

## **Bend-La Pine Schools' Return to Schools September 25 Family Update**

Dear Families,

I hope this week's update finds you well, and I hope all our families have enjoyed a respite from the smoky conditions over the last few days. I have a lot to share, from the rise in COVID-19 cases being reported in Deschutes County, to Monday's Town Hall events with details about K-3 hybrid learning, and changes to elementary school start times.

### **Metrics for Returning to In-Person Instruction**

First, we have seen a steady rise in COVID-19 cases over the last two weeks. As a reminder, our district is **required** to follow the guidelines established by the Oregon Department of Education, in consultation with the Oregon Health Authority. What these rules mean for us locally is that in order to start in BALANCED/hybrid instruction for our K-3 students, all of the following metrics must be met:

- No known cases of COVID-19 within the individual school community; AND
- The case rate in Deschutes County is below 30 cases per 100,000 in the preceding 7 days for the past three weeks in a row (for K-3 return); AND
- The test positivity rate is at or below 5% in the preceding 7 days for the past three weeks in a row.

For the week ending September 20, both our county's number of cases and positivity rate have increased: we had 23.8 cases per 100,000 and a positivity rate of 4.1%.

### **IF COVID-19 CASES CONTINUE TO RISE**

We receive official notice of our county metrics each Monday. If any of the metrics above are not met this Monday, September 28, we are **required** by the Oregon Department of Education to restart our calendars and meet the metrics for the following three weeks, which would make October 26 our earliest start date for any in-person instruction, rather than our current anticipated start date of October 5.

We know this constantly changing situation poses a tremendous challenge for everyone: students, families, and staff. As a district, we can make these important commitments:

- To return students to in-person instruction as soon as the state metrics indicate that it is safe;
- To create and maintain environments in our schools that are safe for students and staff;
- To educate and engage our students to the best of our abilities, whether in person or from a distance; and
- To remain flexible and agile, as much as we are able as a large organization, as all families, companies and organizations must during this time.

### **K-3 Hybrid Town Hall Events, Monday, September 28**

Please join our town halls Monday, September 28, at 6 p.m. (English) and 7:30 p.m. (Spanish). You can view the events live on our district [Facebook page](#) or [Vimeo account](#). The videos will also be available to view any time after the events on our [district website](#).

District leaders will share our most recent metrics and what they mean for a pending start of K-3 in-person, balanced/hybrid instruction. In addition, they will share learning and safety details to help families understand what their students' learning days will look like in a balanced/hybrid model and the extensive work being completed to prepare healthy spaces to welcome them back.

Our Operations teams have been working since March, readying our schools for your students' return. Three million square feet of floor space has been cleaned and disinfected, meal service has been modified, desks have been separated, bus routes have been adjusted to carry fewer students, and more.

You can learn more about our BALANCED/hybrid plans, and answers to frequently asked questions on our [FAQ webpage](#).

### **Keeping Students Safe: New Staggered Start Times**

As I just mentioned, we have planned new bus routes so that each student can sit by themselves in assigned seats (siblings will share seats) to increase distancing between students and decrease cohort sizes on the bus. Each bus will carry fewer students at a time on shorter routes. In order to nearly double our routes each morning, we will be implementing new start and end times to elementary school days to accommodate the transportation adjustment.

When our students return to K-3 BALANCED/hybrid instruction, schools will be on the following schedules:

#### **7:45 a.m. to 2:15 p.m.**

Bear Creek  
Buckingham  
Elk Meadow  
Juniper  
La Pine  
North Star  
Rosland  
Silver Rail  
Three Rivers  
William E. Miller

#### **8 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

Amity Creek (at North Star)  
Highland  
Westside Village

#### **8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Ensworth  
High Lakes  
Lava Ridge  
Pine Ridge  
Ponderosa  
R.E. Jewell

Families, we wish you well as you continue the learning journey this fall. As always, I thank you for your patience and grace as our staff, students, and families navigate our challenging environment.

Take care. Be well.

Lora Nordquist  
Interim Superintendent