

IMESD responds to updated school metrics from ODE

On Friday, October 30, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) released an update to its Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance, including updated metrics for students to return to in-person instruction in schools. According to ODE, the metrics are based on the latest COVID-19 studies and data, align to CDC recommendations, and are in line with standards in other states to help Oregon meet its priority to return students to in-person instruction.

ODE stated that an important lesson from the review of national school data is that Oregon school districts can help protect student and staff health during in-person instruction when community spread is sufficiently low and when districts strictly adhere to the health and safety protocols outlined for schools.

Key changes to the metrics include:
 -A clear set of reachable targets for communities to strive for.
 -Acknowledgement that Oregon's Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance's strong public

health protocols in structured settings like schools can greatly reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

-Additional time for schools to transition between in-person and distance learning models.

-Increased access to in-person instruction at the elementary level; incrementally increased access for in-person instruction beginning at the elementary level.

-A two-week "Look Back" at the Metrics Data rather than one week at a time over a three-week period.

-Removes State Positivity Rate in favor of County Positivity Rates.

-Maintains use of some exceptions, including a hold harmless clause

-Extends implementation windows and advises use of an equity decision tool.

-Limited In-Person Instruction: Changes cohort size from 10 to 20, removes 250 absolute student limit.

According to the press release from ODE, the updated metrics take effect immediately and, based

on this week's data points, potentially allow close to 130,000 students to return to some in-person instruction. The guidance recommends that schools consider both equity and a methodical and cautious approach at the beginning that return a portion of the school population first and then add more students on-site over time. This will allow schools to build new safety routines, stabilize cohorts and avoid sudden, disruptive transitions back to Comprehensive Distance Learning due to quarantine or isolation.

Dr. Mark Mulvihill, superintendent of the InterMountain ESD, has been working with multiple state committees for months. Mulvihill said the planned fall review by ODE of the school reopening metrics is timely and appropriate. The updated metrics may allow some of the IMESD's districts to re-open to in-person instruction, but Umatilla County's current COVID-19 case rate is still too high for schools to re-open with students.

"The new state metrics provide increased flexibil-

ity for Oregon schools to open safely. Many more students in Oregon will be able to attend school in-person. Union and Morrow County schools will be able to remain open due to previous exceptions and their continued success in mitigating spread. However, Umatilla County's case numbers and positivity rate are still too high, even with these new metrics. It is now up to all of us to reduce the spread and get our kids back to school," Mulvihill said.

For more information on the updated school opening metrics, please visit the ODE website: <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/health-safety/Pages/Planning-for-the-2020-21-School-Year.aspx>.

Heppner averages warmer than normal

According to preliminary data received by NOAA's National Weather Service in Pendleton, temperatures at Heppner averaged warmer than normal during the month of October.

The average temperature was 54.0 degrees which was 2.7 degrees above normal. High temperatures averaged 66.8 degrees, which was 2.6 degrees above normal. The highest was 85 degrees on the 7th. Low temperatures averaged 41.1 degrees, which was 2.7 degrees above normal. The lowest was 14 degrees, on the 25th.

There were six days with the low temperature below 32 degrees.

Precipitation totaled

0.66 inches during October, which was 0.48 inches below normal. Measurable precipitation, at least .01 inch, was received on five days with the heaviest, 0.28 inches reported on the 11th.

Precipitation this year has reached 7.61 inches, which is 3.47 inches below normal.

The outlook for November from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center calls for above normal temperatures and above normal precipitation. Normal highs for Heppner fall from 57.0 degrees at the start of November to 45.0 degrees at the end of November. Normal lows fall from 35.0 degrees to 28.0 degrees. The 30-year normal precipitation is 1.60 inches.

Hintz-Bormann engagement announced

Zechariah "Zech" Daniel Hintz and Kari Lynne Bormann have announced their engagement to be married. They are planning a December 5, 2020, wedding at the Christ Community Church Brookside Campus, Kansas City, MO.

Zech is a 2012 graduate of Heppner High School. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in applied economics and management from Cornell University.

Kari received a Bachelor of Arts degree in secondary English education at Calvin University.

Zech is the son of Teresa Van Doorn, Heppner, and Dan Hintz, Idaho. His grandparents are Linda and Terry Corbin, Heppner, and Carol Hintz, Beaverton.

Kari is the daughter of Scott and DeeDe Bormann, Kansas.



Zech Hintz and Kari Lynne Bormann

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