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Office location:
4275 NE Halsey St., Portland, Oregon

Mailing address:
P.O. Box 13150, Portland, OR 97213

Phone: (503) 288-3311

Web address:
<http://nwlaborpress.org>

Editor & Manager: Michael Gutwig
Senior staff reporter: Don McIntosh
Office manager: Jill Lukens

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Washington AFL-CIO to hold online convention this year

The Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, will conduct its 2020 Constitutional Convention via Zoom video conference Sept. 23-25. The convention was previously scheduled to take place in July in Wenatchee, but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. All WSLC-affiliated unions have been sent a Convention Call indicating their voting strength and the number of delegates they can appoint. Rank-and-file members who want to represent their union as delegates should contact their local union for information about how to serve in this role. All will receive trainings and step-by-step instructions on how to participate via Zoom.




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... Should schools reopen?

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and active shooter drills, which are required under state law. And there's no way to do that under social distancing. And of course the Oregon Department of Education guidelines talks about isolating anybody with COVID symptoms. And any teacher will tell you that on any given day, there are a number of students who have stuffy noses. And what are we actually going to do when the school bus arrives and one or five or 20 kids have runny noses? The logistics of what this mean are just baffling to imagine, when we know COVID is rapidly spreading. There are so many questions that have not been figured out, like how do you move through the hallway maintaining social distancing? How do you eat and serve lunch with kids being apart from one another? How do you have recess when kids aren't to be touching the same equipment? For teachers that all brings forward some pretty bleak questions about how that kind of classroom environment can be developmentally appropriate for kids, when you're talking about six year olds being asked to sit at a desk for the entire day without partnering, without sharing manipulatives with other kids, with-

out a teacher coming up right next to them to read their writing. So much of teaching is about relationships and proximity, and partnering and collaboration. So what in-person teaching would look like under those guidelines isn't the kind of teaching that we're all dying to get back to.

And so many of our teachers have contacted me to say, "I feel like I'm begin asked to play Russian roulette with my own life, or my immunocompromised child's life, or my parent's life who I'm caretaker for. The stakes are very real.

Teachers unions have resisted widespread adoption of online learning as a replacement for in-person instruction. Now the epidemic has forced the issue. How did you feel about the way it went at the end of the last school year? We do not believe that online is the best model for kids, and we are forced to use it and figure out how to use it best. There are so many problems with online learning. Some kids don't have as stable internet access as others, or any internet access. So access to learning is not equitable. There were many students who did not engage or who dropped off after a period of time in distance learning and stopped coming back. The dis-

trict did provide Chromebooks and hot spots [portable Wi-Fi connection], but there were students who were sharing a hotspot or Chromebook with siblings.

Beyond that, some students have a parent at home who was able to help and guide them through learning, and other students did not. Some students have a quiet place to work, dependably. And other students are sharing a crowded living space with many other kids and without adult support at home.

Even in the best of circumstances, what were the limitations you were seeing with online learning? The lack of relationships. Kids are looking at a screen, they're listening, but you can't make friends. You can't make eye contact with people. Your teacher can't look over your shoulder to see what you're working on. The lack of in-person social interactions gets in the way of every aspect of teaching and learning. Teaching is based on relationships. Partner work is a lot harder to organize, face-to-face discussion, all the engagement strategies that we use in classrooms to meet kids' social and emotional needs don't work the same way over virtual learning.

And that leads me to the worst case scenario: How on earth do kindergarten, first and second grade students get something out of online learning?

It is a huge challenge. It's not developmentally appropriate for a five or six or seven year old to be sitting in front of a computer receiving screen instruction. Educators have had to be creative in figuring out how to support kids in developmentally appropriate activities while not being able to be there with them. A lot of teachers are figuring out the best thing they could do, which maybe would be small group meetings with fewer kids, meeting one-on-one to read with kids over the Internet and providing activities and projects that kids can do independently at home and then report back or email in. But all these things are a huge challenge with our little kids especially. We want to be there with them. We want to show them how to hold a pencil, how to socialize with a large group of people, how to wait their turn. How to ask someone to play. All these things, goals of early education, are not there over distance learning.

—Don McIntosh

READ THE FULL INTERVIEW
nwlaborpress.org/schools-in-COVID

Carpenters, Electricians, Laborers, Glaziers, Sheetmetal Workers, Floor coverers, Bricklayers, Cement Masons, Roofers, Asbestos Workers, Millwrights, Painters,

SAVE THE DATE

66TH ANNUAL MEETING

SEPTEMBER 17, 2020 AT 6:00 PM

this will be a virtual meeting—more details as the date gets closer










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