

Dear Governor Sisolak,

The Board of Trustees of the Elko County School District hereby requests that you revisit the current directives restricting student access to full-time in-person education, athletic competition, and activities as follows:

1. Relax the requirements for social distancing in secondary schools to three feet or less; thus, allowing more students to attend in-person instruction more frequently.
2. Relax or eliminate restrictions on athletics and activities allowing for regular competitions and tournaments as well as allow a minimum of 50% capacity for spectators to attend competitions.

The six foot social distancing requirement at the secondary level not only restricts the number of students on our campuses, in part due to infrastructure limitations in our county, but also restricts best practices in education. Interacting with peers has long been an essential part of a healthy educational environment. Under the current directives students are now being physically and; thus, emotionally distanced. An alarming number of students are failing, experiencing high rates of depression and anxiety, dropping out, or moving to other less restrictive states. The effects of the current limitations and directives on our students and staff in the state of Nevada are both troubling and dangerous. In an effort to fight the spread of Covid-19 our students are suffering academically, physically, socially, and emotionally. While attempting to curb the impact of Covid we are creating a mental health pandemic which will have a negative impact on our society for decades.

Along with relaxing the social distancing requirements for our secondary schools, relaxing or eliminating restrictions on athletics and activities must take place immediately. The NFL, NBA, NCAA and even local club leagues are competing. Restricting high school competition eliminates the opportunity to compete for many students, but especially our underprivileged students. Our students need competition, not just modified practices. Our students need the social and emotional processes that accompany competition and carry them through life. They need support from their parents and community when they compete. Competition drives many of our students to strive for success in athletics and in the classroom. We urge you not only to loosen the restrictions on sports and activities but allow tournaments to be conducted pursuant to these relaxed directives allowing community and parental support at a minimum of 50% attendance.

This is a crucial time in the lives of our students, a time where we can make changes for the better. We implore you to recognize the academic, physical, social, and emotional needs of Nevada's students. We ask you to relax the social distancing requirements in our secondary schools to three feet or less. We also request you relax or eliminate restrictions on athletics and activities allowing our students to compete and fans to support them in these turbulent and unsettling times. Let us not trade a pandemic, which can be managed via good hygiene and a vaccine, for a mental health pandemic of massive proportions.

Sincerely,

ECSD Board of Trustees