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School District Also Adopts New State Dial

New dial adds more levels and clarity for community understanding

Eagle, CO – Eagle County Schools announced today that it is in sync with Eagle County and the Eagle County Department of Public Health and Environment in adopting the new Statewide Dial Framework that recognizes the unique local presence of COVID-19 in a community. The dial provides the community with an intuitive and visual indication of COVID-19 containment. Previously, the school district had relied on the Eagle County dial and its Key Performance Indicators to help guide the decision about the modality of learning for the 2020-21 school year.

“We’re pleased to see that this idea has spread to the state level and that the categories have expanded from three to five levels,” said Superintendent Philip Qualman. “Having the additional overlay of the state’s broad categories can also add clarity for communities.”

The new dial features three overarching categories that align with the state’s broad communications efforts: Protect our Neighbors, Safer at Home, and Stay at Home. There are three sub-categories under the Safer at Home level: 1. Cautious, 2. Concern, and 3. High Risk. Eagle County starts in the Safer at Home Level 2 Concern category.

The metrics determining placement on the dial are also straightforward and streamlined.

- **New cases:** how much virus is circulating in a county based on testing
- **Percent positivity:** monitors if there is sufficient testing happening to capture the level of transmission (higher positivity percentages indicate more testing is needed; lower positivity percentages indicate testing levels are adequate)
- **Impact on hospitalizations:** tracks hospitalizations to see if they are increasing, decreasing, or stable.

Intuitively, if conditions are worsening, then restrictions for containment increase. Placement on the dial moves to the right toward Stay at Home. Alternatively, if conditions are improving, then restrictions for containment are eased. Placement on the dial moves toward Protect our Neighbors.

“We want our families and staff to know that being in the blue and green levels improve the overall safety of students and staff members. That remains our goal for the community – get to green and stay there,” Qualman explained. “But, the blue and green categories both have

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containment restrictions that likely keep us in our current modified in-person model of instruction through the remainder of the school year.”

The modified in-person instruction model is based on the physical spacing of students within the school buildings to maximize social distancing. With nearly 1,000 students at each large high school, this requires the A/B hybrid schedule that divides the student body in half so that only half the population is on campus at a time. At other schools, every licensed teacher is being utilized for instruction, meaning reading and math interventionists plus elective teachers like art and music teachers, are leading classroom instruction. This allows for smaller student cohorts spread across buildings to maximize distancing. In addition, all teacher planning time and meeting time has been consolidated to occur on Wednesdays instead of on a daily basis. Students have Wednesdays as a day of remote learning where they complete assigned work at home.

The other primary restriction that is keeping children in schools is the wearing of face coverings. Currently, the Governor is extending the state’s mask requirement 30 days at a time, or through October 19 for now. Face coverings contain droplet spread. Social distancing keeps people beyond the normal range of droplet spread. Together, they have been effective at containing COVID-19 to the point that the reopening of schools has not impacted the presence of the virus in the community.

“We want the community to know that our teachers and staff have gone all out to get and keep children in school,” said Qualman. “It is taking a toll on them, too. We are exhausted, but determined. The continued support and grace from our community remains essential. Operating in this manner is a colossal effort and we are all on the same page in wanting to return to a more normal schedule. But until that is possible, let’s stick together and make the sacrifices as a community to serve our children.”

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