

Administrators focused on safety and education

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ing in the event of a COVID-19 case," a press release stated. "This enables the district to have targeted closures instead of a system-wide shut down."

The district stated that when creating the plan it focused on recognizing the "disproportionate impact" of the pandemic on communities of color, families experiencing poverty and students with disabilities.

"Administrators are focused on providing students with a safe, personal and rigorous education that still follows the SKPS mission statement during a worldwide pandemic. Just as COVID-19 news is rapidly evolving, so is the SKPS reentry plan."

Salem-Keizer Public Schools also will implement a later start to the school year. The week of Sept. 8 will be used to establish connections with students and families. Comprehensive distance learning will begin Monday, Sept. 14.

The McMinnville School District was planning for two 2020-21 school options: A hybrid learning opportunity where elementary school students attend school in person full-time, and middle and high school students attend school two days a week and participate in remote learning three days a week. The other option is an all-remote learning model that follows state Department of Education guidelines, including "real time" teaching and learning, and recorded teaching and learning.

However, the district has now transitioned to comprehensive distance learning.

"At this time, we believe this learning model will last through the fall," the district website stated. "In order to prepare a quality system ... the first day for students will be delayed to Monday, Sept. 14. We appreciate the feedback that was provided in the spring in response



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~ Ramona Quenelle

to the emergency teaching that occurred remotely from March to June. We have used that feedback along with the ODE guidance to create a plan for this fall."

Sheridan School District Superintendent Dorie Vickery said students will be provided a combination of distance learning and in-person instruction following guidance from the state.

However, given the new requirements and current county case numbers, the district also will need to start the school year with comprehensive distance learning. Vickery posted the information to the district's Facebook page July 29.

"At this time, Yamhill and Polk counties do not meet the criteria," it stated. "The Sheridan School District will offer comprehensive distance learning to start the school year. Additionally, there is a level of criteria that allows for providing in-person instruction for kindergarten through third grade and other specialized groups of students. ... Currently, Yamhill and Polk counties do not meet that criteria either. If the numbers change over the next few weeks, we will begin the transition process for K-3 in-person instruction and teaching specialized groups of students."

In the next few weeks, the district will provide more information regarding its comprehensive distance learning model.

When in-person classes begin, they will be conducted with 36 square feet per person, bringing class sizes to approximately 13 to 15 students in each classroom.

Currently, school is scheduled to begin Monday, Aug. 31. However, the calendar may be adjusted, pending School Board approval, for a Tuesday, Sept. 8, start date.

"It is my hope that the numbers will improve in both counties as everyone continues to wear face coverings and practice social distancing," Vickery said. "Thank you for your continued support of Sheridan School District and our community."

The pandemic also will affect how services are delivered at Chemawa Indian School in Salem. On Monday, July 27, Oregon Public Broadcasting posted an article that the school will be fully remote until at least January 2021. Chemawa has been a residential school for Native American students continually for 140 years.

According to the article, the Bureau of Indian Education intends to fund necessary technology to assist with remote education to Tribal Reservations across the country.

Parental concerns

Tribal member and employee Candi Henry's daughter is enrolled in the Willamina School District.

"I would like very much for her to be able to attend school this fall. I feel like the classroom setting provides the best learning environment for the majority of students," she said.

Henry added that she is, however, a "safety first" kind of mom.

"I do not disregard or downplay this virus and the importance of doing my part to keep our family safe and others in the community," she said. "I think that is very important to all of us to protect our loved ones. I believe our schools care very much about our children as well and will make choices about re-opening based on what is best for the families in our communities."

The family, like many others, participated in online schooling to finish the 2019-20 school year.

"It went well other than a few technical glitches," Henry said. "The teachers did really well at putting it together on very short notice. If online schooling is what is offered for the fall, our family will gladly participate and be grateful for the teachers' continued efforts in providing an education for all students."

Ramona Quenelle, the Tribe's Veterans' Services Officer, has six children ranging in ages from 4 to 17. Switching from classroom learning to all-online has been a challenge at times, especially with herself and her husband both employed full-time.

"I am willing to wait until the COVID numbers go down and I

feel safe about sending my children back to school," she said. "However, during the shutdown it was very stressful. Even though the kids were doing online learning, the amount of work there was to do each day required at least a half day of instruction just to keep up with all of the subjects. If there isn't a parent to lead, it's a mess."

Her three youngest children participate in the Chinuk Immersion Program in Grand Ronde and attend Willamina Elementary School. Two of the older children attend Willamina High School.

Grand Ronde, like many rural areas, has scant access to child care, particularly since the pandemic began. Before that, parents often relied on family members or the Tribe's Youth Education Department after-school and summer programs to help keep their children safe and occupied.

"If my older children have to go back to school physically, but the little kids don't, that would put me in a situation where I have no child care, which will impact my work and my job," Quenelle said.

The Tribe is in the process of creating a child care stipend, a move that was announced Wednesday, July 22, during a Facebook Live event. However, the details have not yet been finalized.

"There is no better time than now to take care of child care," Tribal Council member Michael Langley said. "We know schools will face challenges and kids will be home part-time. In many families, both parents also work full-time. We want to help them."

Quenelle noted that the part-day, in-person learning option Willamina is considering has left her with questions about student safety.

"I'm not sure if having the kids attend school three hours a day, every day will expose them to just as much risk as if they were attending full-time, so I'm not sure it makes sense," she said.

Quenelle gave examples of potentially cramped buses, and the congestion at entry and exit points.

"This is an unfortunate situation all the way around. Trying to keep positive has been very beneficial though. And, enjoying the time with my family has been priceless."

Her youngest children are missing their friends, teachers and activities. Her high school students miss the social aspects of in-person learning. Quenelle's oldest daughter, Corina, also was unable to work regularly at her part-time job until recently due to the state shutdown.

"Another thing that really impacts the kids is missing out on their summer," Quenelle said. "The Youth Education Program has a great summer program with so many activities and things to do. They didn't get to do any of the cultural events such as Canoe Journey and now with all the powwows canceled, it has been like a huge vacuum sucking the air out of everything. ... This pandemic has sure taken a toll on many things. All we can keep doing is look for the positive and find the happiness in the situation we are given." ■

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