

Rainier School District #13

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January 24, 2021

Dear Rainier Community,

Following the latest update to the Ready Schools, Safe Learners (RSSL) guidance, we sent out a notice of revised timelines for returning to in-person instruction. Many have expressed their concern and frustration over this announcement. We share the frustrations of our parents and students! Since the Governor's shift from required to advisory metrics and subsequent updates to the RSSL, there has been great misinformation shared with community members.

I am incredibly frustrated that Oregon leaders have painted a picture that school districts have full authority to make decisions at the local level. This information is misleading and does not provide communities with the real understanding of the challenges facing school districts. Since December 23, 2020 I have advocated to all elected officials to provide unconditional local control. Yes, the new metrics have enabled districts to begin in-person instruction for K-3 (and up to 6th) but there is much the announcements have not shared.

What the public is not hearing:

- According to the RSSL, junior and senior high school students cannot return to in-person instruction until case rates are below 200 per 100,000.
- While Columbia County case rates continue to increase, we may be seeing lower rates in our community; but the metrics are built only on county rates.
- Any district that chooses to enter into in-person instruction prior to meeting the advisory metrics is at risk of losing liability protection provided under HB-4402.
- Schools not following advisory metrics are required to administer COVID-19 testing on-site to students who meet certain criteria.
- High risk staff have remained hopeful to receive vaccination prior to a return to in-person but there is confusion regarding the availability of vaccines.

It is my hope that we as a community can work collectively to receive unconditional local control. This would ensure that liability protections remain in place, students and staff have what is necessary to remain safe, that schools are not required to serve as medical providers, and that we can determine what is best for our community and open in accordance with our unique needs.

During the Rainier School District's January 25 board meeting I will be asking the board to join me in sending all elected officials communication asking for support to get ALL students back in school. During the meeting I will also be asking all of our community to join us in writing letters to elected officials and will make sample letters available on our website.

We are living in very frustrating times and we can only make positive progress when we work together for the common good of our students and staff!

Thank you in advance for your support!

With great respect,

Dr. Hatrick
Superintendent