on baselines and two main hoops on auxiliary gym for SHS) may be used. 3 vs. 3 or 2 vs. 2 only on small courts may be utilized;
- Cheer – Pods of ten (with two rows of five); no stunting;
- Dance – Pods of ten;
- Swimming – Pods of ten for conditioning;
- Volleyball – Pods of six with 6 vs. 6 allowed for 30 minutes, twice per week with no blocking or contact at the net; blocking drills only allowed within a pod of six;
- Wrestling – Maximum of ten students in mat room at a time for conditioning/drills.

Outdoor practice and training will continue for outside sports with the following modifications in pod configurations and guidelines. **Drills shall not include activities that initiate student-to-student contact.** All other established guidelines will apply.

- Football – Pods of seven; allowed to play 7 vs. 7 for 30 minutes, twice per week;
- Soccer – Pods of nine; drills of 3 vs. 3 vs. 3 or 4 vs. 4 +1 are allowed with no headers or slide tackles;
- Baseball and softball – Pods of ten; only one pod on field at a time (or small group pods of six in stations);
- Cross Country – Pods of eight (if students are running in groups, they must wear a mask; if running individually, they must have a mask available if they come in contact with another person);
- Track – Pods of eight (one student each per lane);
- Tennis – Pods of eight; allows for rotation of doubles groups and all courts may be used;
- Lacrosse – Pods of seven; allowed to play 7 vs. 7 for 30 minutes, twice per week.

2020-21 High School Athletic Seasons – Starting December 28

The modified WIAA sport seasons are reflected below starting with Season 2 on December 28, 2020. The district will monitor guidance of the State, OSPI and WIAA throughout the fall for updates and further guidance and develop guidelines as needed.

WIAA Season 2 (Traditional Winter Sports) Start Date: December 28
Sports
Basketball
Bowling
Boys Swim & Dive
Gymnastics
Wrestling

WIAA Season 3 (Traditional Fall Sports) Start Date: March 1
Sports
Volleyball
Girls Soccer
Football
Girls Swim & Dive
Cross Country
Slowpitch Softball
Competitive Cheerleading
Boys Tennis

WIAA Season 4 (Traditional Spring Sports) Start Date: April 26
Sports
Girls Tennis
Fastpitch Softball
Track & Field
Baseball
Golf
Boys Soccer
Dance/Drill
Lacrosse
Rugby
Sailing