

SLSD *from A1*

assignments through Google Classroom and teachers will be required to keep the service up to date.

One of the more contentious issues for some has been masking. A small group of parents staged a light protest outside the district office on Monday regarding the mandates.

According to the management plan, masks are required on buses and inside school buildings for all people ages two and older when students are present, except when staff are alone in an enclosed workspace.

“So that means teachers after school working in their classroom getting their lunch or their lesson plans done, you can close the door and take your mask off,” said Curtis.

The mask policies are in compliance with a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) order that remains in effect until lifted by the federal government and cannot be waived by state or local authorities.

However, there are exceptions.

In music classes, masks are not required when playing an instrument that is played with the mouth in practice or performance. Masks are required for choirs when practicing, but can be removed for performances.

Outdoors, masks are optional but are strongly advised in crowded situations where social distancing cannot be maintained.

Students may also remove their masks when practicing or playing a

competitive sport, performing or delivering a speech to an audience. Indoors, this rule applies to those ages two and up. Outdoors, it applies to those five and up.

Students will be asked and reminded to social distance, staying three feet away as much as possible, though Curtis admitted, “there are times when that’s not going to be possible. Sometimes kids are walking down the hall, they get a little closer than that.”

Social distancing requirements do not apply to those who already live together and, in this vein, the management plan also encourages that students adopt a cohort strategy.

Cohorts refers to a consistent group of students who stay together for the duration of the school year. Cohorts will be maintained to the extent possible, according to the plan, and will be more prevalent at the elementary level.

Curtis noted that this would not look like the previous school year’s staggered attendance, however, and this strategy will enable consistent in-person schooling to students.

“That is our goal: all day, every day, the entire year,” she said.

Other measures are being taken to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus on school grounds as well.

Drinking fountains will be turned off and stations to fill water bottles will be offered instead.

All staff will be provided with cleaning products and will regularly sanitize objects which are frequently touched.

“Our custodial staff will

perform enhanced cleaning every night in all areas on all touched surfaces,” said Curtis. “When an individual is diagnosed with COVID-19, the areas where that individual has been in the building will be cleaned thoroughly by custodial staff.”

The district is also asking families to streamline the screening process by monitoring their own children for signs of sickness at home before heading to school.

“That is what we’re asking of families: please help us this year. Help us get kids into school on time,” said Curtis. “Please do make them stay home if they have any sign of an illness just to make sure that they might not have COVID.”

Unlike last year, visitors will be allowed in the schools. Though not required to be vaccinated, the district is highly encouraging it.

Volunteers, however, will be required to be vaccinated beginning Oct. 18, 2021, per Governor Kate Brown’s order for K-12 educators and healthcare workers.

Visitors as well as students will be kept track of when they are on a campus to ensure that accurate contact tracing can take

place in the event a positive case.

If a positive case is confirmed, the school district will notify parents and staff of the particular building.

Notifications will be sent out if a student has come into contact (which is defined as 15 minutes during the day within three feet) with an individual diagnosed with COVID.

The communication will include what is being done in response to the incident, but will not include specifics about the people involved.

“A lot of times people want more information,” Curtis acknowledged, “but we have to be very careful about privacy. And we do want people to know who need to know.”

Testing will also be available at schools.

The Binax Now test will be provided to staff and students when they are on campus and become symptomatic or report symptoms of COVID. Testing will also be provided in response to an outbreak.

Screening of asymptomatic staff and students can be done with a local healthcare provider, and may be provided by the district. These tests can be self-administered.

“But for students to be tested, we won’t do that

until we’ve gotten permission from the parent,” noted Curtis. “If the student is 15 or older, students can give their own consent. But there must be consent in order to do the test.”

Neither staff nor students will be randomly tested, confirmed administrators at the board meeting.

The requirement to be vaccinated may pose a problem for staffing as it is not yet clear how many will meet the requirement. Some students work in school facilities such as lifeguard positions at the pool and would fall under the state mandate.

Under the governor’s order, there are religious and health exceptions to the rule.

A survey is currently underway which will inform the district on the number of certified staff who will be vaccinated and who are asking for an exception. The results are expected by the end of this week, said Curtis during Monday’s board meeting.

Exactly how the year will pan out as these rules are

implemented has been a salient point of uncertainty for many with the district.

“We have no idea what the future holds for us, just like we didn’t last year, but we’re now better at some things,” said Curtis.

During Monday’s meeting, board member Gary Mort highlighted the difficulty in creating a system to accommodate the novel challenge.

“I have an enormous amount of compassion for parents and kids, our teachers, our staff, our administrators, our superintendent and actually our board,” he said. “I mean, none of us are supposed to be in this situation. We’re not supposed to be having to figure out how to run a pandemic at the classroom, or home, or school, or school district or town level.”

Board member Taylor Wilhour said he was “hopeful,” yet “trepidatious” about the coming school year.

“We all want to have kids in person and let’s just hope we can make that work and keep it going all year,” he said.

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