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## **Safe Harbor Designation Allows Crook County Schools to Remain Open Based on the State's New COVID-19 Metrics**

***School districts providing in-person instruction can remain open through at least January 4th***

Students in the Crook County School District will stay in the classrooms thanks to new COVID-19 metrics announced today by Governor Kate Brown. The Oregon Health Authority and Oregon Department of Education created a special designation for schools already providing in-person instruction called Safe Harbor. This allows certain districts to remain open through at least January 4<sup>th</sup> and work with local health departments when making decisions about keeping schools open for students.

“The updated metrics do a much better job of taking into account our community’s population size and allow us to coordinate more closely with the Crook County Health Department when determining the safety of keeping schools open,” said Superintendent Dr. Sara Johnson.

The January 4<sup>th</sup> date is simply a deadline for the district’s Safe Harbor designation. After that date, the school district will follow the new metric system created by the state.

Counties with less than 30,000 in population, such as Crook County, now only track actual case counts and the county’s test positivity rate over a 14-day period. The state’s test positivity rate no longer applies. This means Crook County can have up to 45 cases over a 14-day period to remain in the current hybrid model for grades 6-12.

State leaders said today that a review of national and global data indicates that schools aren’t superspreaders and can safely reopen when community spread is low and health and safety protocols remain in place. Crook County School District has a robust safety plan that includes sanitizing the air between passing periods.

“We’ll continue to take all safety precautions seriously and make sure our district goes above and beyond what the state requires. I’ve been really proud of our staff – and especially our custodians and bus drivers – who work tirelessly to sanitize, keep the air flow in our schools moving, and do everything possible to reduce any possible spread of the virus,” explained Dr. Johnson.

Colt Gill, Director of the Oregon Department of Education, specifically mentioned Crook County School District in the Governor’s press conference today. The Safe Harbor designation allows for greater

flexibility to make local decisions for schools in collaboration with the county health department, and creates certainty for districts already open as they transition to the new metric system.

“We have a great partnership with the school district and their nurses, and we’re doing everything we can to keep the community safe so schools can stay open. The best way to prevent the spread of the virus is for everyone in the community to wear masks, physically distance, avoid private social gatherings, and stay home if you have a fever or don’t feel well,” said Katie Plumb, Deputy Director with the Crook County Health Department.

Students in grades K-5 are attending school full time, while grades 6-12 are in a rotating Blue-Gold hybrid schedule. That model will continue through the 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter, which ends January 22<sup>nd</sup>. The district will then re-evaluate the metrics and consider bringing middle and high school students back full time.

Crook County High School recently developed a campaign called Stay Safe, Stay Open. Students across the district have been reminding parents and community members through [video messages](#) to wear masks and social distance so students can stay in school.



Dr. Johnson says it’s a simple reminder that has a meaningful impact.

“We recently sent out a survey at the high school asking students about their experience learning online, and most are incredibly happy to be back in the classroom. We want to keep that momentum going, so hopefully folks in the community will do their part to keep our schools open.”

### STATE METRICS FOR COUNTIES <30,000 POPULATION

Metrics & Models	Fully On-Site	On-Site & Distance Learning	Transition	Distance Learning
County Case Count	<30	30 to <45	45 to <60	>60
Test Positivity %	<5%	5% to <8%	8% to ≤ 10%	>10%
Instructional Model	Fully Onsite	Onsite for K-5 & Hybrid for middle and high schools	Consider transitioning to Comprehensive Distance Learning based on feedback from public health	All students move back to Comprehensive Distance Learning