

March 20, 2020  
3:15 p.m. Update

Bend-La Pine Schools' Families,

As I shared with you on Wednesday, Bend-La Pine Schools has a plan to deliver a variety of strategies that will engage our students to continue learning, connect with their teachers and each other, and stay positive as we get back to 'class' on Wednesday, April 1.

I have since thought a lot about questions that you might have regarding this effort and have started a FAQ of sorts to provide answers. I have also been thinking about mental health supports and will also share those here as well.

#### **CONTINUATION OF LEARNING PLAN**

##### **Q: How will information about the continuation of learning be shared?**

Classroom teachers will communicate directly with families and students about next steps, materials and expectations. Each classroom will be customizing information for their students.

##### **Q: When will families learn details about supplemental curriculum that will be used through April 28?**

Families can expect to hear from teachers on Tuesday, March 31. Teachers will have instruction for picking up materials in person or receiving materials electronically.

##### **Q: Why wait?**

For Bend-La Pine Schools, the days missed from March 16-20 are being treated similar to an emergency weather closure. Some staff provided students with supplemental materials or provided opportunities for students to make up missed work assigned previously, but there was no expectation for school work to be distributed during this time. March 23-27 was already set aside for spring break. On March 30-31, teachers and other staff will train, plan, and begin to implement the district-wide Continuation of Learning Plan, which launches on April 1.

##### **Q: Can I get all of my child's supplemental materials now?**

Teachers will be preparing their classroom materials, starting March 30 and 31. They are approaching our planning in two-week windows. These materials will be made available to students, from their teachers, in shorter, manageable lessons and activities – not all at once.

##### **Q: What if my child needs personal belongings, their iPad, or other materials from the school?**

We are currently working on plans that will allow students and families to gather necessary items and materials without violating any of the current state recommendations regarding social distancing.

##### **Q: Is this online school?**

This is an opportunity for our staff to provide students and families support for continued learning until students can return to their classrooms, but is not an online school/program. Students will remain enrolled at their home school.

##### **Q: Is this work mandatory?**

For students who complete assignments, teachers will provide appropriate feedback. Students who are not able to access or complete work will be provided time to do so once in-person classes resume, if the work will be factored into students' final course grades.

**Q: What about high school students, especially seniors? How will they get the credits they need to graduate?**

While we don't have the answer to this question right now, students, families, and staff should know that this is a major priority for the Oregon Department of Education. We will share information as soon as we have it.

**Q: What about graduation ceremonies?**

A: At this time, we have not made any changes to planned graduation ceremonies.

**Q: What will supplemental materials look like for young learners? Or those without school issued iPads?**

Materials for K-2 students will be primarily paper packets, supplemented by teacher videos, etc. Materials for 3-12 students will be primarily digital.

**Q: Is a wireless connection needed to complete work?**

For most students a home internet connection will be important so they can access and complete assignments and stay connected with their teachers.

That said, we recognize that even with numerous technological supports, there are barriers to remote learning for some students at all levels, including different levels of home access to technology. We will work to remove these individual barriers as they arise.

**Q: What if I don't have internet?**

Access to learning for all students is a priority of ours. We will be distributing a limited number of hotspots to accommodate those families who do not currently have internet access. We also encourage families to contact local cable and phone providers for possible no cost options for internet connections as some providers are currently providing these services free to students.

Paper packets will also be utilized at the elementary level and for other students 6-12 who need it, and digital learning at the secondary level can be downloaded to Google Drive in order to provide access offline, if necessary. All teachers can be contacted via phone in lieu of email for families that do not have internet.

**Q: What message do you have for parents wondering how they will be able to handle working from home, educating their children, watching small children during the closure?**

These are unprecedented times, to be sure. All of us will do the best that we can, recognizing none of it will be perfect. It's important that we all give ourselves and each other some grace.

**Q: Will I still be able to connect with other school staff?**

While classroom teachers will be the primary designers of instructional materials and activities, all our staff — counselors, specialists, speech pathologists, educational assistants, etc. — will be working to provide support and connections for students and families, as well.

Classroom teachers, specialists, counselors, and others will be committed to regular outreach and personal communication with students. Google Classroom, WebEx, emails, and phone calls are all tools that we may use to connect to promote communication.

**Q: What if I have questions?**

You're not alone in this, and we are here to support you! We appreciate you learning alongside us as we embark on this unique opportunity. Please contact your principal or teacher at any time with your questions.

## **MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES**

I shared some links to national resources around mental health in my Wednesday communication, but want to follow up with some local information and resources as well. I will continue with my FAQ format.

### **Q: Can you provide some tips for maintaining mental and emotional health during this crisis?**

A: Health officials acknowledge that feelings of anxiety and stress are normal during times like these.

Social distancing is critical to physical health, both for individuals and to protect the health of our community and our frontline responders. But mental health professionals suggest that it's important to continue to make safe social connections at this time. Safe connections might include: regular phone calls, group texts, FaceTime, email, going on walks with household family members, time with a family pet and more.

### **Q: Who can I call for help?**

A: If you or your children are in need of free mental health support, you can call the COVID-19 info line at 541-699-5109 to request to be connected with resources. Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

You can also call the Deschutes County Crisis Line 541-322-7500 ext. 9 and/or visit the Deschutes County walk-in center at 2577 NE Courtney, Bend, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### **Q: What resources are available for students?**

A: Students can refer to the FirstStep app on their iPads, or you can download it at home on your personal devices. Inside the FirstStep app, student will find links to the Oregon Youthline (a free, confidential teen-to-teen crisis and help line; teens are available 4 to 10 p.m. daily; adults available all other times) 1-877-968-8491 or text teen2teen to 839863.

### **Q: Do you have tips for managing stress and anxiety?**

A: Our partners at Deschutes County Behavioral Health offered the following tips:

- Take care of yourself: Get enough sleep, eat healthy, exercise.
- Talk to others: Feelings of anxiety are normal in a situation like this. Reach out and talk to people in your community who can provide support.
- Avoid rumors and inaccurate information: Rely on official sources for information, including Deschutes County for countywide updates: [www.deschutes.org/covid19](http://www.deschutes.org/covid19); Oregon Health Authority for statewide updates: [www.healthoregon.org/coronavirus](http://www.healthoregon.org/coronavirus); Centers for Disease Control for nationwide updates: [www.cdc.gov/covid19](http://www.cdc.gov/covid19).
- Do what you can: Even when some things are out of our control, there are always things that we as individuals and communities can control.
  - Wash your hands often.
  - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
  - Stay home when you are sick.
  - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
  - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Ask for help: Local residents can reach out 24-hours-a-day to area crisis lines:
  - Deschutes County 800-875-7364; Crook County 541-323-5530; and Jefferson County 541-475-4822.
- Seek help if you're struggling with persistent inability to sleep, increasing drug or alcohol use, an overwhelming sense of depression or panic, urges to harm yourself or others, or an inability to take care of yourself or those who depend on you. Please do not call 911 unless you're experiencing a medical emergency. Instead, call a crisis line or the nonemergency COVID-19 info line at 541-699-5109.

- Reminder: Taking precautions is altruistic. When we remind ourselves that others are benefitting from our actions, it makes sacrifices easier to bear. By staying home and taking precautions, we are helping to keep vulnerable populations safe and supporting our frontline responders.

**Q: How about tips for parents?**

A: Our partners at Deschutes County Behavioral Health offered the following tips:

- Remain calm and reassuring: If true, emphasize to your children that they and your family are fine.
- Make yourself available: Let your children talk and give them plenty of time and attention.
- Talk to children in language they can understand: The CDC suggests telling children that, from what doctors have seen so far, most kids aren't getting very sick. In fact, most people who have gotten COVID-19 haven't gotten very sick. Only a small group have had serious problems. Keep the conversation going. Make time to check in regularly as the situation develops. Take cues from your child if they become afraid or overwhelmed offer comfort. If you need help, seek professional health.
- Avoid language that stigmatizes or assigns blame: Remind children that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race, ethnicity or national origin.
- Monitor television viewing and social media: Try to limit children's exposure to media and talk about what they're seeing. Use only reliable sources of information.
- Maintain healthy behaviors and household routines: Serve nutritious meals, encourage adequate sleep and exercise, and maintain household routines to the extent possible.
- Teach strategies to prevent infection: Remind children to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the length of two "Happy Birthday" songs) when they come in from outside, before they eat, and after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom.
- Find more info: <http://bit.ly/COVID19-TipsForParents>

Thank you for making your way through this message, which was packed with information. I hope that you find it helpful as you transition into what was originally scheduled as our 2020 Spring Break. Please find time to enjoy yourselves and implement some of the great tips, above.

I thank you for your continued patience and resilience and support of our students and staff. You are very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Shay Mikalson,  
Superintendent