

Guidance will continue to be updated

SCHOOLS continued from front page

fewer than 100 students, students with disabilities and programs such as career technical education will be made provided there is not active COVID-19 school community spread. Also, county cases must be below 30 per 100,000 people in the past seven days for three weeks, and positive test results county-wide must be less than 5 percent in the preceding seven days for three weeks.

At a news conference discussing the new requirements, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown announced she would earmark \$28 million to be distributed through the Emergency Education Relief Fund to enhance online learning and technology for schools.

The Oregon Department of Education's "Ready Schools, Safe Learners" guidance allows schools to utilize three instructional models: on-site, distance learning or a combination of both. However, Director Colt Gill noted during the July 28 news conference that in the six weeks since it was written, coronavirus case numbers in Oregon have risen steadily.

The guidance will continue to be updated based on COVID-19 effects, input from educators and families, review of equity for students, efforts in other countries and guidance from Brown's Heathy Schools Reopening Council. The final update before classes begin will be issued on Tuesday, Aug. 11.

When in-person classes resume, the Department of Education has mandated mask wearing for all kindergarten through high school students and staff. Earlier versions of the return-to-school plan recommended, but did not require, face coverings for students, or for staff to wear face coverings in all circumstances.

"The new requirement is in response to mounting evidence that face coverings are effective in mitigating the spread of COVID-19," the department stated in a press release.

To help school districts meet the requirement, the Department of Education will distribute 5 million face coverings to school districts during the next few weeks. These are not considered medical-grade masks.

All school districts are required to make operational plans available on their websites and submit the link to the department no later than Monday, Aug. 17.

Willamina plans

A majority of Grand Ronde Tribal students in preschool through 12th grade attend school either on the Tribal campus or at Willamina, Sheridan, McMinnville or Salem-Keizer school districts, with the highest percentage attending Willamina schools.

Willamina Superintendent Carrie Zimbrick is in the process of creating a re-entry plan with a team of teachers, administrators, facility supervisor, nutrition supervisor,

**SCHOOL RE-OPENING
INFORMATION**

Oregon Department of Education
Oregon.gov/ode
Click on "Ready Schools, Safe Learners" tab

Oregon Early Learning Division
Oregonearlylearning.com
Click on "COVID-19" tab

Willamina School District
Willamina.k12.or.us

Sheridan School District
Sheridan.k12.or.us

Salem-Keizer School District
Salkeiz.k12.or.us
Scroll down to "district news" section

McMinnville School District
Msd.k12.or.us

Graphic by Samuel Briggs III

transportation representative, Tribal Education Manager Angela Fasana and parents.

The group conducted a parent survey and received 430 responses out of 535 total households.

"We were really pleased with the results and plan to complete our plan in early August and have it submitted prior to the deadline required by the Oregon Department of Education," Zimbrick said.

Originally, the district was planning a hybrid model, but the updated metrics have required a switch to a fully online model to begin the school year.

In a letter to families, Zimbrick said that bringing children onsite was a priority for the community and staff, and the hybrid plan does that while safely meeting the physical distancing requirements and student restrictions.

"Unfortunately our plan must shift to short-term distance learning to begin the school year," she said. "The OHA and ODE recently established COVID-related metrics to determine when Oregon school districts can re-open to onsite instruction. In order to safely open to onsite instruction, the Willamina School District must meet the metrics for both Yamhill and Polk counties as well as a 5 percent or less test positivity rate for the state. The new metric calls for maintaining 10 or less cases per 100,000 people for three weeks and a test positivity rate of 5 percent or less for three weeks. Currently, Yamhill County is at 39.2 cases per 100,000 and Polk County is at 47.6 cases per 100,000."

The district has a projected start date of Tuesday, Sept. 15.

"We do have some time to see those numbers decrease, but meeting the three-week standard may

not be realistic," Zimbrick said. "We all believe it is important to see students to the greatest extent possible: To provide academic support, social and emotional support, and to be perfectly honest, we miss our kids. ... Once we meet the criteria our short-term distance model will shift back to the hybrid model and students may return to campus."

The district's hybrid model has students attending in-person either in the morning or afternoon, with Monday used for preparations for distance learning. The district also will try to group families together in scheduling. The second option is for students to continue full-time online learning, where they will work completely from home while receiving support services from the district.

Grand Ronde plans

On the Grand Ronde campus, the Early Childhood Education program, which serves preschool-aged students, is developing a re-opening plan. It restricts class sizes, keeps children and staff separate in groups, and includes extensive disinfecting and daily health screening for children and staff.

All staff will be required to wear masks and face shields. Students will not be required to wear masks, which is in alignment with guidance from the Early Learning Division, Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority, Early Childhood Education Program Manager Angie Blackwell said.

The plan was reviewed by General Manager David Fullerton, Pediatrician Dr. Allison Empey and Executive Director of Health Services Kelly Rowe, and the program's Policy Council.

"Our first day of school was

set for (Thursday) Sept. 10, but will be dependent on the trend in (COVID-19) cases and is subject to postponement," Blackwell said. "If we are not able to open physically, we will continue to offer distance learning opportunities via Google Classroom, Zoom and Facebook, just as we are doing throughout the summer. Likewise, if we open and then have to close again, we will revert back to distance learning."

Chinuk Language Program Manager Ali Holsclaw has been working with Blackwell to develop a re-opening plan for its early childhood program. The opening date, distance learning plans and mask requirements are the same.

The Chinuk kindergarten through fourth-grade program is currently working on options with guidance from the Oregon Department of Education.

"We are currently waiting on Willamina's finalized re-opening plan in order to really know what we can offer and how," Holsclaw said. "Our students are enrolled at Willamina as well and usually spend the second half of their school day there. So, once we have their plan we can get to work on ours, but in the meantime we are brainstorming options and looking outside the box to make sure we offer as much as we can to our families."

Salem-Keizer, other plans

In the Salem-Keizer School District, officials identified students in kindergarten through second grade as needing priority for in-person classes to help them build learning skills. Students in third through 12th grade were set to begin a hybrid model of in-person and distance learning.

However, after the new guidance was released July 28, Superintendent Christy Perry announced that all students will begin the first nine weeks of the school year in comprehensive distance learning.

"We know this is heartbreaking for those students and families who were counting on in-person learning in September," Perry said. "This direction from the state prioritizes the safety of our educators, children and families, and community."

In October, district leaders will review metrics to establish a timeline to move into blended learning in mid-November.

This means students in kindergarten through 10th grade will not attend in person until the week of Nov. 16 at the earliest. Juniors and seniors will not attend in person until the second semester at the earliest, which begins on Feb. 2.

Students will attend school on Tuesday and Thursday or Wednesday and Friday, with Monday being used as an additional support day as needed. The district also will continue to offer students a new, comprehensive, fully online learning program called Enhanced Digital and Guided Education.

"The cohort schedule allows for comprehensive isolation and trac-

**See SCHOOL
continued on page 11**