

Bend-La Pine Schools' Return to Schools

Family Update: Tuesday, September 15

Dear Families,

As I welcome you all to the start of the 2020-21 school year, I want to thank all our Bend-La Pine Schools' staff who have worked tireless hours to be ready: teachers learning new ways to engage and educate students, administrators building new schedules, custodial and maintenance teams making our buildings safe, instructional technology staff keeping our learning tools and systems operational...the list is endless.

Thanks to the preparedness of our teams, and the ever improving COVID-19 health metrics for Deschutes County, we are in a position to phase in our BALANCED/hybrid model, bringing your Kindergarten, first, second and third (K-3) grade students back to the classroom beginning October 5.

We are excited about the opportunity to bring smaller groups of K-3 students back to safe, healthy classrooms in the weeks to come.

The following are answers to questions you may have about this transition.

What will my K-3 student's schedule look like in a BALANCED/hybrid schedule?

In our BALANCED/hybrid model, students will continue with distance learning three days each week; but they will also spend two full days in their classrooms learning face-to-face with their classroom teachers.

Will Class Sizes be Smaller and Distancing Increased?

Yes. In order to reduce class sizes and increase physical distancing of desks and students while at school, we plan to divide students into two roughly equal groups.

How will Classes be Established?

Students will stay with their current teacher. Classrooms will be split, generally, with last names beginning with the letters A-K will attending in person on Mondays and Thursdays, and participating in distance learning Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Students with last names beginning with the letters L-Z will be attending in person on Tuesdays and Fridays, and participating in distance learning Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays.

If students in the same household have different last names that would put them in different in-person instruction days, families will have the option of switching students to the same days (more details to follow next week).

If K-3 students and families have special requests for particular days due to child care needs, they can complete request forms next week. These will be granted on a "space available" basis.

What about Transportation and Meals?

Transportation and meals will be provided at school for 'in-person' school days. Grab-and-Go meals will continue to be available to families when their students are not in-person learning at school.

At a Glance Transition*

Date	Action
Sept. 15	Discuss at Board Meeting plans to move to Balanced/Hybrid learning for students in grades K-3 on Oct. 5
Week of Sept. 28	K-3 Transition Schedule, teacher prep
Week of Oct. 5	K-3 Orientation Week, students attend one day in person
Week of Oct. 12	K-3 Balanced/Hybrid learning begins, two days in person

**Plan is dependent upon Deschutes County continuing to meet health metrics outlined by the Oregon Department of Education.*

What is the Transition Schedule?

In the two weeks preceding full implementation of a hybrid schedule, school staff will prepare physical spaces and plan for both distance and in-person classroom instruction.

The transition schedule for grades K-3, which we will share with families in an update next week, will move away from “live” meetings on WebEx to teacher-facilitated activities that include pre-recorded video and audio lessons, as well as other learning activities. This transition schedule will look very similar to what students will experience during their distance-learning days in a hybrid schedule.

The transition will include an ‘Orientation’ week for our K-3 students.

What is Orientation Week?

During the week preceding full implementation of a hybrid schedule, schools at all levels will be working with smaller groups of students. K-3 students will attend one day with approximately one quarter of their classmates during orientation week.

The goals of orientation week are 1) to help students connect in person to teachers and classmates; 2) to help students practice safe and healthy skills such as physical distancing and correct mask wearing; and 3) to give staff time to “practice” school safety protocols with fewer students.

Ready to Learn

From the very first discussions last spring about returning to school, the district has been committed to balancing as best we can two critical goals: 1) a safe learning environment for students, families, and staff; and 2) high levels of learning for each and every student.

We know that for many of our learners, especially our youngest students and those with special learning needs, distance learning can never be as effective as in-person instruction. We are ready and eager to get our youngest students back to the classroom safely, and soon, in our balanced/hybrid setting.

As we transition to in-person learning, our classrooms, hallways, lunchrooms, buses...every aspect of our operations...will be ready. We will ensure that we meet or exceed every single one of the state requirements. Staff will be taking time to training and prepare, as well as to adjust instructional plans and schedules to yet another mode of teaching: balanced/hybrid.

COVID Case Counts

We will be following the Oregon Department of Education's Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance as we plan our October 5 move to balanced/hybrid in-person instruction for our youngest learners. We are thankful for this community effort, reducing COVID-19 in our communities, that has allowed us to begin to plan to go back, and we ask that everyone continues to be diligent for the sake of our children.

Grades 4-12 will continue in Comprehensive Distance Learning (CDL) with the first possible day in balanced/hybrid to be October 26. We will continue to monitor case counts and will announce any plan to move to balanced/hybrid for grades 4-12 by October 12, If not sooner.

Healthy Communities Make In-Person Learning Possible

Beyond the most recent challenges, our district's responses to the instructional challenges brought on by the pandemic have formed and changed a multitude of times this summer, as state guidance shifts in reaction to its trajectory and new learnings about safe practices. I wish I could say this will not happen again, but over the course of the school year we may well need to move between CDL and levels of in-person instruction in response to changes in the pandemic.

Where to Learn More?

We will be sharing information in a variety of ways:

- District updates over the next three weeks
- Town halls the week of September 28
- Web page development and launch next week

In closing, I thank all our families for your resilience and patience. I wish all families a safe, healthy, and learning-enriched school year. Please continue connecting with staff, schools, and our district leaders with your questions.

Sincerely,

Lora Nordquist
Interim Superintendent