



Important: Safe Return to School Timeline

August 31, 2020

Dear Kyrene Community,

With school now underway, I know you are receiving a high volume of email, but I urge you to read this entire message carefully. This email contains critical information about our first steps toward an organized and safe return to in-person learning. Kyrene is preparing a rolling return, beginning with our youngest learners, while continuing to offer distance learning options.

Also in this message: a new layer of safety in our schools, what to expect during the transition to in-person instruction, and insight into Kyrene's decision-making process. I want all families and staff to know that my team and I read every single one of your emails and make an effort to personally respond. Your voices are in our heads and our hearts as we tackle new challenges, daily, and strive to provide the highest quality education for our students.

Sincerely,

Jan Vesely, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Health & Safety Updates

Public Health Benchmarks: As of August 27, 2020, the Maricopa County Health Department's [COVID-19 dashboard](#) shows communities in and around Kyrene School District in the moderate risk category for the second week in a row. Risk is measured against three public health benchmarks established by the State of Arizona: number of cases, percent of positive tests, and the rate of COVID-like illness. In anticipation of the positive trend in public health data, the Kyrene Governing Board met last week to begin preparing for a safe return to in-person instruction.

New HEPA Filters: The Board approved the purchase of individual portable HEPA Filtration systems for all Kyrene classrooms, health offices and other areas of our schools and district facilities. The new HEPA filters will be funded with bond dollars, thanks to Kyrene voters who continually support our schools. The HEPA units will quietly filter the classroom air every 35 minutes, capturing 99.97% of particles.

Mitigation Plan: In addition to meeting public health benchmarks, the second key component to reopening schools to in-person instruction is the quality of the school's mitigation plan as measured by the ability to reduce or prevent community spread. Kyrene School District has had mitigation strategies in place for months, but only in the last two weeks has there been a substantial number of students and staff on campus for on-site support. This time has been a test of Kyrene's mitigation protocols. There was a case of COVID-19 confirmed on one of our campuses within the first few days of providing on-site services. It has been 12 days since that case, and there have been no reports of related cases at this time.

A Timeline for Return

Kyrene School District plans to offer in-person, teacher-led instruction on the following timeline, as long as public health benchmarks continue to trend in a positive direction and as long as Kyrene's mitigation strategies continue to prevent community spread.

- **Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd Grades:** In-person students return **Thursday, September 17**
- **3rd, 4th, 5th Grades:** In-person students return **Thursday, September 24**
- **All Middle School Grades:** In-person students return **Tuesday, October 13**
 - **6th Grade Orientation** will be **October 1.**

Flex students may remain in Flex Distance Learning.

All families (except Kyrene Digital Academy) will receive a second message, today or tomorrow, confirming your selection of In-Person or Flex Distance Learning through second quarter. Additional information, including how to make a change, if needed, will be provided in that message. Thank you for your patience.

Why a Rolling Return?

Kyrene School District is staggering the return of students for several reasons.

Long-term Success: Bringing students back in stages will allow Kyrene to monitor the implementation of mitigation strategies, making adjustments as needed with smaller groups, while gradually increasing the population of students on campus. The goal of this careful approach is long-term success, in the hopes that schools will be able to remain open for in-person instruction.

CDC Guidance: Kyrene's Safe Return to School plan is aligned with Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines. The [CDC list](#) of considerations for schools preparing to reopen includes a recommendation

for a staggered return of students. The CDC cites Denmark's successful approach of staggering student reentry in waves, beginning with younger children.

Early Learning: Students in primary grades require significant adult support and the amount of screen time involved in distance learning is not developmentally appropriate for younger age groups. While some students in primary grades have adapted well to distance learning, a large number of early learners will benefit from a return to in-person instruction.

Routines and Rituals: Bringing students back in stages will give schools the chance to re-align campus logistics (arrival, dismissal, lunch, recess) to in-person learning and will give students opportunities to participate in orientations and other back-to-school practices. This approach will also provide additional time for students to adjust to new school systems and protocols. If our youngest leaders can adhere to safety rituals, there is a greater chance of long-term success for in-person learning.

The In-Person Experience

As a reminder, all mitigation strategies will be observed on school campuses when in-person learning resumes. This means all students are expected to follow the protocols as outlined on the [Safety Measures](#) page of www.kyrene.org/SafeStrong, including face coverings, hand washing and social distancing, when feasible and to the extent possible. Students will eat meals in classrooms and will remain with their assigned cohorts throughout the day. Families are required to conduct [home health screenings](#) before sending children to school and must be prepared to pick children up if they experience any symptoms of COVID-like illness.

Families in both In-Person and Flex Distance Learning models should be aware that students may experience a change in teacher during the transition back to school. Family selections and staff circumstances may have changed since students were placed with teachers, necessitating some changes to teacher assignments. Schools are prepared to support this transition, as needed, either through an introduction to your child's new teacher or a group meeting with all grade level teachers.

Continuing Communications

This message and all District communications related to the Safe Return to School can be found at www.kyrene.org/safestrong. Again, families will receive a second email, today or tomorrow, confirming your selection of In-Person or Flex Distance Learning. Please wait for that email for further instructions. Any replies to this email requesting a change in selection will be directed back to the confirmation message to come.

Thank you for your patience and continued engagement as Kyrene works to resume in-person instruction and provide options for all families.

Sincerely,

Kyrene School District

Our Vision: All students achieve at their maximum potential to become problem-solvers, creators, and visionaries of tomorrow.

Our Mission: Kyrene School District will commit to student success for all, by providing engaging, challenging educational environments which promote and inspire passion for learning, leading, and achieving transformative life outcomes.