

Feb. 1, 2021

### *A Message from the COVID Safety Team*

Dear staff,

As part of our ongoing work to keep you informed about COVID safety practices and protocols we will be sharing regular updates. Each update will include the latest information from local and regional agencies as well as stories and resources within our district.

**Today's topics:** ventilation, vaccine updates, where to find COVID-19 information on the BPS website, updated K-12 guidance and Whatcom County case data resources.

### A breath of fresh air: ventilating our schools and buildings

**In a nutshell:** ventilation and air exchange in every school and classroom meets [CDC recommendations](#) for optimal air flow in the time of COVID.

- **How does it work?** Our classrooms have five air changes per hour or greater, and constant air exchange lowers the risk of COVID-19 spreading. All buildings have outside, fresh air that is filtered during intake. Prior to in-person reopening, all instructional spaces are measured by our colleagues in buildings & grounds for air exchange using the building's HVAC system.
- **What can I do to maximize air flow?** Keep room vents open and clear from any blockages, and even though it is counter-intuitive, keep windows closed when it's cold outside. If internal temperatures dip, it can interfere with HVAC settings and decrease the amount of fresh air coming in...so please keep windows closed until it's warmer outside.
- **Why do I have a fan?** Each classroom is equipped with an additional box fan with a MERV 13 filter. This fan provides an extra layer of air flow in the space and can filter a typical classroom size with efficiency within several hours. We recommend running it before and after school hours. AND if you're not a fan of the fan, you don't need to run it as your space already has ample air flow (see first bullet).

Learn more about ventilation in [our staff handbook for COVID times \(page 6\)](#).

### COVID-19 Vaccine Update

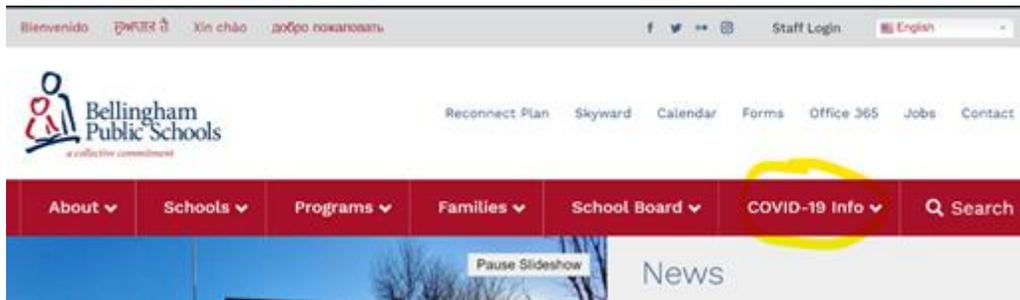
Whatcom County providers receive a weekly supply of vaccines from the state. As of Jan. 27, 14,181 first doses have been administered by Whatcom County providers. Demand continues to outweigh local supply and providers receive variable amounts of vaccine from week to week. Local provider access to the vaccine is the barrier to vaccinating more people. PeaceHealth opened a large-scale COVID-19 vaccine distribution site at their Health Education Center (HEC). With enough vaccine supply, they have the capacity to vaccinate between 600 and 1,000 people a day.

[OSPI and Kaiser Permanente are collaborating on a large-scale school vaccination plan](#). Their timeline does not change the current phases, rather it is working on expanding capacity to provide vaccinations safely and equitably when our state moves to Phase 1B Tier 2. Read their [FAQ for more information](#).

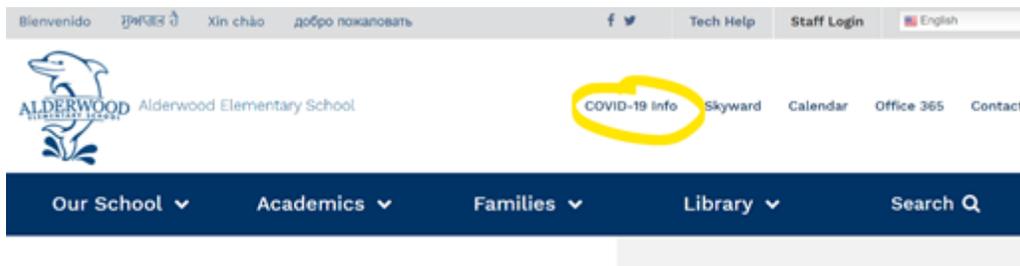
**Whatcom County Health Dept is hosting a COVID-19 Vaccine Update Town Hall.** This virtual event to be held from **5:30 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 4.** The meeting is part of an ongoing effort to keep the community informed of COVID-19 vaccination efforts, plans, and progress. You can attend the event by [clicking here](#).

## Bellingham Public Schools links

We have recently made some updates to our district and school websites to make COVID-19 information more easily accessible. Under the COVID-19 Info menu item you will see information has been organized into different categories for easy navigation. This [three-minute video](#) will guide you through the new website menu.



We've also made updates to all school websites. Visitors will now see a [COVID-19 Info](#) link on the top right of their school website under quick links.



## Updated: Washington state Department of Health K-12 Schools Guidance

The state DOH has updated its [guidance](#) for K-12 schools. Changes were made to the following areas:

- Requirements guiding K-12 performing arts activities.
- Quarantine language to include recommendations for people who have recently been in countries where the new variant has been identified.
- Health screening questions for staff when they arrive at work.

## Whatcom County data and updates

Keep up to date on local cases through the [Whatcom County Health Department COVID-19 Data](#). Explore the Data Dashboard and Risk Assessment Dashboard.

The Whatcom County Health Department released a [newsflash](#) on Jan. 26 with information on the UK Variant, which has been identified in Pierce and Snohomish counties but not Whatcom. Labs monitor for variants; guidance remains to wear masks, wash hands and maintain physical distance from those outside your household.

[Whatcom County COVID-19 testing information](#)