

May 5, 2021

Bend-La Pine Schools' Families,

COVID-19 is spreading fast in Oregon right now, driven by new, more contagious variants. Oregon leads the nation for rate of increase in cases over the last two weeks. Cases among youth are increasing at alarming speed. Spread of COVID-19 among youth continues to be connected to parties, carpooling, BBQs, and social gatherings. These cases are having a profound impact on our teaching and learning in our schools.

The number of students and staff who are unable to attend and work in our schools is at an all-time high. Hundreds of students throughout the district have been quarantined as a result of rules that call for quarantine of 'close contact' to those with COVID-19. Of the many pressures our schools are facing, one of the greatest is finding time to support the large numbers of students in isolation/quarantine, or those students who have returned from lengthy absences due to these issues, particularly at the middle and high school levels.

Beginning on Monday, May 10, our teaching and learning delivery model will be adjusted at middle and high schools in response to the current surge of cases in our communities, which is in turn impacting our schools. This change will provide staff additional time to support students both inside and outside of the classroom.

### **HIGH SCHOOLS**

At Bend Senior, La Pine, Mountain View, and Summit high schools, we are shortening the length of the school day for most students. **Students will be released at 1:35 p.m. on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.** From 1:35 to 3:45 p.m., teachers will focus time on students who are isolated, quarantined or in need of more support.

Students who ride the bus will stay on campus, with lunch and then supervised study periods. Other students may also stay for support, make-up assignments, etc.

**There is no change to the Wednesday schedule; students will be released at 2:15 p.m. (regular time).**

Realms High School, Skyline High School, and Bend Tech Academy, our small high schools, will stay on their current schedule.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOLS**

At Cascade, High Desert, Pacific Crest, Pilot Butte and Sky View middle schools, students will be in person on the current bell schedule on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Wednesdays will be "distance learning days" for students, with a focus on connections with students who have significant absences, are in quarantine, or are struggling with coursework.

**On Wednesdays, students will be remote, with time to complete course work that has previously been assigned by their teachers.** Teachers will be available for extra tutoring and support via scheduled office hours, which schools will share with families.

Three Rivers, REALMS, and La Pine Middle School, our small middle schools, will continue with in-person classes five days a week.

### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

No change.

Every day we hear from families, local businesses, students and staff, who are worried that the surge in cases may lead to our district returning to all remote instruction. Our goal is to keep our schools open for in-person instruction, so long as we feel we can do so safely and effectively. We believe our students learn best when inside the classroom and that will not change. Moving to distancing learning for a period of time is a district decision that will be made on a school-by-school basis in response to large number of cases or quarantined students at that school.

You can help us keep schools open by working hard to lower the chance of spread in our community, using the same precautions that we have been taking throughout this pandemic: wear a face covering, keep gatherings small and outdoors, and get vaccinated as soon as possible.

Joe Sluka, president and CEO of St. Charles Health System, shared the following in a recent message to the community: “We are in a race to vaccinate as many people as possible against COVID-19 before new variants of the virus catch up with us. Unfortunately, as of this moment, it feels like we are losing that race. COVID-19 is spreading in Central Oregon and the people being hospitalized are getting younger.”

We wish we did not have to change course so close to the end of the year, and our goal is to make adjustments that will have as little negative impact as possible on our families. Our decision-making is always based on the best information we have at the time and is always centered on students and what we believe will best serve them.

I firmly believe we can finish this year strong. I am so proud of our students, who inspire us every day with their resilience, passion, and determination.

Sincerely,

Lora Nordquist  
Interim Superintendent