

**SCHOOL:** Half of SMS and SHS students will be on site at a time

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is referred to as the “hybrid model” since early in the school year. Students attend Monday through Thursday full-time and work from home on Fridays. The middle school and high school have been conducting school under Comprehensive Distance Learning (CDL) since last April, but will soon have the opportunity to attend in-person classes on a part-time basis using the hybrid model.

Scholl and building administrators will send out further information in the days ahead, making sure families have a clear understanding now of how the middle and high schools will operate under the new plans.

The opening of schools in Sisters comes after Governor Kate Brown announced the move to making school-opening guidelines “advisory” rather than mandatory earlier this month.

In his January 6 letter, Scholl explained that under the new advisory model, fifth and sixth grades at the middle school and ninth and 10th grades at the high school will begin in-person hybrid instruction on January 25, while seventh and eighth grades and 11th and 12th will begin the following week on February 1.

Details are being distributed by principals Alison Haney and Joe Hosang via emails and physical letters in the days ahead, explaining what the daily schedule will look like, how students will enter and move through the school, and what is expected of students and families. Both principals urge families to contact their school if they have not received updates by January 14.

Due to the need to manage social distancing, only half of the student population will be on site at any given time at both schools.

At Sisters Middle School

(SMS) students are split up alphabetically with half attending Monday and Wednesday and half attending Tuesday and Thursday for full days and all six periods, according to Haney. The balance of the week students will continue with CDL.

Haney explained that she and her staff will be using the first week or two back to identify those students who need additional support or remediation and make necessary adjustments that allow some smaller cohorts to attend school Monday through Thursday.

An informational video will be delivered to middle school students and families via email on the afternoon of Thursday, January 14, to help everyone understand schedules, protocols, cohorts and more.

“We want all parents to be well-informed,” Haney said.

She urges parents who are not receiving updates from SMS to call the school (541-549-2099) and verify email addresses and contact information. The school will provide printed copies of information for families that prefer it over email if it is requested.

In addition, Haney will conduct a question-and-answer meeting via Zoom on January 19 to cover any remaining questions before the start up.

Haney, understanding that some families may not feel ready to have their children start in-person instruction,

needs to hear from families as soon as possible so proper teacher preparation and building-use planning can be accomplished. Both the middle school and high school have the capacity to have students enroll in Sisters Educational Options (SEO) as an alternative to the hybrid model.

Sisters High School students will largely continue in the same class schedule that has been implemented since the start of the school year, but now with the long-awaited chance to be in the building with their teachers and classmates.

Students will continue taking classes over six-week terms that include two core classes during the middle portion of the day, with the potential of other classes early and late in the day, depending on students’ needs and choices. In general, ninth and 10th grades will attend school Mondays and Wednesdays, while 11th and 12th grades will be in-person Tuesdays and Thursdays. Details of how to manage elective courses that have all grade levels within them, such as art, are being worked out, according to Hosang.

Haney summed up what most school staff are likely feeling when she said, “To say that the task before us is immense is an understatement, but we are more than up for the challenge as we can’t wait to have our students back in the building to finish the year ‘Sisters Strong.’”

# Safety concerns arise as students set to return

By **Charlie Kanzig**  
Correspondent

Even as they welcome the chance to have students back in the classroom at Sisters Middle School and Sisters High School, staff has concerns about safety in conditions where COVID-19 cases continue to threaten and a vaccine is not yet widely available.

At both schools, staff has been working diligently to get safety protocols in place so that everyone can remain as safe as possible.

Sisters High School staff met for two hours on Friday, January 8, to continue preparations and, according to Principal Joe Hosang, the staff is working together well to give students a good learning environment and experience. The staff is excited to have the kids back, according to Hosang, but naturally there is some apprehension about health and safety.

Hosang acknowledged the health concerns for his staff who still await the chance to be vaccinated.

“As the building leader, I take staff concerns to heart,” he said. “We are cautiously excited to have the students back and meet

them where they are after being away so long.”

Speaking as the local teacher union president, SMS teacher Michele Hammer said, “Of course there is concern regarding the spread of the virus to staff and what can happen if multiple staff are exposed and forced to quarantine or become ill. Right now teachers have control over their bubble and exposure risk; once students are back that control is taken away.”

She continued, “We are concerned that the same thing that happened in Crook County could happen here, when they had so many staff quarantined they could not operate school and were forced to close.”

Sisters School District teachers are awaiting news on when they can be vaccinated and the Oregon Education Association is pushing to have teachers prioritized further given the return to in-person learning, according to Hammer.

There are some indications that staff may get the first dose before the end of the month, according to Sisters Schools District Superintendent Curt Scholl.

*Students and families are urged to read all email messages and mailings from the school for complete information about bus schedules, drop-off times and procedures, and comprehensive information about returning to in-school instruction in Sisters.*

**SCHOOL CONTACT:**  
Middle School phone: 541-549-2099  
High School phone: 541-549-4045  
Website: [www.ssd6.org](http://www.ssd6.org)

**IMPORTANT DATES:**  
Monday, January 25: Grades 5 and 6 begin at Sisters Middle School  
Monday, January 25: Grades 9 and 10 begin at Sisters High School  
Monday, February 1: Grades 7 and 8 begin at Sisters Middle School  
Monday, February 2: Grades 11 and 12 begin at Sisters High School



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