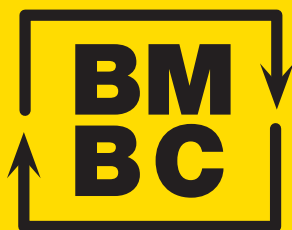


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Distance learning 2.0 to rely on more teacher-student interaction

High-risk teachers will get first chance at instruction slots

BY MATT RAWLINGS
Of the Keizertimes

The Salem-Keizer school board hosted their second work session of the month on Tuesday, July 14 regarding back-to-school planning in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Early in the meeting, Superintendent Christy Perry commented that Gov. Kate Brown's mandate from the previous day regarding limiting indoor gatherings of no more than 10 people would not affect the district's plans for in-person graduation ceremonies in August.

Perry also mentioned that the recent mandate will not affect the district's plan of using a hybrid model in the fall, although she did say that plans could get changed later on if the district receives additional guidance from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).

"Right now, we haven't changed any of our planning," Perry said. "Our goal and the direction right now is to do as much in person as possible."

"Whether it's September or October or whatever month, a hybrid model is how we're going to get back to school."

On Monday, July 13, the district shared that they have developed a new, comprehensive all-online academy called Enhanced Digital and Guided Education (EDGE), which will look different than the distance-learning model used in the spring.

"The Salem-Keizer Public Schools (SKPS) EDGE program will provide students with high quality, rigorous and well-rounded learning opportunities, including instructional supports, English language development support and more," the district said in a press release.

The goal for the EDGE program is to pair teacher-led instruction with family-supported and independent at-home application and learning while still staying connected to

their school communities — students enrolled in the EDGE program will still be registered at the school they would have attended in person for the 2020-21 school year.

"We realized from distance learning that if you just put static information up on a website, but don't have a teacher actively guiding that learning, it doesn't work," assistant superintendent Kraig Sproles said in a presentation to the board. "It is going to be digital, but it's going to have a really high teacher component."

Grades will be given and regular attendance is required. Students won't be allowed to do the EDGE program and in-person learning.

"Some of the things people struggled with in the spring with distance learning was that it was pass-fail and students might not have been engaged," Sproles said. "We heard from a lot of parents that it was not as rigorous as students wanted, so that has been something we're

trying to correct."

High school kids registering as EDGE students also gives them access to Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) sports and activities if they keep their eligibility requirements.

The district hasn't yet made accommodations for ESL students who want to enroll in EDGE, but they are working to make that happen before the fall.

Teachers that feel like they more at risk of contracting COVID-19 will likely get

the first crack at the initial teacher applications for the EDGE program.

"The most likely candidates for the EDGE program are teachers that are at-risk and would have difficulty returning," said Jim Orth, the director of strategic initiatives for the district.

Students are able to opt out of the EDGE program and go into the hybrid model that is currently being planned for the school year. Students can also leave the program if the

district returns to all in-person learning later in the year.

The current hybrid model that is being considered by the district would require kindergarten, first and second grade students to attend in-person classes Tuesday through Friday, with digital learning and supports taking place on Monday.

Students from third grade through high school would attend in-person classes Tuesday and Thursday or Wednesday and Friday, with online instruction taking place on non-classroom days. Supports would be offered on Mondays.

Since the last work session, it was determined by the district that the initial capacity for each in-person learning space would be 20 students per room in elementary schools, 23 students per room in middle schools and 25 students per room in high schools.

Sproles reminded the board that this is still a fluid situation and that flexibility will be required in order to move forward.

"There are so many parts of this that are still ambiguous, and it is really hard to move forward to try and gain certainty where we can, but also live in that ambiguous state," Sproles said.

There will be a public hearing on Aug. 11 to confirm a final plan for the school year.

North Santiam watershed seeking board members

The North Santiam Watershed Council (NSWC) Board of Directors is seeking potential future volunteer Board members. The NSWC Board of Directors represent the diverse interests and perspectives found throughout our geography — local landowners, land managers, businesses, recreation enthusiasts and natural resource advocates.

The mission of NSWC is "providing opportunities for stakeholders to cooperate in promoting and sustaining the health of the North Santiam watershed and its communities."

NSWC is seeking additional Board representation from the following stakeholder interests: Economic (timber, agriculture, aggregate, recreation and tourism or other business), natural resources, small cities in the watershed, Linn County (citizen at large, appointed by County Com-

missioners), North Santiam Middle and Upper sub-basin and education.

Previous Board service is not required, but experience with or knowledge of non-profit organization management is a plus. Current Board committees include executive, governance, and finance. NSWC is planning to create committees for community engagement, fundraising and education. Therefore, we are specifically seeking individuals with experience, expertise or an interest in these areas.

For consideration, please email nswcboard2020@gmail.com. Then, NSWC will coordinate a brief telephone and/or Zoom interview conversation with the members of the NSWC Governance Committee. Candidates will be reviewed on an ongoing basis for currently vacant positions.

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