

## School: Students will still have online coursework

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guidelines established by the state that outline how and when schools can open given the local number and rate of positive virus cases. These metrics became advisory in January, but districts who want to stray from them to reopen must comply with other measures, including the ability to provide on-site testing of staff and students who show any symptoms of the virus.

As they dropped off their children on Thursday, parents told The Astorian they were excited for schools to reopen. The students are only returning for three hours a day for now, but it gives parents who may be working from home more breathing room. It is especially welcome to parents whose children may have struggled with online coursework or social isolation.

At Astor Elementary, some students posed for a traditional first day of school photo, beaming as their parents snapped pictures on their smartphones. Then school staff gathered students and talked to them about how to keep a safe distance from each other. One staff member had them stretch out their arms to



Katie Frankowicz/The Astorian  
**Shane Robinson walks his son, Tristan, left, to Astor Elementary on Thursday accompanied by his daughter.**

show them what kind of space they needed to maintain.

With their arms held in front of them, they began to line up on markers painted on the pavement. When several children began to group up, chatting enthusiastically, a staff member quickly jumped in and reminded them to keep their distance.

Inside the elementary schools, red arrows and tall orange safety cones mark out “lanes” for students. There are yellow signs depicting two figures standing apart from each other to remind students and staff to keep their distance. When they go home, the students will still have some online coursework.

Not all of the school dis-

trict’s elementary school children will return to in-person instruction, but Superintendent Craig Hoppes has already heard from some parents who are now changing their minds and want to send their children to classrooms. For now, the primary limit to the number of children who can return at once is classroom capacity. Under state guidelines, students must maintain a certain distance from each other within classrooms.

At Astor Elementary, with its larger classrooms, this is not so much of an issue. But Lewis and Clark Elementary, which serves grades three through five, smaller classrooms could be a barrier. Other challenges will come

when the middle school and high school reopen, Hoppes warned board members at a meeting Wednesday.

Even with just the elementary schools open for three hours a day five days a week, buses are running constantly as they shuttle different cohorts of students to and from school. When the higher grades return, start times may look different to accommodate possible transportation schedules.

For now, though, Hoppes said Thursday morning, it is good to see students walk into school buildings.

His biggest concern as he stood on the sidewalk outside Astor Elementary was “to get them in and get them used to being in school.”

It was a concern Kate Gohr, the principal at Astor Elementary, shared.

“Is Miss Gohr happy?” board member Jimmy Pearson had asked at the Wednesday night meeting after Hoppes briefed them on the school reopening plans and procedures.

“My biggest concern is just getting (students) in and getting them out,” Gohr replied. “My concern is not about having them in the building. That’s the easy part.”

## Sports: Plans are still in the early stages

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“School sports play an important role in fostering students’ mental, emotional and physical health. We will proceed with caution, to ensure that teams are following health and safety precautions to protect our athletes, their families and their communities.”

Clatsop County was downgraded on Friday from the extreme risk to high risk category for the coronavirus.

Rub is hoping that trend continues, so he can get back to scheduling games and events for the Fishermen.

“We’ll be able to get up to 50 people in our gym, so we’ll be able to get volleyball going,” he said of the only fall indoor sport. “The thing that would be helpful moving forward, with our return of students to school and some form of athletics, is that our COVID numbers keep going down. We need everyone to work hard to do what they can.”

Plans are still in the early stages, and Rub is anticipating questions that will arise. Will spectators be allowed? Will road trips be safe for student-athletes? Will there be junior varsity sports?

“Right now, the early discussion is if we’re able to play a league season, the league rule would be that there would be no spectators,” he said. “That’s not our desire — it’s a safety-driven decision. Our desire is to provide competition for our kids. That’s our sole focus.”

For fans, “we will work hard at all of our facilities to provide some type of broadcast for our varsity events if possible, to help our parents and fans.”

Also, “we want to make certain that we’re not going to take any long bus trips, if it’s not deemed safe to do so. There are some trips on our schedule right now that might not be able to happen.”

For sports that have the

numbers, there will be one level of junior varsity sports.

“A lot of this will depend on how our numbers turn out,” Rub said. “There will be some kids or families who prefer to wait until next fall. We understand and respect that.”

The Oregon Health Authority also stated that schools in extreme and high risk counties wishing to hold outdoor contact sports must meet requirements for sports organizations and must also have “at least limited in-person instruction occurring, with the goal of achieving hybrid or full in-person instruction for students this school year.”

Rub said, “I appreciate the (Astoria) district office, the school board, the superintendent of schools and all of our administrators for working so hard to get our kids back in school.” Brown said, “To all of Oregon’s high school athletes: I am asking you now to be leaders in your communities. We’ve given you the chance to play, but with that opportunity comes great responsibility. If COVID-19 numbers spike, we may have to shut down contact sports again. When you are off the field, set the example for your peers: wear a mask, maintain physical distance, and avoid social gatherings.”

Brown, who has been under pressure over the past six months to open classrooms and restart sports, responded with a challenge of her own.

“It is not lost on me that this decision will allow high school football to resume, when too many high school classrooms across Oregon remain empty. To all the parents of student athletes and coaches who have called and emailed me in the last year asking for school sports to resume, I am challenging you now to devote your energy to making sure in-person academics can resume for your kids, too,” the governor said.

## Shooting: ‘I think the system failed her’

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burglary at a home on Oregon Lane. The homeowner told police he saw Burns, who he did not know, entering his vehicle in front of his home and taking his laptop.

The homeowner followed her down the road, and during that time she was seen returning and entering his home.

Burns reportedly barricaded herself in an upstairs bedroom. At around 1:40 p.m., Burns made threats to kill police if they got closer to her, and about 15 minutes later, while still barricaded in the room, she fired off a round from a gun.

According to the report, the bullet traveled through the room, a closet door and an exterior wall east toward a neighboring home.

“Police continued negotiations and at times she appeared to be making a connection and at other times she cursed the police,” the report said.

About an hour after police were called to the scene, Burns reportedly burst from the bedroom to an outside balcony and then over a railing onto the second-story roof.

Eslinger, another trooper and a Seaside police officer were tactically placed outside and could see her holding a 9mm semi-automatic carbine she had taken from the home. Other police and sheriff’s deputies were gathered nearby and were in Burns’ firing range.

Burns was given commands to drop the gun, accord-

ing to the report, but instead she reportedly raised the gun toward police. She was shot in the chest by Eslinger at 2:35 p.m. Police checked for a pulse and called emergency crews, but she quickly died.

The state medical examiner’s office concluded after an autopsy that Burns died from a single gunshot wound. There were preliminary findings of THC, the active ingredient of cannabis, along with amphetamines, benzodiazepine and buprenorphine in her system, but confirmation is pending.

The Astorian has requested to review the material gathered in the investigation.

### ‘Two regrets’

People close to Burns told the newspaper she had mental health and drug abuse issues and had been experiencing what appeared to be psychosis for about a month leading up to her death.

Pattie Osborne, the mother of Burns’ boyfriend, said she believes the system failed her.

Burns had been arrested a few days earlier for burglary in the second degree, theft in the second degree and criminal mischief in the first degree. She was booked at the county jail and released the same day because of coronavirus precautions.

Osborne said Burns had been arrested other times around that time frame, but was released every time. She said she wishes Burns had been held in custody to protect herself and others.

Osborne said Burns had

been violent toward her son and on a couple of occasions tried to attack him with a knife and hammer.

Earlier in the day before Burns was killed, Osborne said Burns was with her son in his car near Sunset Beach. She said her son called the police reporting that Burns had tried to stab him.

She said after police arrived, Burns walked away from the scene. Neighbors told The Astorian that Burns had tried to enter other homes before entering the home where she was killed.

“My son said he’s got two regrets,” Osborne said. “One, that he called the police. Two, that he didn’t let her stab him so that they could have helped her.”

Osborne said she wants to know why police did not arrest and book her earlier that day. She wants to know why her son, Burns’ mother or the mobile crisis team from Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare were not called to try to help calm Burns down and negotiate with her before the shooting.

She said situations like Burns’ death are not black and white, but that progress needs to be made to prevent these types of deaths from happening.

“I don’t think they tried very hard to save this young woman’s life,” Osborne said. “Thirty-one years old, and she was a beautiful girl. I mean, her heart was beautiful. She just had this problem.”

“I believe, at the very least, they failed her. And it’s not

like I want a particular cop to be in trouble. I want awareness. I want people to be educated about what to do in a situation like this. This happens all the time with mentally ill people.”

Osborne, a retired registered nurse, said Burns exhibited signs of schizophrenia, but she was never diagnosed. She said the family tried to get her to seek help.

“The sadness is that I was just waiting for Alaina to finally give in and go to the hospital and get some help,” Osborne said. “But I think the system failed her.”

## Hospital: Deeper investigations are routine

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Jonathan Modie, a spokesman for the health authority, said that after some deeper investigation, the state’s epidemiological team determined the more recent cases had no association with the earlier related cluster. The state considers virus cases related — part of a workplace outbreak — unless a more likely alternative source is identified.

“Our epi team did some deeper investigation with the hospital and were able to identify several cases that were originally associated with the hospital who had more probable exposure elsewhere (largely due to social gatherings and other workplace outbreaks that affected family members),” he said in an email. “After reviewing those details, they updated the outbreak to reflect only those cases with probable exposure at work.”

Modie said that sometimes it takes time to obtain

all of the appropriate information and that going back for deeper investigation is routine practice.

“We collaborate with local public health and employee health at the hospital to determine both work and personal exposures to identify probable transmission,” he said. “We obtained additional data for the more recent cases, which led us to recharacterize the outbreak. It wasn’t due to any undue concern.”

When the health authority’s initial report was released on Jan. 27, the Astoria hospital objected to the state’s characterization of the virus cases as an outbreak. The hospital said there was no active outbreak at that time and that the 27 cases were cumulative of employees who tested positive for the virus over nearly two months.

The hospital acknowledged that five employees who tested positive for the virus during the week of Nov. 27 “met OHA’s definition of an outbreak.”

Nicole Williams, Columbia Memorial’s chief operating officer, said she reached out to the health authority and provided the epidemiological team the hospital’s investigatory notes and context for the virus cases. She said it took about a week to get it completely resolved.

“We always conduct investigations right away when we hear about a positive case from an employee,” Williams said. “So we do our own investigation into how they could have acquired COVID, whether it’s an internal or external source.”

“They were very willing to work with us, and even in the future we’ll definitely be more proactive about providing them that additional information. The county provides them some investigatory notes — that’s where they were getting their information from — but we’ll also be providing our notes on it so that they have our information as well,” she said. “And they said they’d be more than happy to review those.”

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