

Good Afternoon Dallas parents, students and community members,

As you may have heard, Governor Brown has revised the metrics for reopening Oregon schools. I wanted you to receive this information as soon as possible along with what it means for Dallas School District. The Governor's changes are the result of a recent planned review by the Oregon Department of Education. She shared her reasons for these revisions earlier today in a press conference. Here are a few of them.

The Governor is committed to getting kids back in school because she and the department of education know it can be done safely for students and staff members.

The Governor is concerned about the impact of the continued closure on student well-being. Here are a few examples --

- Child abuse reports are down significantly.
- Students are not receiving consistent healthy meals, especially students with the highest need.
- Access to adequate mental health supports and counseling is challenging when done electronically as compared to in-person. Many of our students require in-person mental health supports and counseling. Symptoms of youth depression and related conditions are on the rise.
- Comprehensive Distance Learning has been much harder than anticipated. The impact on student well-being has been more significant than expected.
- School closures have disproportionately impacted students in poverty and historically underserved students.

She is also concerned about the impact the closure is having on families. She specifically cited the impact on women due to their inequitable removal from the workforce.

The Governor shared that being in schools is safer than where kids may be when not in schools. She shared that public health protocols being used in schools make a significant difference for the safety of everyone. Schools that have been open are experiencing little to no transmission of the virus. In Dallas School District, we know that this requires the use of safety measures and public health protocols with fidelity, and for each employee and student to adhere to them. These include consistent wearing of masks, hand washing, sanitizing practices, contact tracing practices, social distancing and all other requirements within the Oregon [Ready Schools, Safe Learners](#) document. The governor also mentioned increased COVID testing measures and improved tracing methods that would positively impact school safety. More information on these efforts is expected soon.

The new metrics were developed in partnership with the Oregon Health Authority and are aligned with the Centers for Disease Control. According to the Governor, they are also similar to changes occurring in neighboring states.

Here is today's [press release](#) from the Oregon Department of Education. The details of the [updated metrics](#) are embedded. See pages 12-21. Here is an [overview](#) of the metrics. There are too

many updates or changes to describe in this email but they allow for in-person instruction in our schools sooner than the old metrics would have allowed.

Please understand that this is "new" information to us and no opening decisions have been made for Dallas schools at this time. Any reopening decisions will be the result of thoughtful and deliberate efforts which reflect collaborative input. At this point, I cannot say with certainty when, or in what instructional form, our students will return. The new metrics still allow for an earlier return of our K-3 students than the older grades. There is more flexibility to add grades based upon the new metrics and local decisions.

There is one important distinction to remember. If we meet the new metrics in Polk County we must also meet the metrics in Marion County since more than 10% of our staff members reside there. The new rules allow for some flexibility to this requirement but only after consultation with and approval by Polk County Health Department. We have been in touch with our Polk county partners and are meeting with them next week to discuss the new metrics and our efforts.

Next Steps --

- The safety of staff members and students will continue to be paramount to our decisions.
- We are convening the district re-entry team next week to begin crafting recommendations based upon the new metrics. School teams are also meeting to determine site specific implications with the new metrics.
- Our commitment to collaboration and student equity will be central to our decision making.
- We will update parents, students and the community as frequently as possible. You are welcome to submit input at this email address -- covid-19@dspd2.org
- Decisions moving forward will occur after review of feedback, committee recommendations consultation with the Dallas School Board.

There is no question that we want our students back in school when it is safe for students and staff members to do so. While we have lots of details to work through, these new metrics create optimism that it can happen sooner than later. I continue to appreciate your patience, understanding and grace as we move forward through this unique and unprecedented time.

As always, please contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss any of this.

Sincerely,

Andy Bellando
Superintendent