



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2021

Contact: **Joel Aune, Executive Director**
Washington Association of School Administrators
800-859-9272
jaune@wasa-oly.org
www.wasa-oly.org

School Leaders Appeal for Flexibility on Six-Foot Spacing Rule

Researchers say three feet should be default distance for schools

OLYMPIA — The Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), representing school district leaders across the state of Washington, is appealing to Gov. Inslee and the Department of Health for flexibility on COVID-19 spacing regulations to ensure space for all students who seek a return to in-person learning.

In [a letter](#) to Gov. Jay Inslee and Washington State Health Secretary Umair Shah, WASA Executive Director Joel Aune emphasized the urgency in getting students back into the classroom. With large numbers of children and teens suffering from neglect, hunger, abuse, depression, severe mental health challenges, and suicide, schools need added flexibility to welcome all students back to school, said Aune.

“In our view, the social, emotional, and academic well-being of students clearly tips the scales toward a return to in-person learning for all students by next fall,” wrote Aune. “Simply stated, our kids are in trouble, and after what will be 18 months of remote learning next fall, we must get them back to in-person learning. It can be done, and it can be done safely.”

A strict adherence to the rule poses a significant challenge for schools and districts statewide and their efforts to accommodate all students who seek a return to in-person learning. Research from the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health indicates that different standards can be safely used with respect to children in schools.

Three feet should be the default distance for schools, according to Harvard researchers.

“With the 6’ distance requirement in place, the number of schools where all students can simultaneously return to the classroom for in-person learning is very small. Consequently, the return of all students to the schoolhouse will not happen as long as this requirement is in effect,” the letter notes.

A decision on this needs to be made promptly, Aune said, given that school superintendents are currently building their budgets for the 2021-22 school year. Decisions are being made right now with respect to staffing levels; clear guidance on this is critical.

“School district leaders stand ready to bring students, teachers, administrators, and staff safely back to school. It is time to step up our efforts, in a responsible fashion, and take care of our kids,” concluded Aune.

“They desperately need us to figure this out and get them back in school.”

Read the [full text of the letter here](#).

About the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)

WASA (www.wasa-oly.org) is a non-profit organization committed to the development of quality education through professional leadership. Members benefit from a supportive community of professional leaders working to provide insightful, valuable training support, and resources. WASA also strives to sustain a positive impact on legislative and community leaders. Membership is open to education administrators in Washington state.

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