

March 31, 2020
10 a.m. Update

Good Morning,

Yesterday, I sent an email to families, students, and community members as we returned from spring break and collectively began to work, building-by-building, department-by-department, to prepare to provide the very best learning environment and options we can for our students during this unprecedented time.

This morning, I write to our Bend-La Pine Schools families to let you know that late last night the state of Oregon, through the Oregon Department of Education, announced a seismic shift in the way our state's education system will operate into the future - from advising Oregon public schools to provide only short-term supplemental learning, to directing more substantive, graded, potentially credit-bearing distance education for all students. (We expect more details from the state on credit delivery over the next few days.)

To understand the context in which we're operating, I want to remind you of all the shifts that have occurred over the last two weeks, including Oregon's spring break:

- On March 12, Oregon announced that our students would lose seven school days.
- On March 17, Oregon extended the closure to more than a month of school days.
- And last night, Oregon's leadership stated that there is a very real potential that our students, like those in many other states, may not return to school this academic year.

This shift by the state from 'supplemental education' to 'graded' is what our students deserve. It gives us a pathway that we did not previously have to provide credit for the work they do now, and through the school current year. It provides a path to graduation for our seniors, gives our youngest learners the skills and encouragement they need to advance, and supports all learners with the teaching and learning they need to be successful.

Now, with new state direction, our teachers have the ability to do what they do best—connect with every student; be allowed to report on progress and provide official grades; and ultimately provide our students with credit-earning options in high school for the last term of this academic year.

[Oregon's Distance Learning for All](#) effort, while it will present challenges, allows us flexibility from the state to continue teaching and learning during this closure. It also draws on our core value to know every student by name, strength and need – no matter the challenge at hand.

We will need the deep support, patience, and resilience of every member of the Bend-La Pine Schools' team, our families, and our students, as we shift to a model that delivers students with an education from afar. We are fortunate that our work to date has positioned us to be in a better place than may others to make this shift, yet this is a herculean task. We accept it. Today is day one of this new effort.

We are committed and ready to take on this challenge - to turn our traditional brick and mortar education system on its head and temporarily deliver a bit of the classroom experience to you at home or wherever you are. We will be here to support you, and your student(s), and we embark on this journey, together.

I realize there are still more questions than answers, but I wanted you to have this information and an initial starting point for today without delay. As always, I will continue to follow up with more information as soon as it becomes available and as plans are determined. And if you haven't already heard directly from your students' teachers/school, expect that they will reach out in the next day or two.

Thank you for your strength, your compassion, and your ongoing efforts on behalf of our students.

Best,

Shay Mikalson, Superintendent