



Message from the Superintendent: Update on Portland Public Schools' Cost-Saving Measures

May 5, 2020

Dear PPS Families,

Two months ago, our daily routines changed as our community confronted the unimaginable health crisis of COVID-19. As we begin week eight from home, I hold profound gratitude for our staff for rising up to the task of educating, supporting, connecting with and providing essential services to students every day, and to you and your students for extending grace and patience to all of us as we move our 170-year old traditional school system to a more virtual model.

As with a pandemic of this magnitude, the state of Oregon faces a daunting financial forecast. This will impact all school districts in the months and years ahead. As stewards of public dollars, I directed our team weeks ago to institute a hiring freeze and put strict restrictions on purchases and travel. Last Friday, we shared with our staff the next step in a series of cost-saving measures that we hope will better position PPS to open next school year with as minimal impact on the student learning experience as possible.

Beginning this week, Portland Public Schools will move to a four-day work week. Upon formal approval by the PPS Board of Education this evening, and agreements in place with each of our respective labor partners, the vast majority of district work, including teacher-student instructional time via PPS-HD, will take place Monday through Thursday, with most operations closed on Fridays through July 31, 2020. This is considered a partial furlough, and as a result of this reduction in hours, we expect most of our employees will be participating in the [Work Share Oregon](#) program.

We believe that, by moving to a four-day work week, we are leading with and expressing our community's deeply held value of being student-centered and maintaining a bold commitment to Racial Equity and Social Justice ([PPS reimagined](#)). By moving to a four-day work week for the next three months--**a plan that would only reduce our total distance learning calendar by two days and would offset deep budget cuts next year**--I believe we will help limit the long-term impact on student learning, understanding that there is an opportunity gap that is widening every day we are not in schools, especially for students of color. By executing this plan, we also know and anticipate that most employees will be eligible and benefit from federal CARES Act dollars (a flat \$600/week), which will be added to any state unemployment compensation for the reduction in hours. This means that employees--especially our front-line staff--will have access to additional stimulus money to support them during this crisis, all while bringing much needed resources to our local economy and preserving limited, precious funding to our schools.

What does this mean for your student's learning?

Our highest priority is making sure our students have access to essential services and providing them a sense of normalcy through distance learning. Despite our transition to a four-day work week, our priority will remain the same:

PPS-HD (Distance Learning): Teachers will continue to instruct, interact, and touch base with students, Monday through Thursday, for the remainder of the school year. In fact, we don't anticipate overall frequency and level of teacher-student contact to decrease on any given week. Instead, the reduced work week will be managed through reduced staff meetings and other non-student-facing activities. Even with shorter weeks, we will prioritize getting seniors through to graduation.

Student Meals: While our [15 nutrition hubs](#) will no longer operate on Fridays, our nutrition services team will continue current practice to provide extra meals to any child in our community for the three-day weekend during Thursday's pick-up.

Despite the sobering fiscal forecast ahead, I remain resolute in ensuring PPS continues on our roadmap to fully support every student, particularly our students of color, to achieve and reach their greatest potential. **I believe that the actions I am sharing with you today, and other cost-saving measures we establish now, however difficult they may be, will help protect the number of school days, support services, and staff we have in our public schools next year.** I know that we will come out of this crisis, stronger and more resilient than ever, and ready to prepare our students to lead *change and improve the world*.

Thank you. I hope you will join me in being encouraged by the optimism, the fortitude, and the innovative spirit of our students, families, and staff during this unprecedented crisis.

Be Healthy.



Guadalupe Guerrero
Superintendent