

11/12/2020



RE: ODE Metric Update

Dear Parents and Community,

At this week's Sweet Home School District Board meeting, the Board voted unanimously to support new ODE metrics and standards for on-site hybrid learning giving students more achievable pathways back to in-person learning.

Impact of New Metrics

Last week's ODE metric revisions to allow students to return to school made returning more achievable- for instance, by reducing the three-week 30 cases per 100,000 requirements to under 100 cases every two weeks. I, along with other advocates, have been asking for more realistic, equitable, and fair metrics to get our kids back in school. The state listened. While the new standards may not be perfect, they are much better.

ODE has recognized that in-person learning is superior to distance learning for the majority of K-12 students. Schools supply the needed social, emotional support our kids need right now. We provide better access to health and social services. And we can, when following all safety protocols, help our community identify and mitigate the spread of COVID.

Greater Local Control

This revision and reduction in standards by the state health and education authorities now place greater obligations and responsibilities to local and regional communities to stop and mitigate the spread of COVID. **Now more than ever, to get our students back in school, we need to work together to reduce case counts by following the OHA health and safety guidelines of wearing masks, social distancing, and washing hands with fidelity.**

Timeline Advisement

Even with easing the new standards, our Linn County case counts have exceeded the allowable limits; and projections suggest we are at least two weeks out from any start-up. Per ODE guidance, when we do start up, it will be phased and scaled up in two-week increments. For instance, upon successful two-week implementation of grades K-3 on-site hybrid learning, we can begin grades 4-6 for two weeks followed by the implementation of grades 7-12.

When we would begin K-3 Programing

We want our students back in classrooms as soon as possible. While it would be nice to state a specific return date to parents, students, and our staff, the virus does not adhere to person-made timelines. We do not want to project false hope by presenting a return date. We will follow the metrics and be poised to bring students back in a safe, systematic way when we meet the metrics. Then we will follow the

scaling-up-guidance for grades 4-12. This will allow us to analyze and improve any safety protocols in smaller increments along the way.

Health and Safety First

Face mask protocols, social distancing, cleaning, hand washing, and so forth are a top priority. To help facilitate COVID protocols, we will be dividing classes in half i.e. classes of 20 students will be 10 on a daily rotation or AM/PM schedule. Buses with capacities of 70 students will be reduced to 20 to 30 (depending on the number of siblings). It is important to know we will not be flipping a switch and bring all students back at once. **We want to build program sustainability through the pandemic and scale-up prudently.** We will also be developing COVID safety videos for students and families. For instance, illustrating what our mask expectations are.

Specific Schedules for Grades

We will have a K-3 schedule developed by next week. Then we will work on schedules for grades 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12. We will also complete our K-12 family surveys to understand the demand for distance only learning. **We will continue to deliver distance learning to students and families through the duration of the COVID pandemic.**

Next Steps

This week we will be completing our work with our nutrition, transportation, facilities departments, site facility managers, principals, student service and teaching and learning departments to iron out details-- we will also be working in a collaborative spirit with the union leadership. We have already done much of this work. The nuance with the new metrics is it is now attainable for all students to return. We want to make sure any schedule we build for grades K-3 will allow enough resources to scale up for all students to return.

Your Schools will be in Contact

Principals will be sending out updates to families and students next week that will outline what your student's hybrid in-person learning will look like and the anticipated timeline for opening **once Linn County case counts permit us to bring students back.**

Thanks for your patience while we have worked through our understanding of the new ODE-OHA guidance, metrics, and how the new standards impact our programs. If you have questions or concerns, you can reach my office at 541 367 7126.

Best Regards,

Tom Yahraes

Superintendent of Sweet Home School District