

SCHOOLS: Staff is working on distance learning

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families to get a better understanding of what resources they need to help us achieve the ‘Distance Learning for All’ directive from the state,” he wrote.

Scholl’s letter came three days after Oregon Department of Education leader Colt Gill said in an interview with *The Oregonian* that we are facing “the strong possibility that our students may not come back through our school-house doors this academic year.”

Sisters, along with the rest of the state, suspended school attendance on March 16 and the district’s two week spring break covered March 21-April 5 so Sisters is effectively a week off schedule from the rest of the state as far as the guideline laid out by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to implement distance learning. That does not mean the district is lagging behind.

Scholl explained, “In this first week back, as we gather this information, staff will provide supplemental and review materials to re-engage our students. It is our goal to get supplemental material out as quickly as possible and estimate that we should start disseminating materials by Wednesday, April 8. By Friday, April 10, it is our goal to get technology and other learning materials into the hands of those that need it as we transition to distance learning on April 13.”

The state guideline suggests that all school districts “go live” by April 13, which matches Scholl’s goal. Clear communication with families is going to be crucial and will have to be multi-faceted in order to reach everyone. “This is an ever-evolving situation and we will do all we can to keep families updated,” said Scholl.

Scholl acknowledged in his letter that this alternate way of doing school is rife with challenges. “We will need the deep support, patience, and resilience of every member of the Sisters School District including our families and our students, as we shift to a model that attempts to educate students remotely.”

How materials and resources will be delivered and how students will communicate back with teachers has not yet been totally mapped out, according to Scholl, but staff have already begun preparing.

He said, “This distance learning is not just about online education and may,

in fact, include a blend of other modes, such as phone calls, recorded video lessons, Canvas, Google Meet and paper packets and materials.”

Pressing questions from families thus far include what will be done for students who don’t have technology (WiFi and/or computer) to access education as well as information about school-based food service.

“This is an ever-evolving situation and we will do all we can to keep families updated.”
— Curt Scholl

Scholl said, “Our primary goal the week of April 6 will be for staff to survey all families to determine what needs are out there, including school meals and technology.” He noted that during the last three weeks about 50 students were being served meals and he expects that number to grow.

Social, emotional and mental-health support for students can be tricky when it comes to not being able to meet in person, but district counselors are working on an outreach plan to help ensure support is available, according to Scholl.

Scholl concluded his letter urging everyone to take care of themselves and their families.

“Again, I remind you to take the time to take care of yourselves and those that you love,” he said. “We have an incredibly strong community and together we will continue to navigate the challenges that this crisis presents.”

BIRDWATCHING: Now is the time to pick up hobby

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western-most migratory passage for birds and an attractive home for many fascinating species. Getting to know and recognize the various birds that are part of our extraordinary, wild community is incredibly rewarding.

The East Cascades Audubon Society’s (ECAS) premier birding event, the Dean Hale Woodpecker Festival was held in Sisters last spring. People from all over the world took in this event because they had the opportunity to see all 11 species of woodpeckers in the Sisters and Central Oregon region, and also potentially to observe 200 additional birds of the area.

Pick up a book on local birds that will describe the best food to attract them, whether residents or just passing through the area. (You can order from Paulina Springs Books for curbside pickup or home delivery). Bluebirds love mealworms. Hummingbirds like floral nectars and orioles prefer citrus flavors, while jays dine on sunflower seeds, etc.

Check out the birding sites online. Birding Oregon is a Facebook group open to all active birders and bird photographers who wish to share their passion and knowledge in a community setting. The group focuses on sharing birding experiences, sightings of rare birds, descriptions of interesting behavior, and helping those new to the hobby.

Nick Boro, a Birding Oregon member, grew up

in Sisters and is now living in Portland and has multiple bird feeders on his small patio.

He noted, “My feeders attract goldfinches, house finches, house sparrows, song sparrows, Anna’s hummingbirds, juncos and crows. These birds frequently come for food and nesting materials from my coconut plant basket. I work and attend school from home, and seeing these birds fluttering around helps keep me sane and brightens my days.”

Spring is an excellent time to be a beginning birder. We’re at the start of spring migration, that wonderful time when millions of birds of all shapes and sizes flutter their way north from the tropics to breed.

April and May are peak months for birds both passing through your backyard or past your window on their way to

nesting grounds elsewhere. You might even get a couple nesting and raising young right outside your window. New species will be arriving every day!

You’re just in time to hang some bird boxes. Many bird species will take up residence in boxes, which mimic natural cavities in trees, but birds are pretty particular about moving in. Before you start throwing up birdhouses, please check out Cornell’s Nest Watch site (www.nestwatch.org) which tells you how big to make the hole, which direction the box should face, how high off the ground, and other tips to help you get started.

Don’t have a backyard? There are still plenty of birds to see from your apartment window. Hang a feeder on your deck or porch and hang around for a while; some birds will take notice.

A bird checklist to get you started...

- American Goldfinch
- American Kestrel
- Bald Eagle
- Barred Owl
- Black Capped Chickadee
- Blackbird
- Blue Grouse
- California Quail
- Calliope Hummingbird
- Cooper’s Hawk
- Cow Bird
- Crow
- Dark-Eyed Junco
- Downy Woodpecker
- Eurasian Collared Dove
- Golden Eagle
- Great Horned Owl
- Grosbeak
- House Wren
- Magpie
- Mourning Dove
- Northern Flicker
- Nuthatch
- Pheasant
- Pinyon Jay
- Purple Finch
- Pygmy Owl
- Raven
- Red-Tailed Hawk
- Red-Winged Blackbird
- Robin
- Starling
- Stellar’s Jay
- Turkey Vulture
- Western Blue Bird
- Western Meadowlark
- White-Headed Woodpecker
- Wild Turkey

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