OEA is committed to ensuring the health and safety of our members and the students they serve. In light of the novel Coronavirus epidemic, we will continue to advocate for each of you to our local, state and federal leaders and are continually searching for additional ways we can support Oregon’s students and educators during these uncertain times.

In this mailer, you’ll find important updates around the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on our schools and staff. We’ve included some vetted resources from OEA’s Center for Great Public Schools to help you and your students during the statewide closure of our public schools and community colleges. More resources are housed on our Coronavirus resource page on the OEA website at www.oregoned.org.

WHAT IS OEA DOING TO SUPPORT EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES?

OEA leadership and staff are working tirelessly to advocate for both educators and students during this time of uncertainty. That includes being in regular communication with the Governor’s office, the Oregon Department of Education and the Bureau of Labor and Industries to both receive new information from state leaders that we can share with you, and pushing those leaders for clearer guidance aimed at protecting students and educators.

Additionally, our leadership, our staff, and our legal team are working to push districts to make every educator financially whole during the school closures. While we will continue to work at the district-level to try and secure agreements for all public education employees to receive pay during the shutdown, we will also continue to urge the Governor’s office to issue statewide guidance instructing districts to do so.
More Frequently Asked Questions

HOW CAN I HELP MY COMMUNITY DURING THIS TIME?

Our state and our nation are facing an unprecedented challenge. As our elected officials make the difficult decisions about temporally shutting down public life, we must find ways to work together and offer our support to keep our community healthy and safe. OEA will be coordinating with school districts and with state agencies about ways we can help others. This includes volunteering to distribute meals to students and providing childcare to medical professionals who are working on the frontlines to keep our community safe during this pandemic.

If you are at high-risk from novel coronavirus, or live with someone else who is at high-risk, please do not volunteer. The CDC has said high-risk individuals include: older individuals (60+); individuals who are immune-compromised; and individuals with chronic medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, lung disease or other conditions. The CDC does not have evidence that indicates pregnant individuals are at higher risk for contracting COVID-19, but out of an abundance of caution we ask that if you are pregnant or live with someone who is pregnant, that you refrain from volunteering.

You can find a list of volunteer opportunities, and a contact form to learn about additional ways to support your community at: https://bit.ly/OEAcovidvolunteer.

HOW WILL SCHOOL EMPLOYEES BE TREATED DURING THE CLOSURES?

New guidance released by Governor Kate Brown on the evening of March 17, 2020, made clear that all Oregon school districts would receive allocations from the State Schools Fund as if the closure period had not occurred - and directed all Oregon public schools to pay all employees during the closure, with the caveat that districts must have a plan in place to deliver Supplemental Education, as well as other key mandates (explained on following page).

It is not clear what this guidance means for substitutes, but OEA is working with the Governor’s office to receive additional clarification and is advocating that long-term substitutes also be kept financially whole during the prolonged closure of Oregon’s schools.

We are also advocating to keep our community college staff safe and financially whole. So far, our higher education institutions have not been closed as many of them work to switch over to online and virtual programs.

DURING THIS CRISIS, YOUR UNION IS HERE FOR YOU.

Reach out to us at any time with questions or concerns: webadmin@oregoned.org.

Do we have your email address? OEA will continue to send a daily update to all members via email with up-to-the-minute news. Each day’s update is posted at: www.oregoned.org/covid-daily-update.
CAN I BE FORCED TO RETURN TO WORK DURING THE SCHOOL CLOSURES?

The short answer is yes.

In order to continue receiving funding from the State School Fund, districts must meet four mandates handed down by Governor Kate Brown. Those mandates include:

- Providing supplementary education to students.
- Nutritional services for students must be maintained.
- Childcare must be provided for emergency personnel and first responders.
- All district employees must continue to be paid.

School districts have been given the authority to call employees back to work in order to fulfill these mandates and continue to receive state funding.

On March 24, ODE instructed superintendents that to the greatest extent possible, they must facilitate telework and work-from-home for employees, and that work in buildings is prohibited whenever a telework or work-from-home option is available.

Guidance released by Governor Kate Brown on March 17, 2020, directed school districts not to call employees who fall into a high-risk category, or who live with someone in a high-risk category, back to work. OEA is seeking additional guidance on how employees should handle disclosing relevant health information to their school districts.

OEA has joined with other education advocacy organizations to publish joint guidance on returning to work for our members. The guidance is available to read at: www.oregoned.org/covid-daily-update.

HOW LONG WILL SCHOOL CLOSURES LAST?

New guidance released by Governor Kate Brown on the evening of March 17, 2020, extended the closure of Oregon’s K-12 public schools until April 28, 2020. An update sent on March 30 by ODE hinted at “the strong possibility that our students may not come back through our school house doors this academic year.”

That guidance has directed K-12 districts to put systems in place that would maintain nutritional services for students and to continue mental health services for children and their families. All K-12 districts have been instructed to pay their employees during the closures.

HOW SHOULD I REPORT WORKPLACE SAFETY VIOLATIONS?

We encourage you to try and resolve any issues directly with your workplace supervisor. If workplace safety violations continue, we recommend you file a complaint with the Occupations Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).
Governor Kate Brown released guidance for Oregon's colleges and universities on Wednesday, March 18, 2020. That guidance ordered all colleges and universities to end in-person instruction and limit the number of people on campus to essential personnel.

We understand the uncertainty this guidance causes for many staff, faculty, and students at Oregon's institutions of higher education.

We are advocating to keep our community college staff safe and financially whole, and are fighting for guidance on how institutions should treat students who depend on on-campus work for their income. We are urging elected leaders to enact emergency funding and healthcare for part-time faculty and hourly staff at Oregon's community colleges, and to develop emergency unemployment support community college employees who will suffer financial losses due to class cancellations.

We are also urging state leaders to allocate emergency funding for community colleges themselves to protect against program cuts or institutional closures as a result of course cancellations in the wake of the COVID-19 outbreak.

You’ll find resources for Community College members on our website: www.oregoned.org/coronavirus-CC.

RESOURCES FOR ALL EDUCATORS

We are living in unprecedented times. COVID-19 is changing our lives – and our most vital institutions – and forcing us to find ways to support one another.

OEA’s Center for Great Public Schools has vetted and compiled a list of resources to support our members in each teaching classification, and on some specific content areas: www.oregoned.org/COVID19resources.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards is working to be a professional resource for all teachers. You’ll find a clearinghouse of resources from the National Board here: www.nbpts.org/covid-19.
Distance Learning for All

At the end of March, ODE released updated guidance for school districts, making the move from providing supplementary education to providing Distance Learning for All of Oregon’s students. “We foresee the strong possibility that our students may not come back through our school house doors this academic year,” ODE Director Colt Gill wrote in the update.

In this moment of uncertainty - educators have been asked to take on a monumental challenge in order to provide our students with some sense of stability in their education.

This transition will be difficult. It will be messy and imperfect. It will exacerbate the issues of education inequity that plague our nation’s educational system. And it will ask our educators to navigate new, uncharted, territory without adequate access to the tools or trainings required to fully develop an online curriculum.

ODE’s new guidance raises a host of new questions that must be answered. How will student progress be tracked during this time, and what accommodations will be made for students who don’t have the tools, the access, or the time to engage in distance learning? How will districts address the inherent issues of inequity that will pervade the proposed distance learning model? And how will educators be evaluated as they rapidly shift highly refined and long-developed pedagogical practices to a new modality in matter of days.

However, despite deeply rooted inadequacies, educators will do what we have always done: we will take the resources available to us and we will provide our students with the best learning experience we possibly can. We will make sure that our students feel loved and acknowledged in a time of national crisis.

OEA’s Legal Guidance for Distance Learning

- Best practice is to contact students using pre-existing district communication methods – school-provided email addresses, web sites, etc.
- It is best to not to use text messaging, Twitter or Face Time for distance learning purposes.
- Refrain from one-on-one phone calls, if possible. If you do engage in one-on-one phone conversations, write contemporaneous notes of the call, and save the notes in a secure place. Maintain the confidentiality of the notes.
- If districts expect direct communication via private email addresses or text messaging, be sure you copy parents/guardians on all communications or consider group messaging to all students at the same time.
- Be sure your communication is related to schoolwork and is not overly personal. If you feel the need to inquire about a student’s health or well-being, be sure you ask all students the same questions.

More on the implementation of Distance Learning and your union rights: www.oregoned.org/distancelearning.

A NOTE ABOUT TSPC

IS THE TEACHER STANDARDS AND PRACTICES COMMISSION (TSPC) STILL OPERATING DURING THE CLOSURE PERIOD?

Yes, but it is only operating online. Due to COVID-19 precautions, TSPC closed its office and all phone call correspondence effective March 24. Email inquiries at contact.tspc@oregon.gov and online licensing applications will still be operating as usual.

How will school closures impact teacher candidates completing preparation programs, or current educators completing required professional development, coursework, or time-in-service requirements for license renewal in 2020?

The Teacher Standards and Practices Commission has released guidance on this issue, which can be found at www.oregon.gov/tspc.
What to Expect From the Federal COVID-Relief Bill

The federal government has passed several large spending bills aimed at providing relief for individuals and businesses that have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic.

The second of those bills, called “Phase Two,” was signed into law on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 by President Trump. That bill includes:

- $500 million in additional funding for the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program
- $400 million in additional funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program
- $82 million in additional funding for the Defense Health Program
- $250 million in additional funding for food programs, including home delivery food programs, for the elderly and disabled
- Waivers to some requirements for school lunch programs
- Waivers to work requirements to be eligible for SNAP food programs
- New, temporary requirements that employers with more than 20 employees offer some paid sick leave time to their employees
- Extensions to, and additional funds for, unemployment benefits
- Free COVID-19 testing without co-pays or deductibles

On Friday, March 27, President Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (H.R. 748) into law for the “phase three” coronavirus relief bill.

As it is currently written, the bill provides the following spending allotments. Once the final bill is ready for full review, OEA will share information for members on how they can take advantage of some of the programs included in the Phase Three spending package.

The package spends $2.2 trillion, and will deliver relief in the following ways:

- Extend unemployment insurance by 13 weeks and include a four-month enhancement of benefits
- $1,200 in direct payments that would apply equally to workers with incomes up to $75,000 per year before phasing out and ending altogether for those earning more than $99,000. Families would receive an additional $500 per child.
- $130 billion for hospitals
- $150 billion for state and local governments
- $500 billion fund — $425 billion for the Federal Reserve to leverage for loans in order to help broad groups of distressed companies and $75 billion for industry-specific loans — will now have far stricter oversight, in the form of an inspector general and a 5-person panel appointed by Congress and companies that accept money must also agree to halt any stock buybacks for the length of the government assistance, plus an additional year.
- A provision that will block Trump family businesses — or those of other senior government officials — from receiving loan money under the programs
- $350 billion that would establish lending programs for small businesses, but only for those who keep their payrolls steady through the crisis. Small businesses that pledge to keep their workers would also receive cash-flow assistance structured as federally guaranteed loans. If the employer continued to pay its workers for the duration of the crisis, those loans would be forgiven.
HANDWASHING 101
SCRUB RINSE REPEAT!

WHEN?
- After using the bathroom
- Before and after you eat
- After picking your nose

WITH WHAT?
- Soap: germ killer
- Warm water: microbe remover
- Your hand: scrubber extraordinaire

HOW LONG?
- Sing your ABC's
- Count to 20
- Sing 'Happy Birthday' twice

Credit: Libby Burns for Bravery Magazine
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I HAVE A STUDENT WHO IS STRUGGLING BECAUSE OF THE PANDEMIC. IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP THEM?

The OEA Foundation will temporarily be expanding the allowable grant funding guidelines to support our students with immediate and basic needs. Until May 1, OEA members may apply for grants to help students with food, rent and utility bills.

In addition, OEA Aspiring Educators (college students studying to become educators) have also been invited to apply for Foundation assistance if they are experiencing COVID-19-related financial need. Learn more here: oeafoundation.oregoned.org.