

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

School will look more normal this fall

Oregon schools should plan to offer 5 full days this fall

By **EDER CAMPUZANO**
The Oregonian

SALEM — School will look much more normal this fall, with students attending class in-person for five full days, teachers taking regular attendance and both going about unmasked during recess and other outdoor activities.

But the Oregon Department of Education, which is drafting its coronavirus mitigation guidelines for the new year, might still require students to wear face masks in classrooms and ask districts to offer an all-remote learning option.

The draft guidelines, which the agency will officially adopt in late July, are not final nor do they lay out exactly what the future holds for Oregon's approximately 560,000 public K-12 students.

But the document does provide a look at which pandemic policies and procedures that the Department of Education adopted last March the agency is likely to adjust or even drop as more Oregonians become vaccinated and the state creeps back toward normalcy.

The agency will likely encourage, rather than mandate, that schools keep children three feet apart "to the degree possible," a departure from its current guidance. It will also require districts to automatically unenroll a student upon a 10th consecutive absence, a state rule the Department of Education temporarily dropped "to serve students to the maximum extent possible."

The Department of Education also says it will relinquish its role in deciding when and whether districts can allow visitors inside school buildings, how to screen students for symptoms of COVID-19 and whether to split pupils into cohorts.

But the agency will still require districts to plan how they will isolate and quarantine students and tell families if there's a positive case in a school.

On the academic side, the department likely won't allow districts to keep a student from moving up a grade level or signing up for advanced classes in a math or English sequence based on how they performed during the pandemic.

Likewise, academic achievement over the last 14 months shouldn't bar students from participating in sports and other extracurriculars.

"You shouldn't limit a student's opportunity to advance in a course just based on what was happening to their performance during the pandemic," Cindy Hunt, the agency's manager for government and legal affairs, told the Oregon Senate Education Committee last week.

The advancement guidelines dovetail with a bill the House Education Committee approved that would waive the requirement for students in Oregon's classes of 2022, 2023 and 2024 to demonstrate basic proficiency in math, reading and writing in order to earn a diploma. The legislation is likely to be signed by Gov. Kate Brown after the Senate votes on it.

The Department of Education will also require that students who opt for remote learning next year take standardized tests and spend at least half of their time in class synchronously with their teacher.

The agency will officially adopt its new rules July 22.

Brown sets June 21 target to end limits

Oregon about 127,000 adults short of 70% vaccination goal

By **GARY A. WARNER**
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Nearly all COVID-19 restrictions could be lifted in as early as just over two weeks, Gov. Kate Brown said Friday, June 4.

The state is about 127,000 adults short of the goal of getting one shot of vaccine into 70% of eligible residents.

Once the state crosses the threshold, Brown said she would lift masking, business capacity, event size, social distance and other limits that Oregonians have dealt with for over a year.

"We can fully reopen — we can all look forward to that," she said.

Local health officials would then take over the daily decision-making and operations in counties from the Oregon Health Authority.

Brown said even very large events, such as the

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Lifting restrictions would include:

- End the risk level system for counties of lower, moderate, high and extreme
- End a state requirement for masks and face coverings in almost all settings. Exceptions would be airports, public transit, and health care settings that follow federal agency guidelines.
- End requirements for individuals to show vaccination verification in public venues and businesses.
- Allow K-12 students to attend school in-person, full time, five days per week.

Pendleton Round-Up in September, would be good to go once the state hits its target.

Oregon's statewide mark stood at 66.2% on June 2. OHA Director Pat Allen

K-12 guidance is being revised to support schools in safely delivering in-person instruction throughout the school day.

Current health and safety standards — including

"We can fully reopen — we can all look forward to that."

— **Kate Brown**, Oregon governor

said that if the current pace continues, the mark would be hit about June 21.

"This is not a slam dunk," he said.

Allen said the June 30 deadline set earlier in the year by the governor was well within reach.

"It will take a lot of work by a lot of people to get it done," Allen said.

indoor mask requirements — will remain in place in workplaces, schools and child care settings. Colleges and universities can make their own decisions on protocols after considering guidance from the Centers for Disease Control.

Brown said the move would not mean the pandemic was over in Oregon.

She will reexamine whether or not to lift her emergency order that gave her a wide latitude on public health decisions.

"The pandemic will not be over," she said.

To try to increase the vaccination rate toward the goal, many pharmacies will extend hours to reach out to more people who want shots.

"Some people are not vaccine resistant, but vaccine inconvenienced," Allen said.

Brown also reiterated plans to give away \$1 million to a vaccinated Oregonian, along with \$10,000 to a vaccinated person in each of the 36 counties. Scholarships worth \$100,000 are also being offered in the vaccination program.

Brown and OHA officials said it was time to push past the current levels of inoculation as medical evidence and state statistics show the impact of the virus has separated residents into two groups with very different likely futures.

Those with vaccination are almost completely free of infections, severe illness and death.

But the pandemic is still

"a shadow" across the state for those who are not inoculated. OHA said nine out of 10 deaths are currently in people who have no record of vaccination.

Children, immunocompromised and the those who have not been able to get vaccinated must still be considered when communities decide to what steps to take.

"There are still Oregonians who need to take extra precautions to feel and stay safe," Brown said.

Those battling cancer, immunocompromised Oregonians, and organ donors were among those still needing protection, to name a few. There are also many Oregon kids who are not yet eligible for a vaccine.

"So, it will remain incredibly important for Oregonians to continue making smart choices," Brown said.

OHA will continue to monitor the global pandemic and provide assistance and resources, but will increasingly advise local officials on measures to take.

OHA and CDC are expected to issue more guidance in coming days as the state nears the 70% goal.

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