

Grant Union and Humbolt Elementary move to distance learning

Two cases confirmed in school district

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant Union and Humbolt Elementary are closing their doors because of the local COVID-19 outbreak.

Grant School District 3 made the decision last week for Grant Union Junior-Senior High School and Humbolt Elementary School to transition to comprehensive distance learning according to a press release from the district.

The district has two confirmed cases of COVID-19 at Humbolt Elementary as case

numbers rise in the county. The transition to distance learning started Monday.

Grant School District Superintendent Bret Uptmor said the schools will anticipate reopening on Nov. 30 if the number of cases go down.

“We are looking at this through the lens of keeping staff and students safe,” Uptmor said. “We are also looking at this through the lens of making sure we’re back on site as quick as we can because we know, for a lot of our students, that’s the best source of education they have.”

Uptmor said the district received a call from the Grant County Health Department that confirmed there were pos-

itive cases of COVID-19 at Humbolt Elementary.

“At that point, I was in a spot where I needed to make sure we’re safely operating our schools, and if we have a case that’s in our schools, that’s where we need to step back, close the schools down and wait for this to pass,” Uptmor said. “... I say wait for the cases to die back down, and we anticipate we’ll be back inside on Nov. 30 unless we continue to see the community spread of COVID.”

Uptmor said he appreciates the school board for supporting his recommendations, the staff for their work preparing for this situation and for support from families.

MEALS AVAILABLE TO PICK UP

Breakfast and lunch for children 18 and younger can be picked up at Mt. Vernon park, the bowling alley parking lot in John Day, the Seventh Street Complex near the pond in John Day and at Humbolt Elementary. The meals can be picked up from 7:30-8 a.m. for breakfast and at 12:30-1 p.m. for lunch Mondays through Thursdays.



Eagle file photo

Grant School District Superintendent Bret Uptmor.

School districts in Monument, Dayville and Prairie City will continue their current plans with on-site teaching. Long Creek will continue distance learning.

Administrators in each district are monitoring the rise of

COVID-19 cases and are continuing to work with the health department to ensure that students and staff are safe in their respective districts.

“In the updated metrics, the test positivity portion could become problematic to our

small county, but as a small district we are doing everything we can to help ensure our students continue to receive in-person instruction as long as it is safe,” Monument Superintendent Laura Thomas said.

Gov. Brown orders social slowdown in five counties over COVID-19 spike

Baker, Malheur, Umatilla among counties on the list

By Gary A. Warner
Oregon Capital Bureau

Nine Oregon counties must have a “social pause” for two weeks to fight a spike in COVID-19 infections that led to a record 805 new cases on Thursday and nearly as many Friday.

“We are seeing in real time how this virus can quickly snowball out of control,” Brown said at an afternoon press conference. “We cannot let up now, in fact we have to go on the offense.”

Baker, Clackamas, Jackson, Malheur, Marion, Multnomah, Umatilla, Union and Washington counties are under the new restrictions, which are applied to larger counties that have over 200 cases per 100,000 people. Counties of fewer than 30,000 people can have no more than 60 cases over a two-week period.

In order to allow businesses to prepare, the “pause” will begin Nov. 11 and last through Nov. 25 — the

Wednesday before the Thanksgiving holiday.

Restrictions include:

- Businesses are asked to allow employees to work from home.
- Reducing restaurant capacity to fewer than 50 people, including customers and staff. A table can have no more than six customers.
- Reducing the maximum capacity of other indoor activities to 50 people. The governor gave gyms, fitness centers, bowling alleys, ice rinks, indoor sports facilities, pools, and museums as examples.
- A halt to indoor visits of people at long-term health care facilities.
- Limit gatherings in households to six people or fewer if it includes people from outside your household.
- Residents of the counties should reduce the frequency of social gatherings and keep the same six people in their social circle.

None of the restrictions apply to religious institutions, Brown said. The surge in cases in Oregon reflects a national and worldwide upward trend. Through Monday, Oregon has reported 51,155 cases



PMG file photo/Jaime Valdez

Gov. Kate Brown, at a May press event, wearing her social distancing mask in public.

and 734 deaths.

Nationwide, there have been 10.18 million, with 239,000 deaths, according to the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center.

Worldwide, there have been over 51.24 million cases and 1.26

million deaths, the center said.

“This is not like the flu,” said Dean Sidelinger, the state’s chief expert on infectious diseases. “There is a 20 times higher death rate than the flu.”

Additional actions — including business closures — could be ordered if the spike in COVID-19 cases isn’t brought under control.

“I don’t want to do that,” Brown said, urging for voluntary compliance, adding she knew “the actions I took in March again later in the year have been really harsh on our businesses.”

Linn County is also close to the limits, Brown said. Its status will be reviewed as new information comes in. Additional actions could be taken soon.

The new lists replace what was previously the Governor’s Watch List of counties.

Brown called on Congress and President Trump to provide aid to states and their residents to replace funds that will stop at the end of the year. She called for another \$600 weekly benefit in enhanced

Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation.

“It is incumbent on our federal government to get their act together and to assist,” she said.

Oregon is currently averaging 578 new COVID-19 cases a day, with 12.5% of tests for the virus coming back as positive. Health officials have said a 5% rate is needed for the virus to be kept in check.

On Monday, the Oregon Health Authority reported 723 new cases, and Multnomah County reported 204 new cases, the most in the state. Washington County had 119 cases.

Four more deaths were reported, for a total of 734.

There were 25 new cases in Deschutes County, 11 in Umatilla County and two in Clatsop County.

Other county case totals: Baker (1), Benton (8), Clackamas (68), Columbia (4), Coos (6), Crook (2), Douglas (21), Grant (4), Jackson (41), Jefferson (5), Josephine (2), Klamath (10), Lane (36), Linn (17), Malheur (7), Marion (79), Morrow (1), Polk (16), Union (13) and Yamhill (18).

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