



**Ashland School District**  
*inspiring learning for life...*

## **Draft Resolution of the Ashland School Board Regarding State Guidance**

### **Resolution #2020-2021 #C1**

WHEREAS, Ashland School District is committed to educating all students, including focusing on their mental, emotional, physical, and social wellbeing, while continuing to safeguard the health of our students, our staff, and our community and recognizing there are undeniable educational and mental health setbacks to all students due to comprehensive distance learning;

WHEREAS, elementary students are mastering foundational learning skills that will be required for secondary grades and beyond, and the impact of prolonged distance learning may impede their ability to do so;

WHEREAS, students of color, students experiencing poverty and homelessness, students experiencing disabilities, and students learning a second language are being harmed disproportionately by comprehensive distance learning;

WHEREAS, teachers and other school staff are the number one reporters of abuse and abuse reports are down significantly in our county and state due to comprehensive distance learning;

WHEREAS, connections with caring adults have been proven to play a significant role in healthy cognitive development of children and youth;

WHEREAS, pediatricians have weighed the substantial harm to children and parents from keeping schools closed and recommend offering in-person learning;

WHEREAS, our district is committed to creating a safe learning environment with appropriate safety measures for all;

WHEREAS, ASD has created a distance learning option for all ages for families wishing to keep students at home;

WHEREAS, findings from other states and countries where schools reopened are demonstrating that schools are not super spreader events, and in fact, in the United States the Covid positivity rates among the students and staff of K-5 schools fall below the corresponding rates of the communities they serve;

WHEREAS, ASD has proven our commitment to work with Jackson County Public Health (JCPH) to ensure we are following all safety protocols and are able to quickly identify staff, students, and cohorts who have been exposed to or are confirmed to have COVID-19, connect them with medical professionals,

remove them and any “close contacts” from the school community, thereby helping slow the spread in the community;

WHEREAS, on October 27, 2020 a majority of the Ashland School Board sent a letter to Governor Brown and Superintendent Gill (attached) outlining a strong desire to prioritize elementary in-person education;

WHEREAS, every school district in Oregon is unique and it is the local school board’s responsibility to articulate the values and priorities of their communities into policy and governance.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Ashland School Board wishes to thank Governor Brown for the recent reevaluation of the metrics in Oregon which allow over 100,000 more students to attend in-person learning; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Ashland School Board urges Governor Brown to reevaluate the metrics for reopening, incorporating scientific data emerging from within the United States and other countries where school reopening has not resulted in increased community spread of COVID-19; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Ashland School Board urges Governor Brown and local governments to prioritize the welfare and education of children in Oregon by adopting and enforcing measures to reduce community spread and provide funding for K-12 education to manage the increased costs of in-person instruction during the pandemic; and

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED, the Ashland School Board urges Governor Brown to prioritize the return of all students in grades K-5, by establishing metrics that follow the science and align with many states and countries which have prioritized education first and foremost by reopening schools, or delegating authority to local districts to decide when it is appropriate for these students to safely return to school.

Adopted this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_.

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Eva Skuratowicz, Board Chair

To: ODE Director Colt Gill  
CC: Governor Kate Brown

October 27, 2020

Dear Director Gill,

The Ashland School Board, at its meeting on October 26, 2020, discussed at length the complexities of both distance learning and in-person instruction during this pandemic. We have been keeping abreast of the latest data and information regarding Covid-19; its impact and spread among varying ages; and the weekly infection rates, both county-wide and here in Ashland.

We understand that eliminating risk entirely – whether for Covid, field trips, or chemistry labs – is an impossible task. In every case, we strive to mitigate risks and strike a balance for the overall well-being of students, staff, and our entire community. We also realize that every school district in Oregon is unique and that it is the local school board's responsibility to articulate the values and priorities of their communities into policy and governance.

For these reasons, we urge you to refine and revise the ODE metrics for in-person education to reflect the following:

**First, finding a path to return our K-3 students to the classroom should be the priority for any future framework.** Statistically, this age group is far less likely to become severely ill with Covid and far less likely than older kids to effectively transmit it to others. Again, we realize that “low-risk” is not “no-risk”; however, these are the students (and parents) who are most in need of in-person instruction. These are also the students who have the most to lose with months-upon-months of distance learning. Each week, more data emerges and reinforces what schools are seeing world-wide: *we can bring younger kids back to school with minimal risk to themselves, their teachers, or the community.*

**Second, we urge you to allow a greater degree of local control in making these decisions.** While the numbers in Jackson County as a whole are not promising, a closer look at the data reveals that Ashland in particular is faring far better than our neighbors. We would like the ability to work with our local health authorities to make decisions around Covid that reflect the reality of *our* community, rather than the arbitrary boundaries of Jackson County.

We understand that these decisions are not easy and seldom popular. However, we were elected by our community to advocate for students and to make hard decisions when necessary for their well-being. We urge you to include our ideas above in any revised ODE guidance and thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Eva Skuratowicz, Chair, Ashland School Board  
Victor Chang, Vice-chair, Ashland School Board  
Jim Westrick, Director, Ashland School Board  
Tomas Monter-Rangel, Director, Ashland School Board