

Parents & Guardians:

I hope you are having a restful summer and enjoying time with your family.

I want to provide you with an update for the 2020-2021 school year, as we move forward through the planning process. As a part of the plan to re-open, a district-wide Health and Safety Committee was created. This committee has spent a large amount of time reviewing and working through the *Ready Schools, Safe Learners* guidance, and requirements provided by the Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education, and has submitted recommendations to the District that we believe will allow us to begin to determine what the 2020-2021 school year will look like for our students, staff, and families. District leaders and staff are working throughout the summer to prepare for the upcoming school year.

Guiding Principles

Astoria School District has worked with our Board of Directors to create five “Guiding Principles” for the re-opening of our schools in the 2020-2021 school year. These “Guiding Principles” include:

- All decision-making and plan development will be made with the prioritization of the health and safety of our students, staff, and community.
- Our goal is to provide on-site learning opportunities for all students to the greatest extent possible, while adhering to state requirements and recommendations, prioritizing the access of our youngest learners (Grades K-5).
- We will be intentional with our efforts to provide equitable access to programs, services, and learning support for students and families, especially for our historically underserved populations and those facing barriers that may significantly impact their ability to access learning.
- We will create and support systems and practices that nurture the social, emotional, and mental health of our students and staff.
- We will create high levels of engagement and maximize the learning and academic progress of all students in all instructional models provided.

Health and Safety Planning

Given the “Guiding Principles”, the guidance from our State, and the recommendations of our Health and Safety Committee, our biggest concern is the safety of our students and staff. This is an area that the District will plan for and monitor closely as school reopens, and throughout the year. In line with the District’s Health and Safety Plan and

Oregon Health Authority guidelines, we are working to create a plan for each school that adheres to the following requirements:

- Students are placed into stable cohort groups within the school day; the district will work to minimize the number of cohorts a student is exposed to, to the greatest extent possible. Each student cohort will be assigned to consistent restroom facilities and entry/exit doors, to limit crossover with other cohort groups.
- Classes will be created based upon cohort grouping, and the number of students placed in each classroom will be established in accordance with the state requirement of one student/staff member per 35 sq. feet of usable classroom space.
- Buildings will be cleaned and sanitized throughout the day, in a timely manner. The District has budgeted for additional custodial time to help with cleaning and sanitizing of our facilities.
- Physical distancing requirements will be in place and instruction regarding distancing requirements will be provided to students and staff. The District will work to maintain social distancing of 6 feet between students during the day, with consistent seating and desk arrangements.
- The district may implement staggered arrival and departure times for students, to maintain safety on busses and to reduce exposure across student groups.
- Visitors and non-essential guests will not be allowed in school buildings during the school day. Essential visitors/volunteers must be screened prior to entry.

Re-Opening Task Force

The District has put together a Re-Opening Task Force consisting of over 40 staff, parents, and community members that will review the Health and Safety Committee recommendations, the District “Guiding Principles”, and feedback from parents and staff collected in June 2020. They will use this information as they review and provide feedback on the possible school scenarios for the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year. It is our goal that the Task Force will complete their initial work by July 21, 2020, and that we can get information to parents for feedback by July 23, 2020.

Remote Options for 2020-2021

We have had several families express desire to continue distance learning during the coronavirus pandemic. The District has been reviewing and will select a K-12 distance learning and online platform, supported by certified teachers, to meet remote learning needs next school year.

Communication Plan

The District has put together a communication plan that is designed to help us provide important and consistent communication to parents for the reopening of schools in September. As part of the communication plan, the District plans to provide opportunities for parents to provide feedback through online and phone surveys, and possible virtual meetings. Please watch for information from the District about important communication and feedback opportunities. I look forward to the opportunity to speak with parents about our school plan, and how we will work to make sure students are as healthy and safe as possible while at school.

School Start Date

As the District continues to plan for the upcoming school year, it is paramount that staff are trained to properly adhere to the new demands of our educational environment. Staff training will include guidance to meet the instructional needs of students, as well as guidance to best support their own health and safety and the health and safety of our students. To ensure we can provide training and support for our staff, and adequately prepare for reopening under the new guidance, the District is exploring the possibility of moving our school start date to Monday, September 14, 2020, instead of Tuesday, September 8, 2020. It is my hope this decision will be made by August 1, 2020.

Finally, I want to thank all parents and students for their support and patience during this unprecedented time. The District is committed to providing a quality education model to all students, throughout the current COVID-19 situation, and beyond.

Sincerely,

Craig Hoppes
Superintendent
Astoria School District