

# Schools:

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Some districts may be able to leverage gyms, lunch rooms and other large spaces to accommodate all students under the 6-foot rule, for example, while others may need to rotate half the students into the building at a time while the other half participate in online schooling for the day. Districts will also need to make sure students aren't mixing with other cohorts in restrooms, hallways, playgrounds and other shared spaces.

On a phone call with Oregon journalists, Oregon Department of Education Director Colt Gill said if school districts do have a hybrid program of online and in-person learning next year, the distance learning will be held to "higher level of expectation" than they have been in the spring, including actual interaction with teachers on those days they're not physically in the classroom.

"With this level of local flexibility, there is an equal level of local responsibility," he said.

He said in the event of an outbreak at a school, districts must be prepared to temporarily switch an entire building or classroom to distance learning while everyone who may have been exposed is quarantined at home.

Hermiston voters passed a bond in 2019 to add on to Hermiston High School,



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan, File

**Families stand and take pictures of their graduates during Hermiston High School's commencement ceremony at the high school on Thursday, June 4, 2020. The measures taken for graduation are a preview of social distancing schools will be required to practice in the fall.**

replace Rocky Heights Elementary School with a larger school and add a sixth elementary school to the district. During the campaign, the district's website stated the Facilities Planning Committee estimated that the high school and elementary schools would "exceed capacity" by the 2020-21 school year. Those projects are currently in the design phase, but won't be built in time for the upcoming school year.

Mooney said last week

that Hermiston has been able to keep its class sizes "manageable," however, which will help in following the state's guidelines in the fall.

In addition to tackling the problem of sufficient physical distancing for each student and teacher, districts will also be challenged by the requirement to keep students together in a single group, or cohort, all day to try and limit the exposure that would happen if a student were to come to school

carrying COVID-19.

Mooney said at the elementary school that is easier to accomplish, as students mostly stay together in one group all day anyway, but high school and middle school students usually mix with different students in different classes.

"There will be different needs for different levels, for sure," she said.

Mooney said the district will also follow hygiene standards set by the state, including rigorous hand

washing and sanitizing protocols and not allowing students or staff to be at school if they are displaying symptoms of COVID-19. The school district is adding two new school nurses to the two it already has on staff, and will make whatever additional accommodations are needed for students with medical conditions that put them at higher risk of complications from COVID-19.

"Students' safety, security and health, all of that has always been at the fore-

front for us," she said.

At Umatilla School District, Superintendent Heidi Sipe created a slideshow and video showing a first draft of the district's plan for fall, and asked parents and students to give feedback on the plan through a survey sent out to parents and available on the district's Facebook page.

In the video, Sipe said the district plans to present a mixture of online and on-site opportunities for students. Students can choose to attend school online only for their health, while students who wish to attend in person will be kept in a "cohort" with the same students and teacher all day on Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, students who need help catching up will meet with their teacher in person while students who are passing their classes will be learning online.

In elementary school, the students' main teacher will handle PE, music and other special classes in their own classrooms. In the secondary grade levels, students will be kept in one "homeroom" classroom all day with their cohort for an entire quarter, with that classroom's teacher handling some subjects in person while students will watch a livestream of other teachers' lectures for other subjects.

"It's important to recognize this is our draft plan," Sipe said. "That means it's not final yet. These are our first ideas into the guidance that was released so that we can have school in the fall."

# Masks:

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major corporations have since gotten on board. Sporting goods brands like Adidas and Under Armour are selling masks designed for exercise. Department stores like Nordstrom are selling fashionable masks online. Disney is offering Star Wars masks.

Taunji Knudsen of Hermiston is a big Los Angeles Rams fan, so her favorite mask is a dark blue one with a sparkly Rams logo. She said the team sells official masks now, as do all the NFL teams, but she doesn't like the new Rams logo so she ordered a homemade one from a fan she met in an online forum.

She said she wears one every time she is in public to protect herself, since she has asthma, and to protect others.

"As the temperature gets warmer it makes it a little more difficult, but the benefit outweighs the risk," she said. "(Oregon) just saw our largest one-day total (of COVID-19) earlier this week, so now is not the time to be complacent."

Knudsen said so far she hasn't had anyone give her a hard time about wearing one, although she did share some gentle ribbing with a Seahawks fan sporting their team's logo on their mask.

Sports aren't the only fandom represented on masks. When Kathy Street of Boardman was recovering at home from an injury a couple of years ago, she closely followed the progress of a hippopotamus named Fiona, who was born dangerously premature and was nursed to health. So when Street was ordering masks she ordered a Fiona mask from the Cin-



Contributed photo

**Shannon Hickam shows off her Trump 2020 mask she ordered from a seller on Etsy.**

cinnati Zoo, which will use the proceeds to support its hippopotamus program.

"I'm a huge Fiona fan," she said.

Street, the Oregon Trail Library District director, wears a mask to the store now and said when the library reopens to patrons she will wear a mask to work, as do many Americans who work with the public.

In some places, such as hair salons and doctor's offices, masks are required for employees, while other businesses have voluntarily implemented a requirement for their employees to be masked during their shift. Some employers provide disposable surgical masks or a cloth mask with the name of the business, while others require employees to pro-

vide their own.

Becca LaBelle wrote on the *Hermiston Herald's* Facebook page that she sews her own masks to wear to work each day, using fabric

that will match her outfit.

"If you have to wear one might as well look good, right?" she said.

Shannon Hickam proudly wears a "Trump 2020" mask

when she goes out. She said she ordered a bunch for herself and her family members off of Etsy, a website for people to sell handmade items.

The mask business began flourishing on the site before major clothing manufacturers started to catch up with demand. Vogue reported that people searched for masks more than two million times on Etsy between April 2-4.

Hickam said not everyone appreciates her walking advertisement for the president.

"I get a lot of grief sometimes, but I just ask people if they cashed their (stimulus) check, and that usually shuts them up," she said.

Wearing a mask can be uncomfortable, but the frequent mask-wearers interviewed for the article said getting one that fits well helps significantly, as well as finding straps or ties that don't rub on the ears. Hickam said she likes wearing the extenders that allow people to hook their masks farther back on their head instead of behind their ears.

Some recommended getting masks with a flexible metal nose piece that can mold the top of the mask securely to the wearer's nose

and cheeks, particularly for people who wear glasses and have trouble with them fogging up. Messenger said she has found that cleaning her glasses multiple times a day and drying them on a soft cloth not washed with fabric softener also tones down the fogging problem.

Bethany Adair of Hermiston said she at first tried to borrow a cloth mask from her husband, a doctor, but she found that it didn't fit well. She ended up getting a couple more her size from a friend who sews.

She said it's important not to "mask shame" people who could be not wearing one for a mental or physical health reason, but also said that for people who find them uncomfortable, it does seem to get easier as time goes on.

"I've gotten a little more comfortable with it," she said.

She said she hasn't had her children wear one yet, since they have mostly stayed home, but that's a discussion their family will have to have when they return to places like church.

"I'll probably try and find some fun patterns for the kids, or maybe let them decorate their own," she said.

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