

# School closures could have profound impact

By **BETSY HAMMOND**  
*The Oregonian*

PORTLAND — U.S. students, including those in Oregon, will pay a staggering academic toll from the prolonged coronavirus-induced school shutdown, new research conducted in Portland based on five million test scores indicates.

Compared to how much they would have learned in a normal school year, elementary and middle school students are likely to start school in the fall equipped with only about 70% of those reading and writing skills, and with 50% or less of the expected gains in math, according to the research, conducted since the pandemic shuttered nearly all U.S. schools.

While the projected learning losses are estimates, it's clear it will likely take years, even in a best-case scenario, to fully remedy the hit to most students' academic trajectories, say researchers at testing outfit NWEA.

And children in families least equipped to help them during the unplanned and unprecedented pause in normal schooling, due to financial woes, lack of digital equipment or know-how and racial inequities, will surely be harmed the most, they and others say.

"This is the longest break in an education that any kid who has started



A group of Echo fifth-graders hang out in their new classroom on Aug. 22, 2018, during an open house for the new addition of the Echo School.

EO file photo

kindergarten has experienced" in the history of modern U.S. education, says Chris Minnich, the test group's chief executive. "It's going to be really hard on teachers who are going to have wider gaps (in their students' skill levels) than they ever have" this fall.

Minnich and officials at the Oregon Department of Education tried to offer hope, however, pointing to strategies they say could lessen academic erosion for

this generation of students. They include:

- Offer summer catch-up sessions to students most likely to fall far behind, including students of color, those in poverty, those whose families speak languages other than English and those with special education needs.
- Start the school year a couple weeks early, when possible, or at least provide teachers with extra training and a wider range of cur-

riculum materials during the ramp up to schools reopening.

- Deploy additional testing shortly after school restarts so teachers can better match instruction to students' needs.
- Draw on community resources, whether that means posting math questions in grocery stores or sharing highly educated tech-savvy parents' tips with adults in low-income communities, to help rein-

force learning during time out of school.

- In the fall, shift after-school programming, such as Multnomah County's SUN School operations, to focus more on academics, given the need to make up instructional time.

The testing agency behind the new research, a nonprofit based in Portland's Old Town Chinatown neighborhood, sprouted as Northwest Evaluation Association in the 1970s

from early testing expertise that had built up in Portland Public Schools, long before testing students in nearly every grade, every year became standard practice in the U.S. Since its inception, the agency now known only by the initials NWEA has specialized in tests that measure each student's growth over the course of a school year and from spring to fall, rather than how high or low each child compares at year's end to a grade-level standard.

One in four U.S. children, including those in Portland, Woodburn and West Linn-Wilsonville and more than 20 other Oregon districts, attend schools that use the Portland agency's signature test, Measures of Academic Progress. Students typically take those tests in the fall, the winter and again in the spring.

Scores on those tests and others have shown it's normal for students to lose substantial ground on academics over the summer break, which typically lasts about 10 weeks. But this year's unprecedented closures, which will subtract about 12 weeks from Oregon's school year, mean students are expected to lose far more ground, as their skills will erode rather than grow during that time, despite the best efforts at distance learning, the testing outfit's researchers say.

## Brown announces rapid distribution of PPE to long-term care facilities

East Oregonian

SALEM — Gov. Kate Brown announced Monday that the Oregon National Guard will distribute approximately 395,000 pieces of personal protective equipment to all long-term care facilities across

Oregon, according to a press release from Brown's office.

The rapid distribution of masks, gloves and face shields will supplement efforts by the Department of Human Services and the Oregon Health Authority to support facilities by

helping prevent the spread of COVID-19 to residents and staff.

"The staff of Oregon's long-term care facilities are on the front lines of our fight against COVID-19, and I am committed to protecting their health and safety," Brown said. "This

critical equipment will help protect both them, and the residents of these facilities, who are among the most at-risk Oregonians for exposure and infection.

The shipments of PPE to Oregon's long-term care facilities includes approximately 177,000 surgical

masks, 127,000 gloves, 55,000 N95 masks, 33,000 face shields and 2,500 gowns. Members of the Oregon National Guard began deliveries of the equipment on Saturday.

"Thank you to our tireless National Guard members for making this

rapid distribution of personal protective equipment possible," Brown said. "We continue to prioritize securing more PPE, including working with local manufacturers and the federal government to procure additional resources."

### OREGON'S 2ND CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE FORUM



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Primary election is May 19

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Streaming live on this newspaper's Facebook page:

Saturday May 2, 2020 • 5 p.m. & 7 p.m.

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Submit your questions in advance by email to: [CD2forum@eomediagroup.com](mailto:CD2forum@eomediagroup.com) or on Facebook Live during the event.

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• A forum for the Republican candidates will be held on May 2 •



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