

**Schools** from 1A

in' and get to the end of the year, making the best of the situation. We could not do a lot of new instruction, or instruction that was inclusive of everybody."

"It's a much more thought out, much more planned-for event," Harklerode said. "We will have expectations, parameters around it for attendance. It won't be pass/fail. It will actually be coursework that progresses knowledge. I really want to be clear that we've put a lot of time and thought into how distance learning will be different."

Underscoring that has been the large investment in technology, including the purchase of more than 1,200 Chromebooks.

The third option is the much talked about hybrid model.

"That is a mix of distance learning and face-to-face, onsite learning," Harklerode said. "That's likely the model that we are going to have to go with."

But he stressed there may be times when students will be required to remain at home.

"Even if we plan for hybrid, we have to be ready for comprehensive distance learning in the event that there's a [COVID] spike in this community," Harklerode said. "If you're paying attention, you'll realize there's more and more cases in Lane County in general, and even in our fair city. It's probably going to increase. I don't know where the threshold would be when LCPH would tell us specifically when we need to go to comprehensive distance learning. It's one of the things we have to work out with them."

Regardless of what they choose, Harklerode said that standard grading practices and credit courses will be in place.

"This will not be haphazard," he said. "Families will know and have predictability in what their school schedule will be. There will be scheduled times when kids are expected to be at school. If we have to change things for specific kids, we do have flexibility to do that."

While it will be mostly predictable, it will also be different.

"We have to move out

all kinds of equipment and furniture just to make room for student desks," Harklerode said. "And that's where they will be sitting for the entire day. They have to maintain that six-foot bubble. Small groups of children working together would have to be extremely rare for the model to work."

Whatever course the district takes, it will have to create a blueprint for opening, keeping in mind key factors, including what the facility could handle, student and public health, community engagement, mental, social and emotional health, staffing and equity.

"As soon as we have a model selected, we're going to get to work," Harklerode said, stating that the state deadline for a blueprint on reopening is due Aug. 15. "The school board meeting next week, there will be some big decisions."

To help make the district make the choice, Harklerode opened the meeting to questions from parents, students, teachers and the community.

**What is the scheduled start date for school right now?**

"I'm afraid I can't give you that right now, because it's in flux, depending on the model that is selected," Harklerode said. "I'm assuming we'll have that out there quickly."

Harklerode expressed that the district hopes to have registration in mid-August, possibly the week of the 11th or the 18th.

"As soon as we have that, we'll make a big show of it," Harklerode said.

**If the district does decide on the hybrid model, does the parent get to choose at-home learning?**

"You can," Harklerode said. "There's going to be some families who select comprehensive over the hybrid model. Distance learning is available to everybody and all. We're aiming for hybrid so we can have as much face-to-face time with students as we can safely schedule, but there will be people who choose distance."

Harklerode also added that if a parent decides to switch from hybrid to distance, or vice

versa, during the school year, they will have the ability to do so.

**The kids are basically going to be at their desk all day long?**

"I hesitate just a bit, but I will say that going to the cafeteria is going to be a big challenge for us," Harklerode said. "We'll probably have to find a different way to deliver lunch at school. And yes, being at their desks most of the day is something they will have to get used to."

**Will students be able to bring their own masks?**

"We will have masks we provide, but I would suggest students have their own mask in a sense of responsibility, taking care of it," Harklerode said. "That will probably be best in the long run, and parents can help in keeping the sanitation of those masks."

**What is the school doing about the overall stress of the situation?**

"We've thought about that a great deal," Harklerode said. "We recognize that is a major concern, especially coming out of this. I don't want to overstate it by calling it 'trauma,' but for some of our students, they've had trauma in response to this big shift in life. They're going to need some help and extra support coming out of that. It will be a challenge for us in the limited time we have students face to face for counseling."

Harklerode said the district is looking at on-line counseling, though there are privacy concerns. Parents also brought up concerns about students being straddled with too much online work without time for play.

"It was really tough. I think what the teachers did in a lot of cases, and rightfully so, was 'Here's a bunch of stuff you can work on to help you improve in these skills,' but we didn't know what was reasonable and what wasn't," said Siuslaw Middle School Principal Andy Marhol. "I think our teachers will have a better understanding of what's possible now."

Marhol added that it was vital for parents to communicate issues when they first occur.

"Regardless of the model we come back

with, it needs to be an improvement over what these past six months have been," Marhol said. "I think you'll find — from top down — every educator is far more concerned with school being a good place to be a kid. Whether it's digital or face-to-face."

**What is going to be the accessibility to teachers for questions if the parents are not around?**

"We know that access to the teachers was a big challenge last year," Harklerode said. "Part of the guidelines we have now is that a certain number of hours, a percentage of each day, teachers are going to be available in office hours where they can be working with students, they can answer phone calls from parents. ... If someone is having a technical challenge or a content question, they'll have better access to teachers."

**What about rural students without limited internet access?**

"We have recognized that connectivity is a significant issue within the community," Harklerode said. "We have a couple of different models that we're looking at, but I'm afraid I don't have a firm answer — other than we recognize that as an issue. There's nooks and crannies all over the district where connectivity is an issue. We're looking at ways to either mitigate that issue or find alternative ways to give instruction and interaction. ... Some are going to require one-on-one solutions."

**For families with students in different schools (one in elementary, one in high school), will the family schedules remain the same?**

"That is a big factor for a good number of families, myself included. I've got one in all three schools," Harklerode said. "Especially knowing that options for childcare in town are pretty slim right now."

District Superintendent Andrew Grzeskowiak spoke on transportation, and how they are trying to keep families and neighborhood groups together for attendance cohorts.

"If there is a kid in middle, high and elementary, their atten-

dance days would need to be the same because it's coming from the same transportation group," he said. "We're trying to make it as seamless as possible. ... We want to make sure every kid from the same household is on the same attendance rotation."

**What would families be looking forward to with children with IEPs?**

"We do recognize that some students will need something different and more," Harklerode said. "I can't give specifics, but we recognize that some of the kids in the district need more from us. They need more from the school, whether it be more class time. And some kids need the other direction, more work to keep them challenged and engaged."

While he was short on specifics, he stated that IEPs have been taken into consideration.

"We'll make sure we'll do whatever we need to do to make sure kids are getting what they need to learn. This is not one size fits all."

**What is being done for extracurricular classes, such as band, woodshop and art classes?**

"As far as what [band] would look like, we're still waiting on the state for guidance," High School Interim Principal Garth Gerot said. "I don't have a complete answer. We're just playing a waiting game on band, choir and some of those CTE classes that bring people into a space that have different requirements to keep our students safe."

As for woodshop and art classes, Marhol said, "We're working really hard to make sure those happen. We fully acknowledge how important they are to a well-rounded learning experience for kids. ... We're fully making every effort to make sure kids can still have those experiences, within the guidelines from the state."

Harklerode added, "We recognize that having answers for families is critical. When we have things crystalized, we will get it out there."

**What will happen when a student gets sick? Are you going to shut down if there is a COVID case?**

"This is an advantage of keeping cohorts small," Harklerode said. "One, it's easier to give individuals and small groups instructional intensity, but it's also easier to track students in cohort tracing. It's also easier if we need to exclude a certain number of students. We can have small groups of students at a time missing school instead of a huge swath of school being out."

However, if two or more students contract COVID, LCPH would consider it an outbreak and would have to get involved.

"Frankly, we pulled the plug because the state government determined that the conditions in the community and in the state were not safe to continue meeting face-to-face instruction — That hasn't improved," Harklerode said. "The conditions in the community haven't improved since last March, they've gotten significantly worse. I think they're not as bad as they could have been, had we not stayed in. But we are all wondering what's going to happen when we begin more social contact."

**Is there something more as a community we can do for the school district?**

"Spread the love," Harklerode said. "Let your social contacts know the district is working hard to ensure we're bringing the best possible model to the kids, but also ones that will meet the merits laid out before us."

Harklerode added that there are things kids — especially younger students — can do to prepare for the fall, including getting used to wearing masks.

"I can think of numerous ways for kids to misuse their masks, it's endless," he said, pointing out that the less time teachers spend on getting kids used to masks, the more time they have to teach.


"The best you can do for us is to keep your spirits up and the kids' spirits up," said Harklerode. "Some people have had a bad taste left in their mouths with the politics of the era. We are doing our best to steer clear of that and do what's best for kids and the community as a whole."

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