KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM OREGON TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

December 2020

OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Oregon achieves . . . together!

Thank you.

A sincere and heartfelt thank you to the teachers who contributed their voice and questions during the virtual meetings held by state education and health leaders in the first weeks of December.

This has been a difficult and challenging nine months. Oregonians continue to be in awe of the varying ways educators, leaders, students and families across the state have adjusted to meet the demands of these trying times. State education leaders and health officials hold deep appreciation for your courage and resilience as your work lives have shifted. For many of you, this has meant balancing childcare and the needs for your own family. Your willingness to be flexible, while also continuing to show up for students and families across Oregon is hard to overstate. We cannot thank you enough for centering compassion, grace, and love as we navigate the impacts in our ever-changing reality.

We want you to know that the Oregon Department of Education and state leaders are better informed because of your questions, personal stories and insight about the 2020-21 school year. The report and summary that follows aims to capture your voices and key takeaways for state leaders to consider.

> *"The most rewarding part of the school year is having the opportunity to connect with students in ways that never would have been possible in the classroom."*

Teacher Voice

Oregon education leaders see teachers as trusted partners in determining how to operate Oregon's schools. Students and families rely on teachers' skills and expertise. The experience of teachers and school staff is a critical piece of input that will be considered as we move through the coming months to prioritize in-person instruction. Activating and elevating the voices of teachers is one avenue to inform state-level decision-making and policy.

Background

To provide schools with health and safety requirements prior to the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and the Oregon Health Authority (OHA), under the direction of the Governor, released Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance. All public and private schools are responsible for understanding the guidance and the requirements outlined to uphold public health protocols, including entry screening, face coverings, physical distancing, cohorting, and much more.

Oregon's experience with COVID-19 is dynamic and state leaders acknowledge the need to continually adjust or add to the tactics to address changes in our circumstances. This includes: integrating new learning about how the disease spreads; incorporating updated information regarding the effectiveness of safety protocols; and ensuring feedback loops are in place to respond to the experiences of educators, students and families.

Purpose of Engagement with Teachers

Governor Brown's top priority is getting students back in the classroom as safely as possible in 2021. State officials believe in-person instruction is critical not only for students' educational success, but also for their health and well-being.

Existing public health metrics have impacted the school experience for teachers and school staff in significant ways. Some have not seen the inside of a school building since March of 2020; others are using safety protocols -- like physical distancing and face coverings daily.

The primary purpose of the listening sessions summarized in this document was to provide a touch-point to hear directly from teachers, and for state leaders from ODE and OHA to create an open space for teachers across the state to ask questions, with the following outcomes in mind: 1) provide responses and resources to teachers' most frequently asked questions; 2) capture stories that represent positive and challenging aspects of the 2020-21 school year.

Summary of Engagement with Teachers

Leaders from the Oregon Department of Education and Oregon Health Authority engaged teachers from across the state through a series of six virtual meetings. A total of 843 participants attended. Each meeting, held over Zoom, was one-hour in duration and provided a touch-point for state leaders to hear directly from the experiences of teachers.

ODE's Director, Colt Gill, offered opening remarks and transitioned to a brief, independent activity, where teachers could write positive experiences (bright spots) and name challenges (struggles) in a shared space with the other teachers in the meeting. The remainder of the meeting was reserved for state leaders from ODE and OHA to answer participant questions. Participants were encouraged to place their questions in the chat. At the close of the meeting, participants were asked to complete a post-meeting survey. All data was collected, analyzed and summarized in the report that follows.
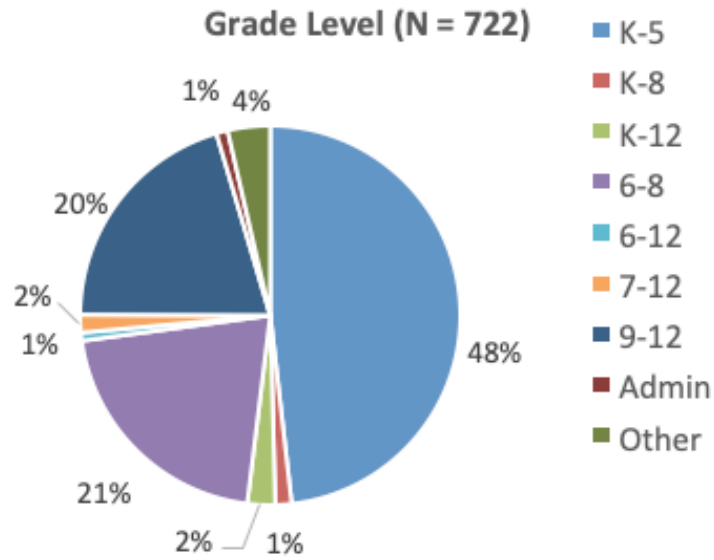
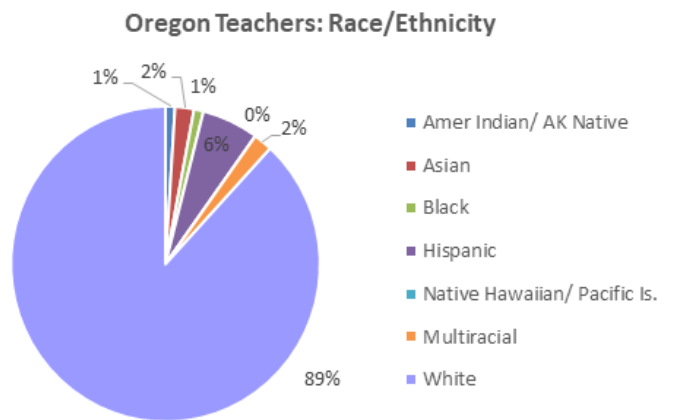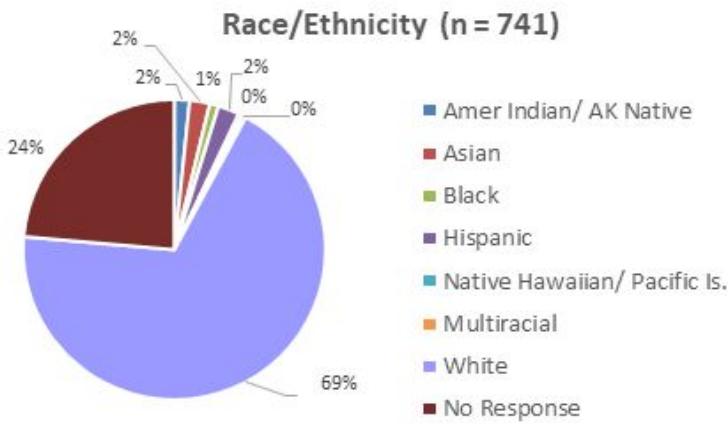| Date & Time	Number of Participants
December 7, 2020 at 5PM	100
December 8, 2020 at 7AM	106
December 8, 2020 at 11AM	220
December 8, 2020 at 5PM	245
December 9, 2020 at 7AM	144
December 14, 2020 at 5PM	28
	TOTAL: 843

Participants

A total of 742 respondents participated in the post-meeting online survey. All questions were optional and participants could elect to remain anonymous. The survey was shared by ODE staff during the virtual meeting. As mentioned, participants were encouraged to share the survey

with their teacher colleagues in order to incorporate voices of teachers not able to attend one of the six meetings.

Grade Level Taught by Participants

Grade Level (N = 722)

- K-5
- K-8
- K-12
- 6-8
- 6-12
- 7-12
- 9-12
- Admin
- Other

48%, 1%, 2%, 21%, 1%, 2%, 20%, 1%, 4%

Race and Ethnicity of Participants

Race/Ethnicity (n = 741)

- Amer Indian/ AK Native
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Is.
- Multiracial
- White
- No Response

69%, 24%, 2%, 2%, 1%, 2%, 0%, 0%

Oregon Teachers: Race/Ethnicity

- Amer Indian/ AK Native
- Asian
- Black
- Hispanic
- Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Is.
- Multiracial
- White

89%, 1%, 2%, 1%, 0%, 6%, 2%

County Worked In

County	Number of Participants
Baker	2
Benton	9
Clackamas	46
Clatsop	7
Columbia	32
Coos	13
Curry	2
Deschutes	19
Douglas	7
Harney	1
Jackson	58
Josephine	3
Lane	80
Linn	49
Malheur	17
Marion	12
Morrow	1
Multnomah	122
Polk	7
Sherman	2
Tillamook	3
Umatilla	29
Union	4
Washington	193
Yamhill	5
TOTAL	742

Number of Participants per County

0	11-50	100-150
1-10	50-100	150+
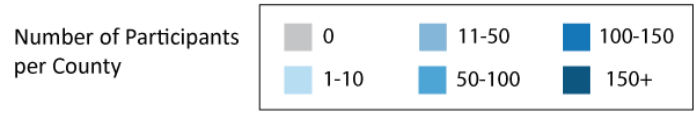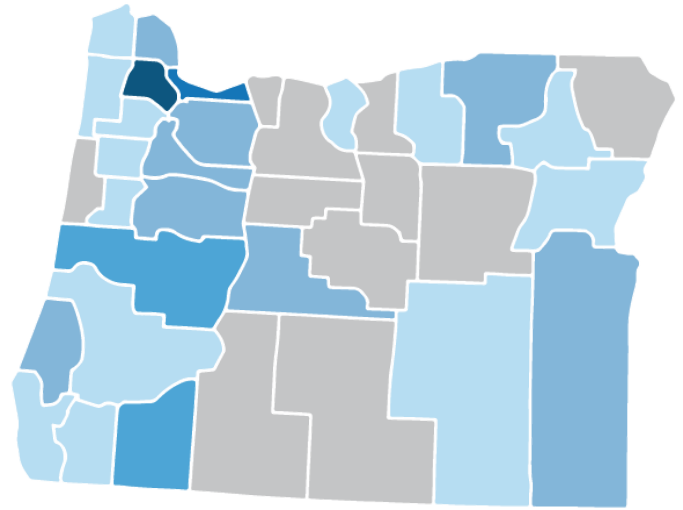
A Three-Part Approach to Engagement

Colt Gill, Director of the Oregon Department of Education, joined by the Oregon Health Authority's State Epidemiologist and Deputy State Epidemiologist, held six virtual meetings to hear from teachers across the state.

The sessions included three parts:
1. Independent Activity: Sharing Bright Spots and "Struggles" (Challenges);
2. Whole Group Activity: Open Space for Questions of Director Gill and OHA; and
3. Post-Meeting Survey.

Bright Spots and Struggles Activity

Participants provided written feedback to the two questions related to bright spots and struggles: (1) What is going really well (professionally or personally)? and (2) What are you struggling with (professionally or personally)? Participants were prompted by the facilitator to share positive experiences and challenges from the 2020 21 school year. Teachers responded by providing 709 separate comments to the first question and 699 comments to the second question.

Open Q&A with Colt Gill and OHA Leaders

Each virtual meeting included 30 minutes or more for Q&A with state leaders from ODE and OHA. Teachers were encouraged to submit their questions into the chat box. ODE staff rapidly reviewed the questions and facilitated responses by 1) verbally acknowledging the question and asking Director Gill or OHA to respond; 2) responding directly in the chat; 3) responding privately to the individual.

Online Survey

The survey (Google Form) offered space for participants from the virtual sessions to elevate concerns, suggestions, and innovative ideas to state leaders at ODE and OHA, or pose a question that did not get responded to during the meeting. State leaders encouraged participants to share the survey with their colleagues who were unable to attend a meeting, in order to capture additional voices and questions from teachers across the state. The survey was anonymous, with the option for teachers to identify themselves.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary source of data used in this analysis includes notes collected from participants during the bright spots and struggles activity as well as the responses from open survey questions. For the purpose of this summary, the quantitative and qualitative data from the online survey was collected and analyzed and used to inform the key themes below.

In addition to the primary sources of data, ODE staff also reviewed and analyzed all questions asked during the meeting and those raised in the online survey. Questions were categorized and patterned and included in the summary that follows.

Key Themes

From the data collected -- including what participants wrote in their responses - five themes emerged:

1 Some students are thriving in a virtual environment.

2 Teachers are encouraged by increased family engagement.

3 Teachers are developing new skills with technology and honing their practice through increased collaboration and supports.

4 Inequities are exacerbated due to the impact of distance learning on students and parents.

5 Teachers are experiencing feelings of burnout, with concerns for safety, mental health and well-being for themselves and their families.

Theme 1: Some students are thriving in a virtual environment

When talking about students succeeding in a virtual environment, teachers frequently mentioned:

- Students attending, engaging, and making progress;
- Some focal group students excelling;
- Students developing new skills, especially with technology;
- Students settling in to a routine;
- Students as resilient; and
- Students making connections and developing relationships.

Bright Spots for Students (n = 234)

Category	Value
Attending, Engaging, and Making Progress	125
Some Focal Group Students Excelling	33
Developing New Skills, especially with Technology	28
Settling in to a Routine	16
Students are Resilient	14
Making Connections and Developing Relationships	12
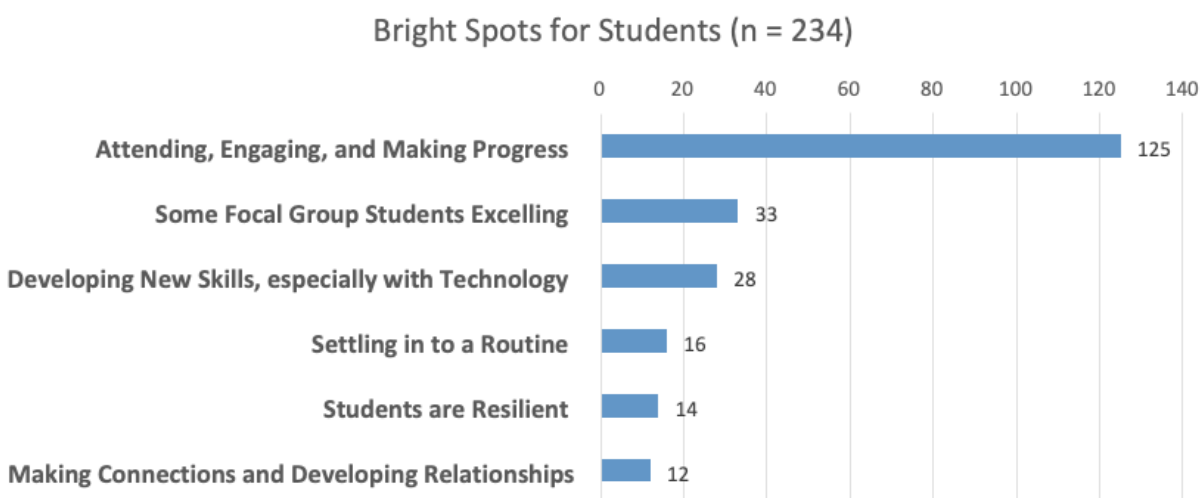
Students Attending, Engaging and Making Progress

Teachers consistently wrote about the educational experience of students in Oregon. According to the respondents, the most common "bright spot" in relation to students was that they had very good attendance, or better than expected attendance, in their current school model. Conversely, data collected under the "struggles" suggest nearly just as many teachers emphasized student attendance and engagement as a challenge. Teachers also reported that students were generally engaged in school (n = 30) and making good academic progress (n = 34). This was often compared to the chaotic nature of the previous spring school experience. In addition, five teachers indicated they had at least made contact with some students online who previously did not show up in person.

"I have had excellent attendance from the students/ families I work with and have connected with parents I didn't have a relationship with before."

"My students are attending, making progress, and learning technology."

"CDL is going really well for the majority of students. Attendance has been great. Students and families seem pleasantly surprised by how engaging the classes have been."

Survey: What do you want to elevate to state leaders at ODE and OHA?

- CDL isn't perfect, but students are learning
- Safety concern of being in-person
- Exacerbating inequities
- Mental health of students and families

An additional 29 comments specifically mentioned that students who experience disability are making progress and the CDL learning experience is allowing their strengths to be seen and their needs to be met. Teachers mentioned that without other students physically present, they were able to provide more individualized attention to students, and that the online experience contributed to a reduction in distractions and interruptions, helping to increase focus. Another four teachers mentioned that CDL classrooms in general were much more calm.

"Some of my students with disabilities are accessing general education more than ever before because learning from home eliminates many of the triggers that make learning so hard for them in-person."

"I thought the SPED students would struggle the most, but I think they are the ones that are doing the best."

Developing New Skills, especially with Technology, and Settling into a Routine

Given the widespread use of distance learning, often for long periods of time, it is not surprising that 12% (n = 28) of the bright spots mentioned by teachers using distance learning was the rapid development of students' technological skills. In addition, seven other comments indicated students had developed skills in other areas such as creativity, flexibility, and autonomous learning. Over a dozen teachers indicated one bright spot was that their students and classrooms were successfully settling into a routine, or "getting into a groove," thereby allowing for better learning opportunities.

> *"My students are getting exposed to new technology that they wouldn't have been exposed to in years past and are making huge gains in the tech skills they are building."*
>
> *"Students are learning new skills - self advocate, self-regulate, time management - skills they will use later in life"*
>
> *"Students are getting into a routine and the majority are doing well. They are just now adapting to this new way of learning."*
>
> *"Most students in my class are in a groove with our routines."*

Resilience and Well-being

Fourteen teachers made general comments about students' well-being. That is, eight commented on students' resiliency, while six indicated students were generally positive about school or were doing well.

> *"My students are so resilient. They attend class, engage in the lessons, and do a great job of staying positive."*
>
> *"The artifice of social pressure that comes from being a high schooler is much less dominant for students. Some kids are reporting that their mental health is actually better not being in the building."*
>
> *"The later CDL start time (8:30 instead of 7:45) means that more teenage brains are awake! We are not "driven" by the bus schedule any longer. Students and staff both report feeling more rested this year."*

## Making Connections and Developing Relationships

Just over a dozen comments were in relation to students developing relationships with students and teachers, which was perceived as difficult to establish during the earlier, more chaotic months of school. Though not always specifically mentioned, most of these comments seemed to be in relation to elementary school years.

"My students are having fun, learning, and forming meaningful relationships."

"I am seeing students make progress with reading. I'm building relationships with students."

"I feel more connected with kids because I see them up close in small groups. Most kids are actually doing well."
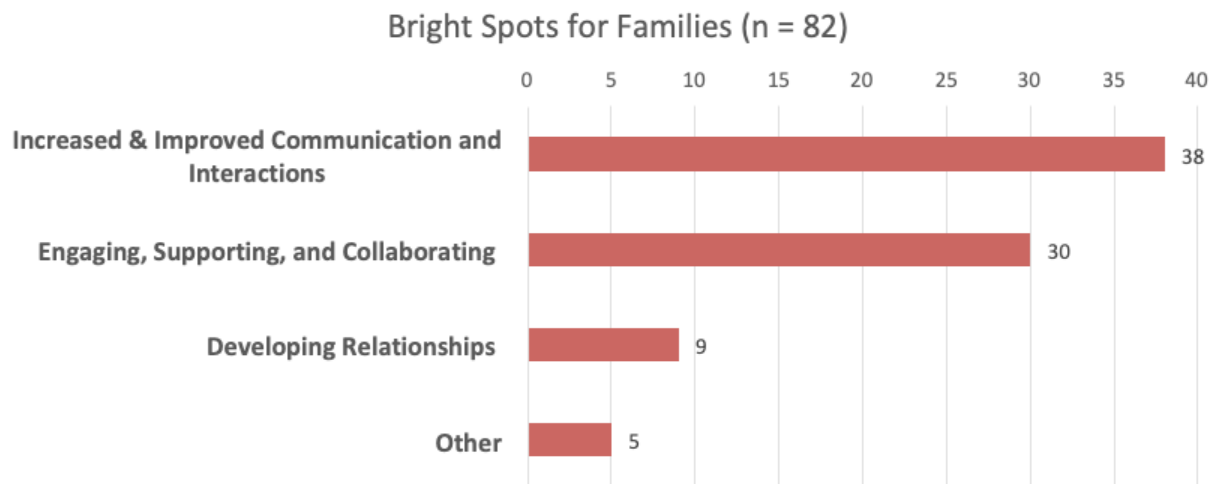
Survey: Who is your most trusted source for information about schools during the COVID-19 pandemic? (715 responses)
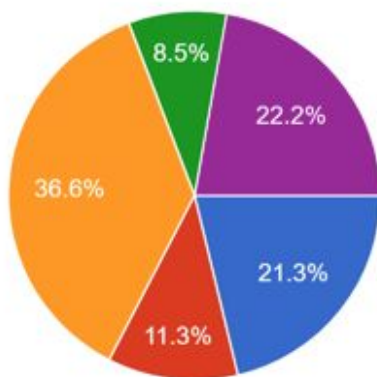
- Local or state representatives from the Oregon Education Association (OEA)
- State Education Leaders from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE)
- Officials from the Oregon Health Authority (OHA)
- My local public health
- My school / district leaders

8.5%
22.2%
36.6%
21.3%
11.3%

Theme 2: Teachers are encouraged by increased family engagement

Teachers mentioned 82 comments in relation to family engagement. Nearly all of the comments were related to how parent communication, engagement, and support improved in light of distance learning.

Bright Spots for Families (n = 82)

Category	Value
Increased & Improved Communication and Interactions	38
Engaging, Supporting, and Collaborating	30
Developing Relationships	9
Other	5

Increased and Improved Communication and Interactions

Teachers mentioned that many parents were engaged in their students' schooling more than ever, and that with the greater availability of private, online communications, parents were more comfortable asking questions and learning how to support their student(s). In addition, because online learning often required some form of parental assistance (at least for lower grades), a few teachers mentioned that they were communicating with some families for the first time.

"There's been more parent participation at meetings since they can attend virtually.*"*

"Connecting with more families in CDL."

"Conferences this year were the best I've had overall. It was amazing to see parents and students glowing at the positive feedback."

Engaging, Supporting, and Collaborating

An additional 25 comments mentioned interactions with parents were uniquely different than before distance learning. Parents were reported as being more engaged with their student's school work, were actively supporting the child's efforts, and were now collaborating with teachers to provide a high-quality educational experience. Some teachers mentioned that with the private and direct communications online, they could actually engage in coaching some parents on how best to support their child.

> *"I am partnering with parents and families in ways that we have not before. Parents are able to see first hand their children's successes and struggles - this has helped with students who struggle with learning as parents now have a better understanding of what their child goes through in the classroom. They also have the benefit of witnessing and celebrating student successes!"*
>
> *"Parents are more supportive than ever - we've been in person for 12 weeks and it's going better than we ever could've imagined."*
>
> *"I am able to provide parent coaching frequently for many students. Parents are able to support their students' speech and language goals better than usual."*

Developing Relationships for the First Time with Families

At the highest end of the collaboration scale, a smaller number of teachers indicated that they were able to develop meaningful relationships with some families for the first time.

> *"Developing strong relationships with families has been a highlight of the year."*
>
> *"I am doing weekly supply deliveries to some of my underserved families and that has helped me build relationships by just having a distanced visit outside."*
>
> *"Building strong relationships with families and students."*

> **Survey: What is the most rewarding part of the 2020-21 school year?**
>
> ● Students attending and learning
> ● Connecting with students and families in new and deeper ways
> ● Collaboration with colleagues
> ● Safety and comfort of teaching from home

Theme 3: Opportunity for teachers to develop new skills with technology and hone their practice through increased collaboration and supports

Collaborative and Supportive Colleagues

The most common bright spot related to teachers was the amount and quality of collaborations with other teachers and administrators. Many teachers indicated they and their colleagues had been working very hard and had "risen to the occasion." Further, despite all the stress and the amount of change, the majority felt supported by their peers and other staff.

"Working with my team to constantly problem solve issues."

"*Collaboration with colleagues. The school staff has worked together really well.*"

"My building principal allows me to work from home, showing consideration for my health and well-being."

"Really impressed and proud of our staff, admins, teachers.   The work they are doing to connect with students and provide the belonging and connections our students and families need is amazing. CDL is HARD but we are making it work.   Our students are not falling behind, they are surviving a pandemic, and we are helping them."

Developing New Skills, Practices, and Strategies, Especially with Technology

The second most common bright spot for teachers was the development of new knowledge and skills with technology and various online platforms, the development of new teaching practices, strategies, and techniques, and a variety of other skills.

"As a teacher, I am learning a ton of strategies and models that I will continue to keep in place even when we are back in person. I am running my class as a blended, mastery-based course with some self-pacing built in, and I have been thrilled with the results and the feedback."

"I feel like the number of tools I will have in my belt when this situation ends will be helpful. I appreciate the challenges of teaching in different ways and in honing the craft of teaching under difficult circumstances."

"We are getting creative and meeting needs that we typically have not met. Connecting with kids in a whole new way/level."

More Individual and Small Group Instruction

Teachers consistently mentioned greater ability to provide one-on-one attention to students, especially students who experience disability or those who are not yet demonstrating grade-level skills. The ease, efficiency, and privacy of communicating online, being able to quickly transition among students needing help, and communications happening at all times of the day and evening allowed for more individualized attention.

"I have been able to support students one on one and in small groups. I have been able to build some sense of community and relationships with my students."

"Being able to work with small groups of students, and having more opportunities to work one on one with students online- the normal (in person) school day doesn't always allow this."

"I am able to meet more small groups and 1:1 with students and really meet their individual academic needs and emotional needs when necessary."

Safety, Comfort, and Personal Time

Teachers in distance learning mentioned working from home as a bright spot as it afforded safety from COVID (many described health issues within their own family). In some cases, working from home contributed to their personal well-being. Professionally, some noted fewer classroom management issues and personally, several reported greater opportunity to connect with their own children (often in distance learning as well), their spouse, their pets, and even get in some self-care.

"I feel safe working from home."

"Students are SAFE!!! Teachers/Staff are SAFE!!! My family is safe so I can focus my time on teaching."
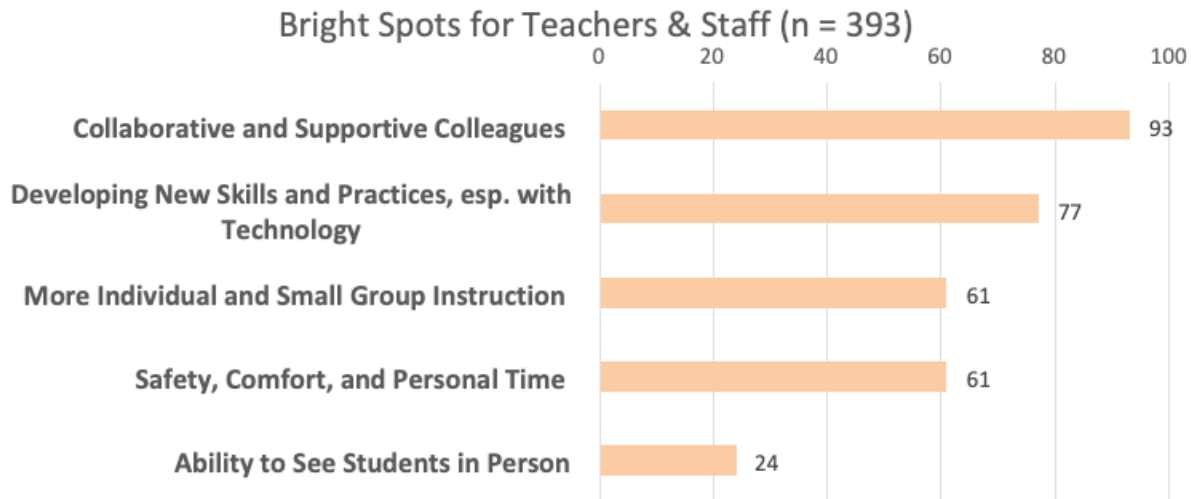
"It is also a pleasure to get to see my own children doing school."

Ability to See Students in Person

The last bright spot for teachers that occurred with any regularity was the joy it brought teachers to actually see their students in person when they were not in comprehensive distance learning.

"I love seeing my kids in person for LIPI! They are so excited to come to school and it's great working with a small group of students. I feel like I really get to know the students well during LIPI."

"It is so nice to see my kiddos again, even if it is a small group!"

Bright Spots for Teachers & Staff (n = 393)

Collaborative and Supportive Colleagues	93
Developing New Skills and Practices, esp. with Technology	77
More Individual and Small Group Instruction	61
Safety, Comfort, and Personal Time	61
Ability to See Students in Person	24

Theme 4: Inequities are exacerbated due to the impact of distance learning on students and parents

Inconsistent Attendance, Engagement, and Student Learning Progress

Contrary to the bright spots in which attendance, engagement, and progress were reported, nearly as many comments from teachers indicated that attendance was poor, progress was not happening, and students were disengaged or distracted.

While many teachers named attendance, engagement and student learning progress as bright spots for CDL, almost the same number of teachers named these as areas for additional support. It may be possible to harness the success some teachers are experiencing in these areas to help deepen the strategy for outreach and reengagement, so more can be learned about how to create the conditions in CDL for belonging, connection, and purposeful learning.

> *"Attendance is a big struggle; about 30 percent of my students do not come to online school on a regular basis."*
>
> *"Lack of overall engagement, lack of accountability (attendance, assignments, etc.), Zoom/computer fatigue, concerns about grades when it is unclear how much help is happening at home or little to no engagement online."*

Internet and Technology Struggles

Teachers indicated that stable internet connections were still lacking in many rural districts.

"All the tech issues from Google Meets glitches, to slow internet at home, to learning many, many new platforms in a short time. Student relationships at the ELE level are much more challenging and slow to build."

"My students do not have good and regular access to Internet, many of my students are working or caring for siblings, several of my students are personally being impacted by COVID."

"With not having technology that can handle the demands being placed on it. Not having multiple screens to see my students when I am sharing my screen."

Survey:

In one word, how would you describe the 2020-21 school year?

Exacerbated Inequities

Over 40 of the comments from teachers expressed a lack of attention being given to issues of equity. They felt inequities were being exacerbated due to family resources, that students experiencing disabilities were not getting the attention they deserved, and students not yet demonstrating grade level learning and may need additional learning time, support and practice.

"I am really struggling to support students with disabilities, students who are English language learners, and students who are substantially below grade level. These students need more support with technology and more support with building their skills."

"We are 100% CDL and many of our students continue to struggle with technology, especially SPED and ELL students. Newcomers are having the hardest time. As such, attendance continues to plummet. Students' unwillingness to talk online, to turn on cameras, etc."

"Being a part of a system (distance learning) that is creating such a wide gap between the "haves" and the "have-nots" which is unacceptable, and working so hard for something that is only effective and accessible for a small population of students and families. It's incredibly inequitable."

Theme 5: Teachers are experiencing feelings of burnout, with concerns for mental health and well-being for teachers and their families

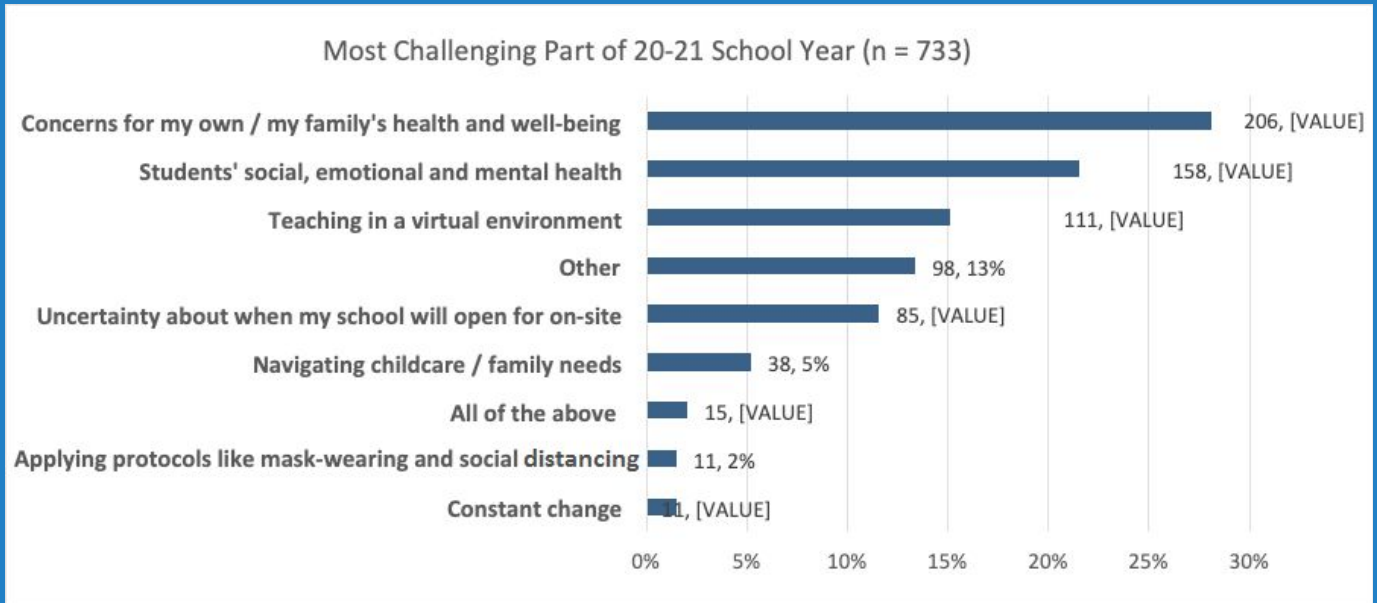### Feeling Overworked, Out of Balance, or Burned Out

The most common struggle reported by teachers in regards to themselves and their colleagues was the constant, unending work (including communications at all times of day and evening), the feeling of whiplash when quickly changing models and practices after finally settling in, and the feeling that the absence of work-life balance lead to feelings of burnout. This was especially likely when they had to teach both in-person and online courses.

"I spend about 70 hours a week on school stuff. Emails from students and parents take hours each day and they come at all hours of the day!"

"I'm working 10 hours a day, and usually a few hours on the weekend. Planning is more time consuming, because I'm re-configuring lessons every day. And the cycle of digital submissions can be hard to manage. I am never caught up."

"More anxiety about having to re-learn and redo all of the lessons once again when I have just figured things out with CDL and have a great thing going. (Teaching whiplash)."

Survey: What is the most challenging part of the 2020-21 school year?

Most Challenging Part of 20-21 School Year (n = 733)

Category	Value
Concerns for my own / my family's health and well-being	206, [VALUE]
Students' social, emotional and mental health	158, [VALUE]
Teaching in a virtual environment	111, [VALUE]
Other	98, 13%
Uncertainty about when my school will open for on-site	85, [VALUE]
Navigating childcare / family needs	38, 5%
All of the above	15, [VALUE]
Applying protocols like mask-wearing and social distancing	11, 2%
Constant change	11, [VALUE]

Parent/Family Stress and Overload

Teachers reported that families were struggling with all the changes and the very real challenge of supporting their children's learning from home. With so many competing needs and the stress of health, employment, financial security, and food and housing security facing so many families, teachers feel parents' stress and burn out. At times, parents are disconnected, disengaged, burned out, or otherwise unable to support their child's education

"It is hard to reach kids and help them over Zoom. I am worried about parents not thinking school is a priority. I am worried about the amount of parents who have pulled kids to homeschool."

"What is a struggle for me personally is hearing how hard life is for the parents and the students."

"I am hearing stories daily of hardships and parents giving up hope that they can continue with the CDL."

Concerns about Mental Health

Teachers continued to express concerns about the mental health of students, including their own children who were students. Adjectives used to describe students included: anxiety, stress, fear, depression, fatigue, and other forms of distress.

"I am worried about the mental health of both staff and students. Being so isolated from each other when we need each other is so hard."

"I feel like I'm failing at being a Mom. Both of my typically straight-A students are suffering from depression and it's taking constant effort for us to keep on top of their work - not very successfully."

"I got an email from a parent whose son is overwhelmed and expressing dark thoughts. This is a kid who is an A/B student, shows up every day, turns his camera on, and smiles. Just because kids are navigating distance learning "successfully" does not make it ok. My own son who was a healthy, athletic high school student is now struggling with depression."

Teachers' Questions

In total, ODE collected close to 400 questions from the virtual meetings and over 300 questions through the online survey. For the purpose of this summary, we've compiled the topics most frequently asked about.

Topics Teachers Asked About Most Frequently:

- Health and Safety Protocols (includes screening, ventilation, cohorting, and PPE)
- Operating In-Person Instruction and Health Metrics
- Research on COVID-19 in Schools
- Considerations for Students
- Health Metrics
- Vaccine Prioritization and Distribution
- Limited In-Person Instruction
- High Risk Teachers and Staff and Leave Time
- Funding
- State Assessment
- COVID-19 Testing
- Equity
- Student who Experience Disabilities
- Decision-Making Process for Opening Schools
- Reporting COVID-19 Cases in Schools

Q&A Captures Statewide Impact

Teachers' experience – the bright spots and the struggles – were further amplified by the questions posed to state education leaders and health officials. In some cases, the questions magnified the challenges experienced personally or professionally by teachers throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, teachers frequently asked about the impact on students, evidenced by questions related to:

- grading policies;
- the need to prioritize serving students with varying learning needs, including those experiencing disabilities, emergent bilingual students, and younger learners (K-3);
- mental health supports and connection for middle and high school students;
- resources for delivering effective career and technical education;
- extracurricular activities and athletics, and
- administrating state assessments.

Teachers consistently asked for clarification around the health metrics – including where to find the latest resources, understanding the flexibility to operate limited in-person instruction, the efficacy of studies and research being used to inform state-level decision-making. Questions related to state and federal funding were raised at each session along with how state officials will effectively monitor schools for compliance in following the health and safety protocols as the priority shifts to returning students to schools for on-site instruction.

In addition, teachers at each session asked about the vaccine, the plan for vaccine distribution, and how, if at all, teachers would be prioritized. Many raised questions about what kinds of considerations were being made for high-risk teachers and school staff and their families. Finally, teachers wanted to know whether schools would begin to operate in-person instruction prior to teachers receiving vaccines.

In an effort to share many of the questions and responses, ODE staff have grouped them by topic in alphabetical order, combined to reduce redundancy, and edited for clarity at the end of this document.

Key Takeaways

The key takeaways from these recent sessions are represented in the themes of this report. Still, there are substantial inflection points for ODE to digest based on what was heard and digested in the report back. Here's a few:

1. **Oregon's teachers are not a monolith and their experiences vary significantly.** This isn't a new insight but the detailed review of all the comments and questions shows a significant range of perspective that state and school leaders need to honor.
2. **Educators asked important questions that go straight to the heart of the dilemmas that live between state policy, responding to COVID-19, and creating needed learning conditions for Oregon's students.** There was tremendous consistency in the ways educators demonstrated their absolute focus on the well-being of children, educators, and their families.
3. **Critical information on the state's approach and guidance in responding to COVID-19, both safety protocols and instructional guidelines, is not always making it to the hands of frontline educators.** ODE's guidance and general operations rely on superintendents, school leaders, and business managers to steward work in each district and school. The sessions reveal gaps that suggest information is not always being shared consistently or completely.
4. **ODE can continue to improve engagement with educators.** There seems to be interest and benefit to holding the kinds of sessions this report seeks to summarize more often with more of Oregon's educators. While this effort engaged more than 800 teachers, Oregon is home to tens of thousands of educators.
5. **A call to make sure a better future is designed while responding to COVID-19 and Oregon's racial and economic disparities.** There is a belief that leaders and educators, working with families, can honor the difficulty of these last nine months by ensuring we design and have a more powerful, creative, and just educational system in the years that follow.

Conclusion

The purpose of engaging with teachers -- through virtual meetings and an online survey -- was to capture their stories, questions and experiences from the first half of the 2020-21 school year. The key themes, patterns of questions, and survey data serve as important inputs for both state and local leaders to consider to better understand the varied conditions and impact COVID-19 has had on Oregons' schools. This report summary represents a snapshot of teachers' experiences, and while the information cannot be generalized, the data presented offers a meaningful and actionable way for state leaders to deepen their awareness of teachers' experiences and take informed and focused next steps to center the voices of Oregon teachers by responding to gaps in information and prioritizing continued outreach.

List of Resources

Assessment Waiver
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/assessment/Pages/Communication.aspx

Comprehensive Distance Learning
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/Pages/Comprehensive-Distance-Learning.aspx

Communication Tools for Students and Families (includes translations!)
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/2020-21-Communications-Toolkit.aspx

Complaints
If you believe a school is not in compliance with the RSSL guidance you can file a named or confidential complaint with Oregon OSHA at 1-833-604-0884 or online.
https://osha.oregon.gov/workers/Pages/index.aspx

Decision Tools
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Decision%20Tools%20for%20SY%202020-21.pdf

Designing Learning for 2020-21
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/Pages/Designing-Learning-for-2020-21.aspx

EI/ECSE Guidance
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/SpecialEducation/Documents/EI%20ECSE%20Companion%20Guidance.pdf

Educator Evaluations for the 2020-21 School Year
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/educator_effectiveness/Documents/EE%20Guidance_2020_21.pdf

Ensuring Equity and Access
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Ensuring%20Equity%20and%20Access%20Aligning%20State%20and%20Federal%20Requirements.pdf

Exclusion Chart
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/COVID-19%20Exclusion%20Summary%20Chart.pdf

Governor Brown's COVID-19 Webpage
https://coronavirus.oregon.gov

Instructional Model Status Webpage

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/2020-21-School-Status.aspx

Limited in-Person Instruction

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Guidance%20for%20Limited%20In-Person%20instruction%20during%20CDL.pdf

Mental Health

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/equity/SchoolSafety/Pages/Safe_and_Inclusive_Schools.aspx

Metrics Dashboard

https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoiMzIyMzI2MTMtMDdkMy00MWFiLTk1OTAtYTcxNWQwMjRhYTI4IiwidCI6ImJkMjNhMzUwLWE4Y2ItNDFmNS04YmZlLWJhZDgzOTTEwYzE5MyJ9

Metrics Explainer

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Metrics%20Table%20and%20Exceptions%2010.29.20.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery

News and Updates Webpage

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/COVID-19-Updates.aspx

Options for Awarding Credit

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/OregonDiploma/Pages/Credit-Options.aspx

Oregon Health Authority

https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19

Oregon Open Learning

https://www.oercommons.org/hubs/oregon

Planning for COVID-19 Scenarios in Schools

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Planning%20and%20Responding%20to%20COVID-19%20Scenarios%20in%20Schools.pdf

Ready Schools, Safe Learners Guidance

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Ready%20Schools%20Safe%20Learners%202020-21%20Guidance.pdf

Reporting COVID-19 Cases in Schools

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/COVID-19-Reporting.aspx

RSSL Home Page:

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/Planning-for-the-2020-21-School-Year.aspx

Research on Spread of COVID-19 in Schools

https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Research%20Informing%2

0Changes%20in%20K-12%20Metrics%20Framework.pdf

Synthesis of Questions

Questions have been grouped by topic in alphabetical order, combined to reduce redundancy, and edited for clarity.

Athletics

How will these changes impact athletics?
Additional information on athletics can be found in the outdoor recreation and fitness guidance along with the indoor recreation and fitness guidance.

Bargaining / Leave Considerations

What kind of leave should staff take when they need to quarantine due to travel?
This is a local determination subject to local collective bargaining agreements.

If someone travels outside the state, are we supposed to pay them to work from home for 14 days?

Districts should support work from home opportunities to the extent practicable. Ideally, people who have to self-quarantine would be able to work from home for that period of time. This is a local determination subject to local collective bargaining agreements.

Our district has made the decision that it is best for student learning when staff work on campus. Are schools required to have teachers working from home if possible?
No, teachers are able to work on-site consistent with the school's Operational Blueprint for Reentry and subject to all requirements in [Ready Schools, Safe Learner](#)s, companion, and supplemental guidance documents. This is a district personnel decision.

Do districts have to provide paid leave to staff who are required to self-quarantine due to travel?
This is a local determination subject to collective bargaining requirements.

Complaint Process

Is Oregon OSHA actually investigating any complaints? What will ODE do if districts are not in compliance with safety guidelines?
The process for filing a complaint has evolved since launching the RSSL guidance. ODE took on this responsibility to support general technical assistance. Of the hundreds of complaints filed early on, only 4 were unresolved and required OSHA follow-up. OSHA has now taken over the process for receiving complaints. If you believe a school is not in compliance with the RSSL guidance you can file a named or confidential complaint with Oregon OSHA at 1-833-604-0884 or online - https://osha.oregon.gov/workers/Pages/index.aspx.

Comprehensive Distance Learning

Can small cohorts complete CDL work on-site with an instructional assistant (IA) so that students are not left on their own?
This is a local decision. This model could be possible under Limited In-Person Instruction (LIPI) in the [Ready Schools, Safe Learner](#)s guidance.

Can teachers use video conferencing to teach some students who are at home while other students are present on site receiving the same instruction?
Most districts are using some form of video conferencing to support the distance learning components of their instructional models. Ultimately, this is a local decision and is allowed when your district meets the metrics outlined in [Ready Schools, Safe Learner](#)s and companion/supplemental guidance requirements and protocols.

What infrastructure changes can districts make to support instruction across models (e.g., two way audio video options) given ongoing changes to health data that may require multiple shifts between models this year?

This is a decision that has to be informed by local context. The infrastructure changes needed in one district to support a sustainable hybrid model of instruction will necessarily be based on current district resources. ODE is happy to discuss individual district needs with local leaders as needed.

Has the ODE discussed the possibility of relaxing the 990 rule for high schools? I would like to have time to reach out to the students and the families of students who are struggling/ not attending.

Oregon's ability to guarantee student learning time has never mattered more. As we work to prioritize student learning and well-being this school year, a common approach to instructional time requirements that apply across every instructional model and to every public school district, public charter school, and virtual public charter school are critical. For the 2020-21 school year, districts must comply with the instructional time requirements in OAR 581-022-2320, and may wish to include up to 90 hours for staff professional development and up to 90 hours for parent teacher communication in their instructional time calculations. These additional allowances are included in OAR 581-022-0104.

Considerations for Students

Is there any discussion on the importance of our high schoolers going back to in person? They will not get this time back.

We know that in-person instruction works better for most students, including our high school students. Quality learning experiences require deep interpersonal relationships and a learning environment where students feel safe, seen, and valued. Relationships build engagement and regular attendance, which are predictive of earning a diploma. Relationships also help teachers get students the support they need to thrive.

I would like to know if ODE is considering a shift in grading policy to allow for a policy such as universal passing for students who meet attendance criteria

We'd welcome you to share more about this in the discussion. We are definitely listening and tracking the range of what is unfolding for students across the state. There are a variety of ways districts can and are responding to what you've raised at the local level. We aren't ready to make any directional decisions on this right now but we are taking the input and questions seriously.

COVID-19 Testing and Contact Tracing

I'd like to know how you plan to do contact tracing and if anyone is collecting real data about exposures and transmission at school.

Local public health authorities, with support from the Oregon Health Authority, conduct case investigation and contact tracing activities, as well provide recommendations on ways to limit the spread of the virus in a particular location, such as separating groups of people, quarantine and isolation, and good disinfection and hygiene practices. Additional information can be found on ODE's Support Tools webpage:
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/2020-21-Support-Tools.aspx.

Decision-Making Process for Opening Schools

How is ODE going to incorporate student voice in this decision making process?
Students are a part of the Governor's Healthy Schools Reopening Council, which is charged with advising the Governor and ODE as school districts develop and implement their plans for a safe return to school. ODE recently hosted a student forum for feedback (on October 23) and we hope to host an additional virtual student summit in the new year.

Equity

What are state leaders doing to address the inequitable issues in our communities that are causing our most marginalized students and families to be harmed disproportionately by the pandemic and how schools are operating in the pandemic?

Harm is disproportionate and widely felt. Early on, ODE created Decision Tools for school leaders to support decision-making processes that might mitigate harm and ensure strong processes while knowing leaders were and are faced with hundreds of decisions. ODE also established the Safeguarding Student Opportunity Clause in Section 5e of the Ready Schools, Safe Learners (RSSL) guidance to ensure that access and inability to engage does not disproportionately impact certain groups of students. Each piece of RSSL guidance has been reviewed by ODE staff and outside partners with attention to what we believe can contribute to solutions and decisions that can, we hope, focus on and attend to the needs of the students and families our educational system has historically underserved and where COVID-19 is often having the most impact. Several state investments and use of Federal dollars have also been focused in ways to respond equitably to the harms ODE knows are evident.

I teach ELL students and their families are some of the populations that have been disproportionately affected by Covid. I fear that they are losing ground in their English as time goes on. What is the solution here?
Thank you for raising an important concern, especially for our students who are emergent bilinguals, many whose families' have been disproportionately impacted by the public health crisis. There are no simple solutions. One resource that may be helpful is Designing Learning 2020-21: Content-Specific Considerations:
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/Documents/CDL%20Digital%20Toolkit/Designing%20Learning%20for%202020-21.pdf

How will there be equity in regards to health metrics, for border towns? Being in a district that borders another state that has limited restrictions there seems that it is hard to see a time anytime soon to be back in building with even a quarter of our student population.
Governor Brown has directed ODE and OHA to continue to develop and evaluate strategies and practices necessary to mitigate risk and return more of Oregon's students to in-person instruction, including greater access to COVID-19 testing, resources to reduce the risk of transmission at school, addressing equity in access to instruction, and the application of metrics.

Exposure and Self-Quarantine

Do staff who are required to self-quarantine have to take leave?
You should work with your legal counsel to determine protocols within your individual collective bargaining agreements. Districts may support work from home opportunities to the extent practicable. Ideally, people who have to self-quarantine would be able to work from home for that period of time.

Can self-quarantine requirements for staff impact the instructional model for a school (e.g., if a significant number of staff are required to self-quarantine)?
It is possible. Instructional models are a local determination based on both the general metrics and exceptions, and the district/school's ability to meet all applicable requirements. If staffing considerations, including those that result from the need for self-quarantine, cause a district to be unable to fully meet the requirements of RSSL in one instructional model, the district will need to shift to an instructional model where they can meet requirements.

Liability protection has been an ongoing concern. What updates does ODE have around this area?
Districts are encouraged to continue working with the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) and other relevant partners in regards to liability protection.

Funding

Will additional funding be made available for school districts to use on PPE, increased custodial staff, increased testing, etc.?
Early in the summer of 2020, ODE made $111.5 million available to school districts through the ESSER fund of federal CARES Act. These funds can be used to prepare for distance learning or onsite learning while meeting COVID-19 protocols. Early in the fall of 2020, ODE made $27.8 million available to school districts through the GEER fund of federal CARES Act. These funds can be used to prepare for distance learning while meeting COVID-19 protocols. In the fall of 2020Governor Brown called a special legislative session for mid-December, requesting that lawmakers support a request for additional COVID-19 relief, including funding for schools.
https://www.oregon.gov/newsroom/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?newsid=53902

Do you see some additional funding from the Federal government to offset the cost of the pandemic? Specifically for schools.
Governor Brown and other Oregon lawmakers have called on Congress to take action, urging them to provide additional COVID-19 relief. These discussions are underway at the federal level; and, while we anticipate additional federal funding, we do not yet know the amount of funding or timing of additional relief.

Health and Safety Protocols

How do we put the most vulnerable back in a classroom without proper ventilation and PPE and/or

testing?

All of the health and safety measures as outlined in RSSL (especially sections 1-3) allows schools to open in a manner that limits the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This guidance was written in partnership with the Oregon Health Authority. Link to RSSL here:
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Ready%20Schools%20Safe %20Learners%202020-21%20Guidance.pdf

Can we ask for medical information for students not wearing face coverings consistently? We do not want to punish students, but have some very concerned staff members wanting to keep these students at home. Is that allowed?

Students who abstain from wearing a face covering, or students whose families determine the student will not wear a face covering during On-Site instruction must be provided access to instruction. Comprehensive Distance Learning may be an option; however, additional provisions apply to students protected under ADA and IDEA. Please refer to the Face Coverings and FAPE supplemental guidance for additional information.

What is the plan for helping older buildings in districts get better ventilation systems? In my district, several buildings, the ventilation system is poor or non existent. For safety and return to school this will need to be fixed.

Districts must meet the requirements for ventilation specified in section 2j of Ready Schools, Safe Learners . What that means within a local context varies depending on characteristics of specific facilities. If your school/district needs additional support, feel free to reach out to us at ODECOVID19@state.or.us to request a support call.

What is the maximum number of students allowed in the classroom if/ when we come back hybrid or full time? If we overflow what will happen with those kiddos?

Given the fact that every classroom and school blueprint is unique, there is not one straightforward answer to your question. The RSSL guidance outlines capacity limits based on square feet, also maintaining 6 feet of physical distance and recommends cohorts of 24-36. The number of people in a classroom is different than the numbers in a cohort. The formal full cohort limit is 100 students. h

I am worried about students eating indoors.....obviously without masks, then continuing to inhabit that classroom for several more hours. If indoor dining isn't safe, how would this be safe, prior to a vaccine?

We hear the concern-- and, students in school will need to eat and drink. Our RSSL guidance recommends that stable cohorts remain in one classroom environment for the duration of the learning day, including lunch. Cohorting is one of the best ways to mitigate the risk.

Are screening procedures REQUIRED still? Our district has implemented a "self-screening" process saying that families will do their temp checks at home. We are not screening staff or students on sight. I know temp checks are not foolproof but it seems like an easy step.

All schools are required to have a protocol for screening students and staff for symptoms (see section 1f of Ready Schools, Safe Learners).

Health Metrics

What is the target for schools to be back to full in person instruction?

The health metrics explainer is the best overview -
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Following%20the%20Metrics%20Visual.pdf with more information in the RSSL guidance.
Is it a requirement or an option for districts to open when the metrics are met in the county? Can you clarify, please? Do schools HAVE to open if the county meets the metrics to reopen?

When schools are considering transitioning between instructional models (i.e., On-Site, Hybrid, Comprehensive Distance Learning) through progression in the general metric chart (above), they should employ an equity-based decision tool to illustrate potential positive and negative impacts on students, families, and staff from all communities.
A decision tool can inform a school around issues of equity in implementation, including: timing, costs (to schools and families), capacity, morale, professional learning needs and more. Importantly, as communities in Oregon are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, a decision tool can ensure the school is making the best possible decision to serve each student. In this time, it is critical that schools maintain a strong relationship with those they serve.

What are the actual current metrics in place for reopening? Did they change again without being publicly announced to reflect county size?

The metrics framework is outlined in RSSL and is best visualized in a metrics explainer. We pull in the metrics from OHA each Monday and work to also produce this dashboard which is often updated Monday or Tuesday of each week. You can find links to all three here:
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/RSSL-Health-Metrics.aspx

How did ODE come to the concept that it is best to start with only K-3 returning to school first? I believe I understand that the virus impacts youth the least but I'm not sure there is a difference in impact with a 7 year old vs. 10 year old vs. 14 year old.
Will ODE use the same metrics to reopen their offices that they are requiring for schools?

You raise many important questions-- none of them that can be fully addressed here but we will provide a high level response. We hear the concern around teacher work load and how teachers can reasonably teach and manage for masks, hand washing, physical distancing, etc. We've heard from teachers who are doing this that it takes time to teach and reinforce these new routines. And, that with time and the right conditions, these new routines do take and it becomes a new way of being/doing/interacting. Our decision to prioritize our youngest learners is related directly to student's fluency with technology and the need for our youngest learners to maximize socialization, literacy and language development. We know all of our learners need to be in person and do not pretend that the needs of our older students are any less important.

High Risk Teachers and Staff

Will educators at higher risk be provided any other option than returning to the classroom?
The state level guidance requires reasonable accommodations in line with the ADA. However, specifics about individual educator scenarios will be subject to local district context and collective bargaining agreements.

Limited In-Person Instruction

My county has had greater than 200 cases per 100,000 over 14 days but I've been told that we can still continue LIPI.
ODE's Limited in-Person guidance allows for small groups of students to come on-site for no more than 2 hours each day. This model is intended to support local needs and is an option when schools are in CDL.

Can someone clarify which students qualify for LIPI? The guidelines are quite vague and are interpreted differently by every school.
The intent of Limited In Person Instruction is to bring students on-site based on need, including to:
- *Address connectivity issues, including a focus on students with limited or no internet access*
- *Provide academic support*
- *Access assessment*
- *Provide social, emotional, or mental health support*
- *Build educator-to-student relationships*
- *Support live peer-to-peer interaction*
- *Support ongoing engagement and attendance*
- *Build school community and culture*
- *Ensure culturally relevant and sustaining pedagogy*
- *Prepare for a return to in-person instruction*
- *Provide voluntary supplemental supports*

How can we get limited in person going in our district?
All schools operating in comprehensive distance learning have the opportunity to utilize limited in-person instruction. Schools can offer the opportunity for limited in-person instruction based on educational, relational, curricular, instructional, and/or assessment need. If a technical assistance call may be helpful for your school, please contact ODE at ODECOVID19@state.or.us .

When is ODE going to put more concrete guidelines on LIPI. All districts are interpreting LIPI differently. Some districts are bringing all students into the classroom for the 2 hours. Is this safe when the numbers do not meet the guidelines for hybrid?
The details matter in the concern you've raised on LIPI implementation. The guidance for LIPI is here and is in concerns with the main Ready Schools guidance. If you see a clear complaint please use the OSHA resources presented. If you aren't sure, you can email us and share more specific details.
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Guidance%20for%20Limited%20In-Person%20instruction%20during%20CDL.pdf

Should a school that planned to implement LIPI, but has not yet begun it, proceed with the plan to begin LIPI? What does ODE recommend?
This determination will need to be made based on local context and in partnership with the school's local public health authority (LPHA).

If schools are providing childcare, they must also provide LIPI. If we choose to stop LIPI during the required freeze period, will we be able to continue providing childcare?

Childcare falls under the guidance provided by the Early Learning Division. Please check their website for more information: https://oregonearlylearning.com/COVID-19-Resources

Mental Health and Well-Being

What resources can ODE share to support mental health in school districts?

ODE just launched a new toolkit and webpage, designed to assist school district leaders, administrators, staff, and school-based mental health professionals and community partners in promoting the mental health and well-being of school communities.

The toolkit addresses six, primary content areas: (1) Leading from Strength to Promote Mental Health; (2) Addressing Traumatic Stress; (3) Elevating Student Voice; (4) Centering Racial Equity and Anti-racism; (5) Promoting Inclusive School Environments; and (6) Delivering Multi-tiered Systems of Support. The website includes information about ODE's current mental health-related activities and initiatives such as Adi's Act (suicide prevention) and the Strengthening Mental Health in Education initiative with OHA, as well as providing many tools and resources for students, families, school staff and leaders.

Need for Further Technical Assistance / Support from ODE

Where and when can we have more time with ODE staff to process guidance, ask questions, and receive needed support?

ODE holds regular Office Hours related to Ready Schools, Safe Learners. RSSL Office Hours are currently held every Monday from 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. Support is also available through ODE's COVID-19 inbox at ODECOVID19@ode.state.or.us.

Can ODE help provide a sample message / communications template that school districts can use to share information with families and staff about the implications of the required self-quarantine following interstate travel?

You can find a sample letter and translations in this message to school and district leaders.

Reporting COVID-19 Cases in Schools

Are schools being required to document reported cases?

Schools offering any form of in-person instruction report all cases of COVID-19 among students, staff and volunteers.

Is OHA still reviewing data about school transmission?

Yes, OHA reviews data about school transmission. The virus spreads easily, especially indoors and within households, and could be transmitted from staff and students in schools who have no symptoms and are unaware that they are infected.

OHA reports on COVID-19 cases in schools when they can verify the school is doing in-person instruction and if those infected attended or worked at school during their infection or exposure period.

Research on COVID-19 in Schools

Can you please cite your sources? How do you know there isn't much transmission within schools?

The link shared with research from OHA is presented here again. It has the citations.
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Research%20Informing%20Changes%20in%20K-12%20Metrics%20Framework.pdf

When will Oregon start looking at what other states and countries are doing successfully to get kids into school? There is no evidence that schools are spreading events. Instead, they are valuable indicators of community spread.

OHA has compiled this research on COVID in schools
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Research%20Informing%20Changes%20in%20K-12%20Metrics%20Framework.pdf
Our team also has developed a resource library -
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Resource%20Library%20Supporting%202020-21%20Planning.pdf

Returning and Operating In-Person Instruction

Is Oregon leadership considering/planning another school reopening metrics change? Dr. Anthony Fauci said to "close the bars and keep the schools open."

Governor Brown's top priority is getting students back in the classroom as safely as possible. COVID-19 is here to stay for the foreseeable future. We believe in-person instruction is critical not only for students' educational success, but also for their health and wellbeing. The metrics are attainable for communities if we all work together to implement the proven measures that limit the spread of COVID-19: Wearing face coverings, watching physical distance, washing hands, staying home when sick, and avoiding indoor social get-togethers. As the situation evolves and we learn more about the spread of the disease, we will remain open to necessary changes.

Can you clarify the process for districts requiring returning to in-person instruction? Is there a minimum amount of notice they need to give employees?

There is not a specific minimum time requirement, but the newest version of the guidance allows for a thoughtful, planned approach to resuming in-person instruction. Once districts meet the metrics to return to on-site or hybrid instructional models, school districts have a two week window within which they can shift to eligible instructional models. Part of a thoughtful, planned approach is engaging with employees to support changes to their working environments.

If masks and social distancing work to mitigate the Virus, then why is ODE keeping schools closed?

There are multiple factors, tensions, and facts that shape the state's policy response. This includes the amount of unexplained community spread, hospitalization rates, public health capacity, effectiveness of contact tracing, and what we know about the ever changing science. This has to be done with lots of humility and navigating across multiple systems and community needs. The pressure and desire to have students learning in-person is real and high. The need to minimize risk and support community health is also present. ODE works with OHA and the Governor's Office to discern amongst the best of the science and the dynamics in Oregon to set direction to respond to impacts caused by COVID-19.

State Assessments

What information do we have about summative state testing for the 2020-21 school year?

Because the conditions for trustworthy summative assessment cannot be met, the Oregon Department of Education plans to apply for a strategic statewide assessment and accountability waiver to the United States Department of Education for the 2020-21 school year, including a temporary pause in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science testing. Colt shared earlier about the waiver out for public comment. Several organizations voiced support for waiver. Public comment has closed and more information can be found here:
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/assessment/Pages/Communication.aspx

Are you going to allow in person testing for ELPA21?

When schools are operating in Comprehensive Distance Learning, in person assessments are possible under Limited In-Person Instruction.

Does the waiver include ELPA 21 summative and the ELPA screener?

ELPA is not included in the waiver application.

Students with Disabilities

How do these new requirements impact instruction within schools?

Schools are subject to the requirements of the sector-specific guidance released by ODE and OHA, Ready Schools, Safe Learners and its companion and supplemental guidance.

How is ODE helping districts plan for students with complex disabilities? Students who have medical protocols, feeding protocols, bath rooming protocols, behaviors such as hitting/kicking/spitting? Students who are medically fragile?

ODE has released a variety of guidance documents to provide requirements and recommendations that support risk mitigation within school settings. Included among this guidance is a companion document on Ensuring Equity and Access, which includes information specific to students experiencing disability. As general education students first, it's also important to note that RSSL and all other guidance documents also apply for students experiencing disability. ODE continues to work on developing guidance and supports for school systems around this topic.

LIPI is not a great choice for our high needs SPED kids due to inconsistency in routines. It is highly anxiety producing. Is there a better option to address the needs of our SPED. Students?

If Limited In-Person guidance supports may not be meeting the needs of students, it is important to connect with families to discuss other ways that students might be served remotely, via synchronous or asynchronous engagements and support.

It might be helpful to refer to Section 3f in ODE's Ensuring Equity and Access, beginning on page 34 for additional information regarding specially designed instruction.
https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Ensuring%20Equity%20and %20Access%20Aligning%20State%20and%20Federal%20Requirements.pdf

Transportation

Transportation has been a big struggle even to get kids back for limited in person. How is that issue being worked on so that we can provide transportation to more of our students?

Section 2i in the Ready Schools, Safe Learners guidance outlines requirements and recommendations for transportation. The Limited In-Person guidance states: groups are limited to no more than 20 students at a given time in a cohort. Students cannot be part of more than two cohorts (including transportation) in any given week. Any one staff member (even in multiple roles) cannot interact with more than three cohorts in a given day and five in a week. As conversations continue about prioritizing in-person instruction, transportation challenges will also be evaluated and considered.

Vaccine Prioritization and Distribution

Where will educators be on the priority list for getting the vaccine?

Governor Brown has told Oregon Department of Education leaders that she wants teachers to be among the first to get the vaccine.

Are schools going to require staff to be vaccinated?

We are not aware and don't foresee a requirement for educators to receive a vaccine. We also imagine that as the vaccine becomes available to more people, there will be increased clarity around who gets it and who--if anyone--may be required to be vaccinated. We will likely be learning a lot as this progresses. OHA is leading the work on vaccine prioritization and keeping ODE informed as the picture gets clearer.

Will the state require students to get a vaccine to be in person school when it is available?

Studies in children are just now beginning. We anticipate the initial approvals for vaccines will be for adults, with the possible addition of children over 16. Good news is the vaccine studies have shown great safety and efficacy. We look forward to having this tool soon to help control the spread of COVID in Oregon. In addition: we are not aware and don't foresee a requirement for educators to receive a vaccine. We also imagine that as the vaccine becomes available to more people, there will be increased clarity around who gets it and who--if anyone--may be required to be vaccinated. We will likely be learning a lot as this progresses. OHA is leading the work on vaccine prioritization and keeping ODE informed as the picture gets clearer.