

# Friends & Neighbors



LAKESWOOD  
SCHOOL DISTRICT

FEBRUARY 2021

Sharing news from our schools that every community member should know....

From Superintendent Scott Peacock to you.



## Learning in person returns to Lakewood schools

“Great!” was Cougar Creek Elementary School teacher Jayanna Haskell’s immediate response to how in-person learning is going at her school. Students in kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grades started in late January. Third through 5th graders joined in February. Plans are underway for middle and high school students to return in March.

“It’s so good to see all of them,” she smiled. Haskell sees the joy on her students’ faces as they talk to each other and appreciate being among their peers again. Like many parts of the world, COVID-19 forced instruction to move online in early 2020. About 250 Lakewood students, from Pre-K to seniors, returned in October for specialized instruction. As we learned more about the virus, there was greater confidence that it was the right time for others to return.

We hired four additional primary school teachers. A few others changed teaching assignments to ensure small class sizes. Some spaces were re-purposed into classrooms. No state funding is available for these changes. In the past, these costs would have been funded by the local Educational Programs and Operations Levy. The renewal of this levy was not approved by voters in 2020. To address this critical need for early learners, funding came from the school district’s fund balance (savings account).

“We spent months planning and thinking through every process,” said Michele Ricci, English Crossing Elementary School principal. She said the most important part of all the new routines is how each one helps students make as much growth as possible academically as well as in their social and emotional development.

Overall student enrollment in Lakewood remains steady. A few families chose to move to online learning rather than in-person instruction and some that were online chose to attend in-person. “Everybody is different,” Haskell said. “Lakewood did a great job respecting those differences.” To read more about this story visit our website at [www.lwsd.wednet.edu](http://www.lwsd.wednet.edu).



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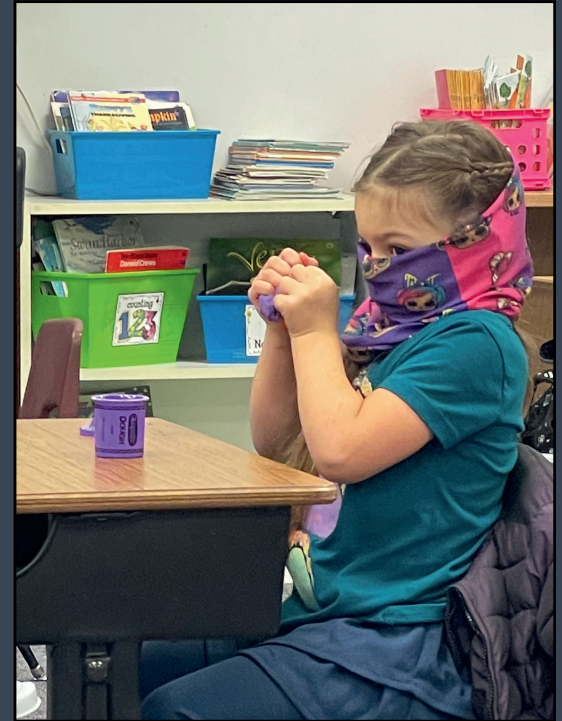
## Safety first for in-person learning

So far, reports of illness have been low with no onsite transmissions, according to Lakewood's district nurse Kelsey Mitchell, RN. She and her team of registered nurses are doing all they can to make sure that trend continues.

Masks are mandatory. Desks are arranged for social distancing. Ventilation systems have been upgraded to COVID standards. Each classroom has a clear plastic shield to allow for personalized instruction. Soon free diagnostic testing will be offered onsite for any student or staff member showing symptoms.

Protective equipment (PPE) and disinfecting supplies are in abundance. Staff received training on the correct use and disposal of each item. When an exposure occurs, nurses have a detailed response plan. Fortunately, Lakewood schools have a registered nurse for each school. State funding would allocate just a fraction of a single nurse for the entire K-12 student enrollment. In the past, the remaining nurses were funded by the local Educational Programs and Operations Levy.

The renewal of this levy was not approved by voters in 2020. Current funding is coming from the school district's fund balance (savings account). To read more about this story visit our website at [www.lwsd.wednet.edu](http://www.lwsd.wednet.edu)



## Budget Advisory volunteers begin new round of reduction advice

Once again, volunteers have stepped up to offer their best advice to help Lakewood schools balance their budget. Just like your family, public schools must offset expenses by revenue. When income runs short then families must trim costs or dip into their savings to make ends meet. Your public schools must do the same. Unfortunately, Lakewood has less revenue than in past years. Two proposals in 2020 to renew the local Educational Programs and Operations Levy were not approved by local voters. This local levy helped fill the gap between what it takes to provide a quality education for Lakewood students and the amount of money the state provides.

When approved by voters, local levies are collected twice a year - spring and fall. This collection spans two school years. In the spring of 2020, a similar advisory group identified \$4.3 million to overcome the loss of the first collection. This included not filling open positions, cutting training, eliminating the school resource officer program and other reductions as well as dipping into the school district's fund balance (savings account). Now it is time to fill the second half of the gap - an estimated \$2.5 to \$3 million for the 2021-2022 school year. Budget Advisory volunteers offer their perspective on priorities to inform decisions School Board members and district leaders will make to reduce expenses. The volunteers' work is expected to conclude by the end of March.

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