

Dear Oregon Legislature, Senator Hayward and Representative Dexter,

This is in regards to the Conversation slated to taking place on Jan 27th about the reopening of schools. I have three daughters in the Portland Public Schools here since kindergarten. One in middle school, two in high school in your district,

My family feels very strongly that schools should reopen in person as fast as possible. The data from around the state, country, and world have shown that when schools are opened with a few basic principles (Masks, distancing that is reasonable not excessive, hand washing, visual and/or temperature checks as students enter) transmission in schools is almost entirely eliminated and lower than the surrounding community in many cases.

Two stories of which there are tens of thousands now in Oregon.

One daughter has been scared to talk on camera most of the year and especially to her teachers. When she finally did ask a question (first one since September and it is now January) she was horrified and destroyed by the teacher's response, "Why can't you figure it out, none of your other classmates have had trouble." Teachers are also cracking under the pressure of 100% online school. This set my daughter's confidence back. Like all things electronic, people are meaner and freer with their negative words than in person. This is a good teacher by all previous accounts and I don't think would respond this way in person.

Second daughter watched many (in her words "all") students cheat together on a very difficult test. She refused to cheat because it is not in her to do that. Meanwhile all these students texting off-line will get high marks while she will do OK but won't do as well as it was a very hard test. This would not happen in person and these things are adding up and will affect chances to get in the college she wants.

And then there is the general daily melt-downs. At least one child's computer fails, misses a class or two or other electronic challenges daily. General fatigue, depression and anger fills in where energy, enthusiasm and enjoyment used to live. School was not meant to be online and keeping it there one day longer than required is the adults failing.

Our parents voices aren't being considered. No one has asked me or my kids what we want. The teachers unions are organized better with email lists and telephone numbers from around the state. We depend on organizing by circles we know and are trying by facebook. This is not a fair playing field and we are being silenced. I don't understand the desire to keep schools closed. The science and practical examples have shown it is safe. On OHA's website you can go look at incidents in the schools here in Oregon that have been opened. About 2 associated cases on average per open school that has even had a case (not all have) since the beginning of the year or whenever some were open. These are not even in school transmissions necessarily, most likely they are not. They certainly aren't large spreads (nursing homes average 18 cases per home in Oregon when one case enters). The only school with larger spreads of numbers like five or six tend to be staff and from all accounts it is staff that let their guard down in places like teachers lounges. Easy fix.

We need to have a rubric that measures mental health, physical health and student success next to Covid numbers if we want to be fair about TOTAL impacts. I also understand there is a liability issue that school boards are still hiding behind because if they open and make an error in the process or don't follow the state "advisory" metrics before opening they can be sued. This

cannot continue. Unions and liabilities issues cannot keep our kids from being safe and learning.

Schools must be opened. Student and parents voices must be heard. Adults in power need to stop putting the kids last.

Sincerely,
Eric Happel