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Tony Mann, Superintendent

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January 22, 2021

## **Update: Reopening Molalla River Schools**

Dear MRSD Families,

As I promised last Friday, I am providing you with an update on the Molalla River School District Reopening Plan following the receipt of new information on 1/19 from both the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). We anticipated and have received updates regarding the state-wide health metrics that inform school re-opening as well as updates to the Ready Schools; Safe Learners guidance from ODE.

Also as a backdrop, I thought it important to re-share the Guiding Principles we have established for our school district's reopening process.

- We will reopen schools safely following a planned step-wise process to support a smooth and effective transition
- We will partner with Clackamas County Public Health, as a key advisor to help inform and support our reopening.
- We will continue to work in partnership with our staff, teachers, our associations, and our community as we reopen our schools.
- Aligned with the governor's announcement, we will begin our reopening process with our youngest students first.
- We have confidence that the processes and procedures that we have put in place, (which are documented in each school's [Operational Blueprints](#)) will enable us to manage this risk when students return to campus.

I anticipate this update to be lengthy, yet I wanted to outline the important changes announced this week and detail how they will inform and impact the tentative reopening plans we shared last Friday.

## Revised Advisory Metrics from the Oregon Health Authority

The metrics outlined below have changed significantly from the previous metrics model in several ways:

- Case Rate per 100K people in Clackamas County has shifted providing schools the ability to move into some form of in-person instruction with case rates less than 350 per 100K. This is a change from previous guidance providing school an ability to move toward in-person instruction when case rates were between 100-200 cases per 100K.
- Introduction of “elementary only” metrics guidance for Onsite and Hybrid learning (Detailed in the Orange column below)

<p><b>Return-to-School Metrics</b> State Guidance- <b>Revised 1/19/21</b></p>
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Metrics and Models	On-site Learning	On-site and Hybrid	Elementary On-Site & Hybrid Transition	Comprehensive Distance Learning
<b>County Case Rate</b> <small>Per 100,000 people over a 14 day period</small>	<50	50 to <200	200 to ≤350	>350
<b>County Test Positivity</b>	<5%	5 to <10%	≤10%	>10%
<b>Instructional Model</b>	On-site or Hybrid (as needed to maintain small cohorts) instructional models	Prioritize careful phasing in of On-site or Hybrid for <b>elementary schools</b> (starting with younger students and adding additional grades over time.)  <b>Middle and high school*</b> primarily Distance Learning with allowable Limited in-person instruction.	Prioritize careful phasing in of On-site or Hybrid for <b>elementary schools</b> (starting with younger students and adding additional grades over time.)	Implement Comprehensive distance learning with allowable Limited in-person instruction only.

\*If over time, elementary schools can demonstrate the ability to limit transmission in a school environment, carefully consider the Transition of middle and high school to Hybrid/ Onsite learning.



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### **Updated “Ready Schools; Safe Learners” Guidance from ODE**

*Ready Schools; Safe Learners* (RSSL) is the guidance document provided by ODE, that outlines all of the requirements that Oregon Schools must meet prior to reopening schools for in-person instruction. Unlike the health metrics from OHA which are advisory, the guidance outlined in [Ready Schools; Safe Learners](#) are requirements. There were numerous updates to the RSSL guidance released on 1/19, with some of the key updates detailed below:

- Incorporate and align the Covid-19 requirements of OSHA into our Operational Blueprint
- Requirement to minimize the number of staff interacting with stable cohorts of students, to the maximum extent possible
- Adds language related to educators ability to maintain physical distancing to the maximum extent feasible when moving around the classroom.
- New requirement to offer access to on-site testing related to advisory metrics if your school is operating an On-Site or Hybrid Instructional Model, but is located in a county that does not meet the advisory metrics.

### **MRSD Plan**

We are dedicated to reopening our schools safely and keeping our commitment to return our youngest learners to the classroom first. We are also dedicated to supporting our front-line professionals by complying with all of the criteria outlined in the latest advisories and requirements from OHA and ODE. As such, we will be shifting our reopening timeline to begin Monday 2/8. Shifting our reopening date 5 school days from the tentative plan communicated last week, provides us with the time necessary to operationalize the new health and safety requirements outlined in the 1/19 RSSL update and to ensure all staff receive the additional required training.

Following is our school board approved reopening plan.

MRSD Plan A measured return to in-person instruction :	Learning Model & # Days/Week	Transition Timing
Can K-1 transition to on-site instruction?	In-person 4 days per week	No School Feb 3 & 4 On-Site Learning begins Feb 08
Can 2-3 transition to on-site instruction?	In-person 4 days per week	No School Feb 18 & 19 On-site Learning begins Feb 22
Can 4-5 & 6 transition to on-site instruction?	Hybrid- 2 days in person/ 3 days at home	No School Feb 25 & 26 On-site Learning begins March 1
Can 7-12 transition to hybrid instruction?	Hybrid- 2 days in person/ 3 days at home	TBD

With a solid plan in place for the safe return for our students in grades K-6, we will continue to work toward our ability to bring students in grades 7-12 back to in-person learning. In partnership with Clackamas County Public Health, we will monitor both county and community health metrics after we open in-person learning for grades K-6. If over time, elementary schools can demonstrate the ability to limit transmission in a school environment, we will work toward transitioning grades 7-8 and high school to Hybrid/ On-site learning.



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It is important to remember, that OHA has provided different health metrics for the return of our middle and high school students (grades 7-12). Although the metric guidance is advisory, all Oregon school districts have been advised that advancing a return to in-person learning outside of the metric guidance may jeopardize the districts general liability coverage. This means that Oregon school districts that re-enter at grade levels outside of the advisory metrics may face significant liability lawsuits. As such, our recommendation to maintain a measured and staggered approach to grade-level return, starting with our youngest learners first, was approved by our school board at last night's special meeting. I am hopeful that county case rates will continue to drop as they have been, which will then allow our district and other districts around the state to more decisively begin to bring our secondary students back by third trimester. You can access the recording of the full board meeting [here](#).

The road to reopening our schools during this Pandemic has been a long, winding and a difficult journey for our community. I continue to be grateful for the support you provide your students, their teachers and one another each and every day as we get closer to returning to in-person learning. In the coming days, you will receive additional information from your elementary principals regarding our reopening plans, including an invitation to attend a school-specific parent meeting. I encourage you to continue to actively participate in these meetings and ask any questions you may have.

We are very excited to reopen our schools— safely. We are Molalla Ready Together!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Mann".

Tony Mann

