



Fall 2020: Classes Will Be Online Until at Least November 5

July 28, 2020

Dear PPS Families and Staff,

I am writing to let everyone know that after reviewing the best available guidance from health officials, and following [today's announcement by Governor Brown](#) regarding new health metrics and standards for opening schools, we have determined that the PPS 2020-21 school year will begin online, using a new, comprehensive distance learning model. This means **all students Pre-K through Grade 12 will participate in an online learning model from September 2 (the first day of the 2020-21 school year for PPS) until at least November 5, which is the end of the first quarter.**

I want to acknowledge that we have all been anxious to learn what the new school year might look like, and that this news may provide a sense of assurance to some and a further challenge to others. Nearing the end of the summer now, we all hoped to be in a different reality with this pandemic. We believe it is both responsible and critical to base our decisions on what will best ensure the health and wellness of our students and staff. For those of us who serve in public education, we will always prefer to have our students engaged in classroom-based learning, but given current conditions, it would be unsafe to have significant numbers of students and adults back on campus at this time.

It is possible that, unless COVID-19 conditions improve significantly, online learning will extend into the second quarter. We will assess all available public health information and county health metrics, in addition to regularly consulting with our [medical advisory team of health experts](#), to help make a decision about reopening school campuses for the second quarter of the school year. We will communicate our plans no later than October 10. Until then, comprehensive distance learning will be the PPS model of instruction for all students until at least November 5.

As an educator, I know that there is no true replacement for face-to-face learning and the interaction between a student and a dedicated teacher or staff member. But our announcement today is in keeping with our highest priority during a global pandemic, which is the health and well being of our students and employees. We are joining a growing number of school districts across Oregon and the U.S. deciding to begin the year in a distance learning model.

As far as what comprehensive distance learning will look like for PPS students, you should know that this model will be different from the student learning experience of this past spring. Our goal is to be prepared to engage students and provide them with a robust learning experience this fall. You can find more information in the frequently asked questions section at the end of this message, and we will continue to share more details in the days and weeks ahead.

During the first two weeks of school, you can expect your children to connect with their teachers, become oriented to their learning platforms and participate in activities that support



interconnectedness with their classroom and school communities. After the first two weeks, students will follow a regular weekly schedule and will have daily interaction with their teachers. Grades will be given and attendance will be taken.

Although this will be an unusual start to the school year, we are working diligently to create new opportunities, establish support structures for students with special needs and ensure our Black, Native and Students of Color have access to culturally specific supports. This includes a continued and strengthened partnership with our culturally specific community based partners, continuing to braid our racial equity and social justice strategies into our instructional core and developing supports that begin to address the trauma, emotion and mental health impacts of these times.

Families and staff can expect additional updates and information before the start of the new school year. Our teams are working tirelessly to make the transition to comprehensive distance learning as smooth as possible. Next week you will also receive more information on timelines for our continued technology device roll-out.

Please check your inboxes regularly and visit pps.net/fall2020 for up to date information about the start of the school year and to access our family feedback form. You can also watch this evening's Board of Education work session, which begins at 6:00 p.m., where staff will present our next regular update, by [clicking here](#).

It will be some time before students can return to their schools, but the health and wellness of our children, youth, and employees have to come first. We are fortunate to have such supportive labor partners, community leaders, elected officials and health officials that are working in collaboration with us every step of the way. It is our collective commitment to do everything we can to support you, your students, and the outstanding educators whose dedication and creativity we count on to make distance learning a positive learning experience for every one of our students. And as soon as it is healthy to do so, we will once again open our classroom doors, but in the meantime, we look forward to seeing our students learning and growing together, virtually.

Sincerely,

Guadalupe Guerrero
Superintendent

***Where can I read the most current updates regarding PPS plans for the Fall 2020?***

Please visit our [Fall 2020 webpage](#) for the latest information about the 2020-21 school year (available in all six PPS-supported languages). We will update the page regularly with information, resources, messages to families and other important details.

Will the comprehensive distance learning model be the same or different from last spring's model of learning?

Our new online learning model will be different from the student learning experience of this past spring. We will follow more rigorous, now-published [Oregon Department of Education](#) guidelines regarding instructional time, attendance, grades, and assessments. Our Instructional Leadership Team has been developing our comprehensive distance learning plan and finding ways to improve distance learning for our students, staff and families.

After spending the first two weeks of the school year getting connected to their teachers and classmates, becoming oriented to their learning platforms and talking with counselors and/or other staff, students will follow a regular weekly schedule and will have daily interaction with their teachers. Grades and attendance will be taken.

What will a typical day look like for students?

Sample weekly schedules for elementary, middle, and high school students will be posted and shared soon as we continue to collaborate with school leaders and educators. The below represents both ODE guidelines and current district plans:

PK through Grade 8 students will meet with their teacher regularly and participate in instruction in each of the content areas. Students will follow a predictable schedule each day with breaks for breakfast, lunch, and physical activity built into the day. Social emotional learning and support will be integrated into the week and students will continue to have access to their counselor and other supports as needed.

High school students will take four classes per semester and we will make modifications for AP and IB students as well as students who need additional support. Students will follow an online bell schedule and meet each day with their teachers. Social emotional supports will be integrated into the schedule and students will continue to have access to their counselor and other mental health supports as needed or requested.

What additional support will be available to students and families to ensure they are successful this fall?

We are working with our labor partners and community-based partners to shift resources in order to provide multiple types and levels of support to students and families. As we identify these supports for the coming school year, we are taking into account the different needs of our students, especially those disproportionately impacted by this pandemic, our Black, Native and Students of Color. We are also considering the unique needs of our English Language Learners and students with special needs. In



addition, family and staff survey feedback, focus groups, and comments provided through our [Fall 2020 webpage](#), have been essential to our planning thus far, and we will continue to ask for your input as we finalize the ways we can help.

School counselors, social workers and other student supports will also be working to connect with families to meet the specific needs of students. We have heard from some families that staff-supervised “learning hubs”, with social distancing and other health protocols in place, would be helpful to ensure a continuity of learning for students in underserved communities. When it is safe to do so, we will certainly be working on ways to help support students in small “learning hubs”.

Along with any additional support we introduce this fall, please know that we will continue to provide meals and access to technology. In partnership with [The Fund for PPS](#), we expect to continue to support families’ access to internet connectivity, as we have since March.

What will special education services look like in the fall?

As we know, special education services are best provided through in-person support and guidance. We will provide specially designed instruction for students through a virtual learning model. We are working on an online curriculum to support families to support their student’s learning. We will continue to provide speech and language services, small group instruction, occupational and physical therapy, and access to general education online learning opportunities, based on students’ IEPs. There will be some services that we will not be able to provide in a virtual environment, such as 1:1 paraeducator supports. We will review IEPs with families as needed to make appropriate amendments for a virtual setting. As always, please contact your case manager with questions regarding your student’s services and if you have additional special education questions, please contact our special education department.

What about evaluations for special education from the spring?

While some evaluations will continue to be provided online within each school team, we are working to organize and implement an alternative option such as test centers, in order to continue with our Child Find obligations. If your child is in process of an evaluation, we will contact you once school begins to schedule online and possibly some in-person testing, when it cannot occur through a virtual manner. We will follow all health protocols in order to ensure a safe evaluation experience for you, your child and our evaluation staff. If you do not hear from your school by the middle of September, please contact our special education department for assistance.

Is PPS providing computers to students?

Last spring, PPS provided thousands of computers to students who lacked available computers at home. We will continue to lend computers to students who need them, and will soon share details of how to access district computers for use in online learning this fall. As was the case last spring, students who already have an available computer at home can continue to use their own devices.

What about athletics?



The [Oregon School Activities Association recently announced](#) that all OSAA-sanctioned fall sports will delay starting until September 23 (previously August 27). Also from OSAA:

If Fall activities aren't able to be held in the Fall, the OSAA Executive Board is committed to working with its contingency groups to exhaust all options for these activities including shifting, condensing, or stacking seasons, like our neighbors in Washington and California, with the fundamental objective of providing participation opportunities for students. These changes may ultimately force schools into choosing which programs they will offer and students into choosing between activities, but the Board believes that a potentially difficult choice is better than no choice.

If we are unable to gather students in classrooms due to COVID-19 conditions, it is unlikely that we could gather student-athletes for practices and games. We will have more information for students and families in the coming days.

What digital learning platforms is PPS using this fall?

PPS online platforms will look familiar to students who participated in PPS-HD. PK-through Grade 5 classrooms will use Seesaw as their learning management platform; Grades 6 through 12 will use Canvas. Teachers will use Atlas for core content units and instructional resources. You can find information about these platforms on our [Digital Toolkit page](#).

We are putting together a number of orientation and onboarding tools for students and families to get familiar and comfortable with all PPS platforms.

How is all of this going to roll out in September? Will my student just log in and start classes right away?

School this fall will certainly be different than any year before. Students will spend the first two weeks (Sept. 2-11) of the school year getting connected to their teachers and classmates, becoming oriented to their learning platforms and talking with counselors if/when needed. Teachers will spend much of these first two weeks in professional development sessions.

Will PPS offer child care this fall?

We are working with our child care partners and exploring ways to provide learning support and child care. Input from PPS families and employees about the need for this support is a critical part of our planning. We plan to send a needs survey to PPS families and school staff in the next few weeks. Any program offered would have to comply with COVID-related space and group size requirements. Please look for a survey to be coming to you via email soon.