



WEST LINN / WILSONVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

To: School Board Members
From: Kathy Ludwig, Superintendent
Re: Reopening Schools Update
Date: April 19, 2021

At the April 19th Board Meeting, it will be recommended by the Superintendent that West Linn-Wilsonville K-12 schools *continue in Hybrid Model for the remainder of the 2020-2021 school year.*

Students Remain our Priority

Our priority has consistently been to bring students back in-person on campus when we could assure it was safe to do so. We were one of the first districts in the Portland Metro Area to start co-curricular activities in September and Limited In-Person Instruction in October. We were one of the first districts in the Portland Metro Area to begin the Hybrid Model, with all students back in-person before Spring Break. With each of these moves, we examined all variables and felt confident we could make the changes safely. It has always been a priority to have students on campus as soon as possible and as safely as possible.

Why is the District Staying with the Hybrid Model?

District Leaders and staff have extensively examined the new *Ready Schools Safe Learners* guidance which now allows for 3 feet of physical distancing within classrooms, but still requires 6 feet of physical distancing between staff, staff-and-students, in all common spaces (gyms, cafeterias, libraries, hallways, outdoors), between cohorts, and when eating, participating in Music, Band and PE classes.

Unlike moving from CDL to Hybrid, the conditions to move to 3 feet, but maintain 6 feet in common places, presented enough barriers, extraordinary costs, or unsafe conditions that would compromise our assurances to students, families and staff of meeting the Operational Blueprints for safety.

While some challenges were less complex, like adding more buses and rearranging bus routes, other challenges were more complex, such as:

- K-8 Cafeteria and classroom eating cannot be maintained at 6 feet without significant relocation of students every day and hiring additional part-time staff to provide the supervision (para-educators), daily set-up and cleaning (custodial). Hiring the number of additional staff needed for this change at this time of the school year is not feasible.
- WLWV K-12 furniture is not conducive to 3 feet physical distancing. In WLWV schools, over the years, we have invested in tables and 4-foot pair-desks for group and team learning. While there are some individual desks still in places, there are not enough for all schools. We are able to use the furniture we have to accommodate smaller classes with 6 feet distance,

but not full classes for 3 feet distance. Additional furniture would need to be ordered and delivered in time to make the change feasible.

- In K-8, we contemplated changing students' schedules and re-assigning teachers, but decided that this was not aligned to our commitment to strong student-teacher relationships. It was important to us to keep students with their existing teachers to the extent possible this school year. Strong teacher-student relationships is one of the highest correlations to strong student learning outcomes. We didn't want to impact learning by reassigning students to different teachers at this point in the school year. We are also mindful that any change in students' schedules or A/B assignment could disrupt parents' childcare arrangements.
- CDC definition of "close contact" for contact tracing purposes is still defined as 6 feet proximity. If we move to 3 feet, then every exposure will result in those cohorts quarantining at home for 10-14 days. With the case rates in Clackamas County currently at the High Risk Sector Level, moving to 3 feet could mean more students would miss in-person instruction.
- In February, the District signed an agreement with both the licensed and classified associations (WWEA, OSEA) representing our shared interests and assurances in maintaining safety and stability for our community. Given the complexities of moving 6 feet to 3 feet in some places, while maintaining 6 feet in other places, and the conditions unique to our district, district leaders are less confident that we can maintain all safety protocols in our Operational Blueprint consistently.

Clackamas County Case Rates on the Rise

There is guidance in the Ready Schools Safe Learners document that advises school districts to pause any expansion (if not already in place) when case rates move a county into another tier.

"Pausing expansion" when metrics move to a more restrictive threshold (e.g. green to yellow, yellow to red) is recommended by Oregon Health Authority, Oregon Department of Education and Clackamas County Public Health (*Ready Schools Safe Learners*, p. 15).

This week, Clackamas County reached 212/100,000 case rate. This moves our county from the green tier into the yellow tier. We are expected to continue increasing in case rates next week based on early projections.

Providing Additional Learning Opportunities During Hybrid

While we will continue the remainder of the school year in the Hybrid Model, district staff recognize that there are students who continue to struggle under current conditions academically or with consistent access to school. Using the same criteria as Limited In-Person Instruction, and keeping with current 6 feet guidelines and safety protocols, district and school staff will extend opportunities for select students who need more than the every-other-day in-person instruction (hybrid).

What is the criteria for Limited In-Person Instruction?

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) provided the following guidance for Limited In-Person Instruction to be applied this school year. Examples of the criteria include:

- Address connectivity issues, such as limited or no internet access
- Provide academic support
- Access assessment
- Provide social, emotional, or mental health support
- Build educator-to-student relationships

The District and schools are instructed not to use limited in-person instruction criteria based solely on disability, race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation. *(ODE Guidance)*

Summer Learning 2021 and Fully In-Person, Every Day in 2021-2022

District leaders and staff are in the early stages of planning for Summer Learning with grant assistance from the state. These opportunities will be communicated in May.

We also encourage families to let us know their plans for the 2021-2022 school year when we look forward to serving all students back on campus, every day.