

Talking Points for Ready Schools, Safe Learners Guidance Update, Version 4.0.0



What the Oregon Department of Education Is Introducing Today

- As part of its planned guidance and metrics review process, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) is releasing an update to the [Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance](#), including metrics for returning to in-person instruction.
- A key learning from this review is that we can prioritize student and staff health and safety during in-person instruction when community spread is sufficiently reduced and when we rely on and adhere to the health and safety protocols and tools now in place in Oregon.
- These metrics are based on the latest studies and data, align to CDC guidelines, are in line with effective standards in states like California and help ODE meet its priority to return students to in-person instruction.
- These metrics are effective starting today, Friday October 30. They will create the conditions for thousands of Oregon's students to return to in-person instruction while taking a measured and methodical approach over time.
- Returning to in-person instruction, Governor Brown, ODE, and OHA are focused on:
 - Ensuring our schools are ready to implement all the public health protocols
 - Providing metrics that allow for in-person instruction at reduced levels of risk
 - Making clear how Oregonians in every county across the state can take the steps needed to meet these new metrics and allow our kids to return to in-person instruction

Materials and Resources for Communicating

[Presentation Slides from 10-29-20 Meeting with Talking Points](#)
[COVID-19 Scenarios Planning Tool](#)

What's New About The Metrics

Key changes include:

- A clear set of reachable targets for communities to strive for, with a North Star of returning Oregon students to in-person instruction.
- Acknowledgement that Oregon's Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance's strong public health protocols in structured settings like schools, can greatly reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.
- Additional time for schools to transition between in-person and distance learning models.

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- Incrementally increased access to in-person instruction at the elementary level.
- A two week “look back” at the metrics data rather than one week at a time over a three week period.
- Removes state positivity rate in favor of county positivity rates.
- Extends implementation windows and advises use of an equity decision tool.
- Maintains use of some exceptions.
- Detailed explanation of the metrics is available at www.oregon.gov/ode

Why It’s Important

- The metrics recognize the importance of getting kids back for in-person instruction— and allows for in-person instruction in places of our state where it is safe right now since many schools are not in hot spots. It also gives guideposts for the rest of the state to work toward that North Star.
- We need to remember what kids are missing when they’re not at school. In-person instruction provides our children and families with more than access to an equitable education. Schools are a center of services to students and families, offering nutritious meals, access to social-emotional and mental health supports, as well as physical health services.
- For most students, in-person instruction works better:
 - Quality learning experiences require deep interpersonal relationships and a learning environment where people feel safe, seen, and valued.
 - Especially in our current context, supporting students and families should begin with connection and relationship.
 - Relationships build engagement and regular attendance, which are predictive of earning a diploma.
- If we follow safety protocols with fidelity, we can fulfill our mission and reduce risk of COVID-19 for students, staff, and their families.
- It’s on us all to reduce community spread so we can get all our schools to a place where they can safely open with these metrics, if we wear face coverings, maintain distance, wash our hands frequently, and avoid group gatherings.
- More information about the metrics and Oregon’s schools can be found in the [Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance](#).
- Oregon Occupational Safety and Health has created a tip line - 1-833-604-0884 - for Oregonians to call if you have concerns that a school is not in compliance with the safety requirements. You can file a named or confidential complaint with Oregon OSHA via the tip line or online at <https://osha.oregon.gov/workers/Pages/index.aspx>

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- School safety and other COVID-19 school related questions can be answered by emailing ODECOVID19@ode.state.or.us.