

Superintendent says S-K schools to remain in-person despite 'crisis-level' staffing shortages

Superintendent Christy Perry told the Salem-Keizer school board Tuesday evening that schools would continue in-person learning despite extreme staffing shortages and student absences across the district.

"Our community needs to know that every person in our organization is stepping up on behalf of our single most important goal right now, which is to maintain in person learning five days a week," Perry said.

Perry's comments came during a Jan. 25 school board work session during which she presented on staffing shortages in the district since schools have returned from winter break. The presentation highlighted just how bad staffing shortages have gotten in Salem-Keizer schools, similar to schools across the state, since the Omicron COVID surge.

"The substitutes in the first two weeks of January was over two times what we needed every other month of the year, September through December," Perry said. "And we are already talking about staffing shortages with our substitutes in September through December."

In the first two weeks of January, the district has had over 800 staffing absences each day — ranging from teachers, bus drivers, administrators and more — with many of the positions remaining unfilled.

The fill rate for licensed positions, which are predominantly teaching positions, was 58% for the first two weeks of January. In that period, there were between 75 to 130 unfilled licensed positions each day, according to the district's report.

Schools were forced to close on Jan. 14 for a non-student contact day due to "crisis-level" staffing shortages and "higher than average student absences," according to the district website.

Staffing shortages haven't improved much since the first two weeks of January either. A snapshot on Jan. 20 showed 767

staffing absences. No replacement was found for 64% of those absences, meaning 324 positions went unfilled.

Perry said schools are having to move substitutes around throughout the school to ensure positions are filled.

"Every day at a school, the principal gets up, looks at their absences and says 'I'm going to need two hours here, one hour here and three hours here,'" Perry said.

Following Perry's presentation, board members inquired about different ways they, or anyone in the community, could help with the mass staffing shortages.

"The staffing shortages look really dire," said board vice-chairwoman Ashley Carson Cottingham. "If you have specific things that the board can assist with, I think a number of us are happy to help out in schools if there's the right place as volunteers. Just want to be supportive for all of you that are doing really hard work every day."

Perry said that right now schools are reaching out to specific volunteers that can be "trained in all the safety procedures, they know when they're available, they know the rules and procedures of the

Students and teachers that have contracted COVID within schools

Sept. 8 -
Dec. 17:

820
total

Jan. 3 -
Jan. 21:

985
total

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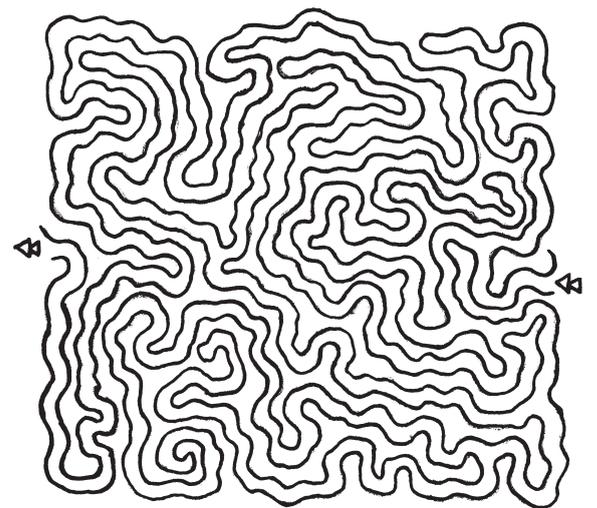
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sudoku

6	9				8		5
		2		8	6		3
	1		2	5		4	
9				4	1	3	
		8		7	5		
	3	6	5				2
	8		7		1		5
5		1		9	2		
3		7				9	1

Enter digits 1-9 into blank spaces. Every row must contain one of each digit. So must every column, & every 3x3 square.

sudoku answers pg A23



maze by Jonathan Graf of Keizer

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