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## Pandemic | Bend-La Pine Schools

# District plans return to in-person learning in April

BY KYLE SPURR  
The Bulletin

Bend-La Pine Schools announced Friday it intends to return students to in-person learning in the first week of April.

In a letter sent to parents, Superintendent Lora Nordquist said the state is expected to announce a reduction in social distancing at schools,

from 6 feet to 3 feet, which would allow the school district to bring all students back to classrooms.

The school district plans to bring back kindergarten through fifth grade classes by April 5 and all K-12 by April 12.

“We feel more confident bringing students back, as well, because studies continue to show that schools are not ma-

yor sites of COVID-19 spread,” Nordquist said in the letter.

Nordquist told The Bulletin on Friday that the change will help fourth grade through 12th grade students who have attended classes both remotely and in-person. Third grade students and younger have already been back to school full time.

The change will help about

9,000 students in fourth through 12th grades, Nordquist said.

“It’s pretty universally understood by our staff and our students that hybrid learning, while better than distance learning, still leaves a lot to be desired,” Nordquist said.

Nordquist also expects to see the emotional and mental well-being of students improve,

because they will spend more time with their peers at school.

“It’s just more time for that social and emotional contact and time to be with peers and having a routine and schedule,” Nordquist said. “That’s more like what they are used to.”

In addition, the return to in-person learning will benefit teachers and students, Nordquist added.

“I think it will make life easier for our teachers so they can focus on the students in front of them,” Nordquist said.

For families who are not comfortable with in-person learning, or who have found success with distance learning, the school district will continue to offer remote instruction.

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## BEND

# TEEN CLIMATE ACTIVISTS PROTEST



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Twin sisters Sasha Dhone, left, and Abby Dhone stand together Friday at Wall Street and Newport Avenue during a climate protest in downtown Bend.

## Deschutes Youth Climate Congress event held in solidarity with rallies worldwide

BY KYLE SPURR  
The Bulletin

The Bend-based teen activist group Deschutes Youth Climate Congress led a protest Friday in downtown Bend to demand action on climate change at local and national levels.

About two dozen people of all ages gathered at the corner of Newport Avenue and Wall Street. Some chanted while others held signs. The protesters wore face masks and kept their distance due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The climate strike was held in solidarity with similar protests in at least 60 countries as part of the global movement, Fridays for the Future, created by 18-year-old Swedish activist Greta Thunberg.

See **Climate** / A7



## COVID-19 in Oregon

# Thousands will be made eligible for vaccine earlier

BY GARY A. WARNER  
Oregon Capital Bureau

People with serious medical conditions and front-line workers are among those who will become eligible earlier for the COVID-19 vaccines, Gov. Kate Brown said Friday.

“This doesn’t mean that every Oregonian will be able to get a shot right away,” Brown said.

As late as January, state officials were forecasting that it would take into autumn or beyond to offer vaccination to the 3.2 million eligible adults. Brown said the timeline is now much shorter.

“We expect to have enough doses for every Oregonian who wants a vaccine to have the opportunity for at least a first dose by the end of May,” Brown said during the news conference.

Brown ordered a compression of the state’s priority list after President Joe Biden directed states to remove all limits on vaccine eligibility by May 1 — two months earlier than Oregon had planned.

### Vaccine eligibility

Under the revised timeline announced Friday, people 45 and older with serious medical conditions that could lead to severe illness or death if they were infected by COVID-19 can get vaccinated beginning Monday. The group had been scheduled to become eligible March 29.

Counties must send a written statement to the Oregon Health Authority attesting they have “largely” vaccinated residents over 65 and can handle moving on to the next group. OHA Director Pat Allen said there is no single state metric for meeting the standard. Counties that submit the statements do not need to wait for OHA response or approval.

With 58% of those 65 and older vaccinated, Allen said many counties will likely start inoculating the new group. Allen singled out Deschutes County as one that had inoculated a high percentage of seniors.

See **Vaccines** / A4

## BEND-LA PINE SCHOOL BOARD

# Eight candidates to compete for four seats in May election

BY JACKSON HOGAN  
The Bulletin

Voters will be choosing at least three new members of the Bend-La Pine School Board in the May 18 special election.

Nine candidates filed to run for four seats on the board. Only one of them is an incumbent: board Chair Carrie

Douglass, who’s running for a different seat than she currently occupies.

This May will mark the second school board election in a row with multiple races without an incumbent, after nearly a decade of pre-appointed incumbents dominating.

The Bend-La Pine School

Board could also diversify its ranks, with one candidate identifying as African American and two identifying as Mexican American or Indigenous Mexican. In recent history, only a few Bend-La Pine board members have been people of color.

See **School board** / A7

## BEND PARK & RECREATION DISTRICT BOARD

# Three seats up for election

BY KYLE SPURR  
The Bulletin

Three positions on the Bend Park & Recreation District board of directors will be on the ballot for the May 18 special election.

Incumbents Nathan Hovekamp and Deb Schoen are facing challengers, and two newcomers are vying for a seat that opened when longtime board member Ted Schoenborn decided not to seek reelection.

Schoenborn, retired from a career in public health, has been on the board since 2003.

Running for Schoenborn’s Position 4 seat are Javier Borja and Robin Vora.

Borja, a former Bend park district employee, runs a Latino outdoor program called Vamonos Outside through the High Desert Education Service District. Borja was a finalist for a park board appointment in 2020 for the seat that went to Schoen.

Borja has worked for several other youth programs with the Boys and Girls Club of Bend and the parks district. He also serves on the Governor’s Road Map to the Outdoors taskforce and Racial Justice Council.

Vora, retired from a 39-year-career with the U.S. Forest Service and Fish and Wildlife Service, has spent the past 19 years in Bend serving on several city committees.

See **Park board** / A4

