



WEST LINN / WILSONVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

To: WLWV School Board Members

From: Kathy Ludwig, Superintendent

Re: Recommendations for 2021-2022 School Year Based on *Ready Schools, Safe Learners* Update

Date: July 12, 2021

The Oregon Department of Education has stated that schools must plan to provide full-time, in-person education for all students every school day for the 2021-2022 school year.

Accordingly, on June 25, 2021 the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) in collaboration with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) released the **Ready Schools, Safe Learners Resiliency Framework (RSSL-RF) for the 2021-2022 School Year** to replace the past Ready Schools, Safe Learners Guidance for 2020-2021. The new Resiliency Framework became effective on June 30, 2021.

The vast majority of the health and safety measures in the Resiliency Framework are *advisory*, with several requirements of school districts per state statute and rule. Where the framework does not require a specific action by a school district, a district may choose whether to consider or implement advisory information or recommendations.

Local Decision Making

In general, decisions of school health and safety reside with school and district officials. Local Public Health Authorities (LPHAs) are vital partners to advise and consult on health and safety procedures. Except where compliance is mandated by existing state law, the Resiliency Framework is *advisory*.

Requirements in State Statute and Rule

Existing state law and rule include the following requirements for schools and districts:

1) Submit an Operational Plan

Schools and districts must periodically submit to ODE a plan for operation during the 2021-2022 school year. The plan is similar, but smaller in scale, to the Operational Blueprint. The plan should be informed by community engagement and posted on the school district website (*OAR 581-022-0105*).

2) Face Coverings Still Required on Public Transportation (applies to school buses)

The CDC order for mandatory use of face coverings on public transit applies to school buses until lifted by the federal government and cannot be waived by state or local authorities (*CDC, Issued 2/1/2021*).

3) COVID-19 Recovery Services

It is important that schools fully consider how to appropriately support all students in light of their circumstances, including those experiencing disabilities. For students experiencing disabilities who are eligible for special education, IEP teams must consider the need for individualized COVID-19 recovery services. This includes notifying parents, considering the need, and documenting decisions related to services at each initial IEP meeting or earlier, where appropriate (*RSSL-RF, June 25, 2021*).

Return to Existing Requirements in 2021-2022

For the 2021-2022 school year, schools and districts will be returning to the existing requirements listed below:

- 1) Maintain a communicable disease management plan (*OAR 581-022-2220*)
- 2) Exclude staff or students from school who have been exposed to COVID-19 (*OAR 333-019-0010*)
- 3) Maintain health care and space that isolates sick or injured students (*OAR 581-022-2320*)
- 4) Meet all standard instructional time requirements in Division 22 (*OAR-581-022-0102(30)* and *OAR 581-022-2320*)
- 5) Complete an independent adoption of any digital instructional materials used as core curriculum (*OAR 581-022-2350*)
- 6) Administer state assessments as required by state and federal law (*ORS 329.485*; *OAR 581-022-2100*)
- 7) Reinstate the 10-day drop rule for enrollment (*OAR 581-023-0006(4)*), attendance and reporting practices (*OAR 581-023-0006(1)(f)*) and notifications (*ORS 339.071*)

COVID-19 Health and Safety

It should be noted and emphasized that what happens with COVID-19 between now and during the school year may require changes in our state's response efforts, and the Resiliency Framework would be updated to reflect any changes. COVID-19 continues to change with new variants, and our knowledge of mitigation efforts grows over time. For these reasons the guidance for responding to COVID-19 also changes. Currently, the best tools to protect individuals are vaccination for those eligible, physical distancing, face coverings, ventilation and airflow, hand hygiene, and staying home if ill or exposed to someone with COVID-19.

Everyone in our community shares in the responsibility to keep our communities safe and healthy. This responsibility asks each person to both maintain their own health as well as respect the individual decisions of others regarding their own health and safety. This mutual respect shown by adults in our community provides a powerful example to our children in our community.

Advisory Health and Safety Strategies Reviewed

Key practices that have shifted from "required" to "advisory" for reducing the spread of COVID-19 in schools were reviewed with a number of district stakeholder groups for input and comment. These groups included the WLWV Executive Administrators and School Principals, WLWV District Safety Leadership Team, District Safety Committee (staff and administrators), West Linn-Wilsonville Education Association (WWEA) and Oregon School Employees Association (OSEA) leaders.

Additional consultation and input was provided by district insurance carriers (PACE; Brown & Brown) and Clackamas County Public Health Authority.

Parent Survey Results

Parents in the school community were provided with an electronic survey (or phone calls) on July 5 – 9, 2021 asking their preferences regarding two of the COVID-19 mitigation measures: face coverings and physical distancing. On average, 90% of survey respondents (n=4,700) supported sending students to in-person learning without masks; 10% did not. The percentage was slightly lower for primary parents (85%) and slightly higher for secondary parents (92-94%). On average, 92% of survey respondents (n=4,700) supported sending students to in-person learning without physical distancing; 8% did not. The percentage was slightly lower for primary parents (89%) and slightly higher for secondary parents, (93-95%). For parents who were reluctant or opposed to in-person learning unless face coverings or physical distancing remained required, the reasons trended towards concerns regarding the Delta variant or waiting until vaccinations are available for younger children.

District Recommendation for 2021-2022 School Year

Consistent with following the RSSL and OHA's guidance throughout last school year, district staff continue to look to this same authority for health and safety guidance even as we crest out of "public health crisis mandates" and move into a stage of "personal health care decisions".

Therefore, the following recommendations are presented to the School Board for approval for the 2021-2022 school year.

Below is listed each key practice for reducing spread of COVID-19, the advisory comment as stated in the Resiliency Framework (*RSSL-RF*), followed by the District's recommendation or statement for the 2021-2022 school year (in blue font).

Vaccination

"Getting vaccinated against COVID-19 is the best way to stop the pandemic, and return society to more typical functioning. Many communities are offering vaccination at school. Everyone age 12 and up is eligible for a free COVID-19 vaccine" (*RSSL-RF, June 25, 2021*).

WLWV Statement for the 2021-2022 School Year:

The West Linn-Wilsonville School District recognizes that the opportunity for vaccination is currently only approved for adults and children over the age of 12.

Additionally, some staff, students and school community members may not or cannot be vaccinated due to medical, religious or personal reasons.

The West Linn-Wilsonville School District has provided its facilities for free vaccination clinics and will continue to make this service available in partnership with health care clinics and the local public health authority.

Protective Equipment – Use of face coverings

"OHA and ODE *strongly advise* face coverings for all students in grades kindergarten and up, and all staff when students are inside the building. Certain accommodations for medical needs or disability may be necessary. Per OHA guidance, it is acceptable for both fully vaccinated and unvaccinated people to be outdoors without a face covering" (*RSSL-RF, June 25, 2021*).

WLWV Recommendation for the 2021-2022 School Year:

Face coverings for students and staff will be strongly advised, but not required.

Students and staff who have not been vaccinated are strongly advised to continue wearing face coverings when inside buildings. While face coverings are no longer mandated state-wide or in the district, district staff will continue to work with all families to ensure:

- *District, school and classroom culture respects each person's health and safety needs and preferences. No individual will be harassed or singled-out based on their decision regarding face coverings.*
- *Face coverings will continue to be made available to students and staff.*
- *Certain accommodations for medical needs or disabilities will be provided.*

Physical Distancing – At least 3 feet with other people

"OHA and ODE *strongly advise* that schools support and promote physical distancing as described below:

- Support physical distancing in all daily activities and instruction, maintaining at least 3 feet between students to the extent possible.

- Consider physical distancing requirements when setting up learning and other spaces, arranging spaces and groups to allow and encourage at least 3 feet of physical distance.
- Minimize time standing in lines and take steps to ensure that required distance between students is maintained, including marking spacing on floor, one-way traffic flow in constrained spaces, etc.” (RSSL-RF, June 25, 2021).

WLWV Recommendation for the 2021-2022 School Year:

Physical distancing for students and staff will be maintained to the extent possible, but not required.

Physical distancing of desks, floor markers and one-way traffic will no longer be required, but personal distance preferences will continue to be respected.

The classroom in-person instructional model will remain the same for all students, but furniture or group work accommodations (e.g. single desk instead of pair desk) will be made available as needed.

Students and staff who have not been vaccinated are strongly advised to maintain physical distance (avoiding hugs, handshakes, prolonged proximity under 3 feet to the extent possible) in addition to wearing a face covering.

While physical distancing is no longer mandated state-wide or in the district, district staff will continue to work with all families to ensure:

- ***District, school and classroom culture respects each person’s health and safety needs and preferences. No individual will be harassed or singled-out based on their decision regarding physical distancing.***
- ***Certain accommodations for medical needs or disabilities will be provided.***

Hand Hygiene

“OHA and ODE *strongly advise* that schools create protocols and systems to ensure access to soap, water and alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Schools will prioritize handwashing with soap and water after students or staff use the restroom” (RSSL-RF, June 25, 2021).

WLWV Statement for the 2021-2022 School Year:

The West Linn-Wilsonville School District will continue to implement protocols and systems to ensure access to soap, water and alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Schools will prioritize handwashing with soap and water after students or staff use the restroom and throughout the day as appropriate.

Airflow & Circulation

“ODE and OHA *strongly advise* schools to ensure effective ventilation and improve the indoor air quality in schools by:

- Increasing the amount of fresh outside air that is introduced into the system;
- Exhausting air from indoors to the outdoors; and
- Cleaning the air that is recirculated indoors with effective filtration methods (e.g., HEPA filters) to remove virus-containing particles from the air” (RSSL-RF, June 25, 2021).

WLWV Statement for the 2021-2022 School Year:

The West Linn-Wilsonville School District will continue to ensure effective ventilation and improve the indoor air quality in schools by:

- ***Continuing the amount of fresh outside air that is introduced into the system;***
- ***Exhausting air from indoors to the outdoors;***
- ***Maintaining a climate level that balances comfort and safety within a classroom and building;***

- *Cleaning the air that is recirculated indoors with effective filtration methods (e.g., HEPA filters) to remove virus-containing particles from the air.*

Cohorts – Small groups that remain together with minimal mixing

“OHA and ODE *strongly advise* that schools design cohorts for students to the extent possible” (RSSL-RF, June 25, 2021).

WLWV Decision for the 2021-2022 School Year:

Primary schools will continue to use classroom cohorts for students to the extent possible.

Class cohorts will not be required for middle or high schools.

Isolation & Quarantine

“**Isolation** separates people who have a contagious disease from people who are not sick. **Quarantine** separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to a contagious disease and could become infectious themselves to limit further spread of the disease. Note: an exposure is defined as an individual who has close contact (less than 6 feet) for longer than 15 cumulative minutes in a day with a person who has COVID-19. Health care and a designated space that is appropriately supervised and adequately equipped for providing first aid and isolating the sick or injured child are **required by OAR 581-022-2220**. OHA-sponsored COVID-19 Testing in Schools is strongly recommended” (RSSL-RF, June 25, 2021).

WLWV Statement for the 2021-2022 School Year:

The West Linn-Wilsonville School District continues to encourage parents to keep children home who are exhibiting COVID-19 primary symptoms. The District will follow the local public health authority guidance and requirements regarding COVID-19 isolation and quarantine procedures.

The District will no longer provide OHA-sponsored COVID-19 testing at each school.

Environmental Cleaning & Disinfection

WLWV Statement for the 2021-2022 School Year:

The West Linn-Wilsonville School District will continue to implement regular cleaning procedures in all district facilities. Special attention will be given to high touch surfaces. Classroom outbreaks of COVID-19 will result in comprehensive disinfection of associated areas per CDC guidance.

Individualized supplies or materials will no longer be required per CDC guidance.

Staff Training and Guidance

WLWV Statement for the 2021-2022 School Year:

All staff will have access to, but not be required to take, a COVID-19 webinar that provides updated information and clear guidelines to meet the health and safety expectations set out by the district.

Visitors and Volunteers

WLWV Statement for the 2021-2022 School Year:

Due to the current contact tracing expectations by the Local Public Health Authority (LPHA), the District will hold on accepting non-essential visitors and volunteers into school buildings. This is subject to change pending contact tracing updates from the LPHA.

All approved visitor and volunteer arrangements will be handled through each school principal’s office.

Next Steps

Following the School Board's decision, District leaders will:

- Send out communication to district parents and students regarding expectations for the 2021-2022 school year, including encouragement to confirm enrollment plans;
- Engage with licensed and classified staff to provide support and resources based on these decisions, in order to be prepared for the new school year; and
- Prepare building facilities and classrooms to welcome back students full-time and in-person for the fall.

Recommended Motion for the School Board:

"I move that the Board adopt the required and advisory guidance from the Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education in the new Ready Schools, Safe Learners Resiliency Framework of June 25, 2021 for 2021-2022 school year, effective July 19, 2021.

*This includes the federal and state statute **requirements** regarding submission of an Operational Plan, school bus face covering mandate, and COVID-19 Recovery Services in addition to a return to existing requirements.*

*This includes COVID-19 mitigation measures (such as face coverings, physical distancing, cohorts, hand hygiene, airflow ventilation) that are **strongly advised but not required** for the 2021-2022 school year, all-the-while ensuring that the District continue to foster a culture and provide assurances of inclusion, respect, equity and care for every member, as they make their own personal health decision."*