

Wednesday, July 29, 2020

- As of today, there are 34,623 confirmed positive COVID-19 cases in Oklahoma. According to the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), as of today, there are 523 deaths and 663 hospitalizations, 1/3 of which are in ICU. We've had nearly 6,600 new cases in one week.
- A mask, according to the CDC, is a critical tool to reduce transmission. Masks are useful for the wearer and for others in the area. A large number of Oklahoma districts have already decided to require masks of staff and students. Cases for those ages 18-35 dropped in the last week.
- School safety protocols sent out last week (<https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Oklahoma%20School%20Safety%20OProtocols.pdf>). District plan should address Health Protocol, Masks, Special Education Classrooms, Visitors and Service Providers, and Extracurricular Activities and Group Assemblies.
- Emergency Rules approved by SBE last week on distance learning (<https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Emergency%20Rules%20-%20virtual%20education%20update%20-%2020210.35-21-2.pdf>). Three areas to highlight:
 - Districts may implement distance learning plans during time of emergency. These options must be available to all enrolled students, resident and transfer.
 - Prior to implementing a plan, local board must approve plan, and it must then be submitted to sde within 10 days through the accreditation upload. However, the upload tool is not yet ready.
 - Distance learning plan must include the following components:
 - Equitable access (connectivity and devices). Must provide free of charge for those that do not have access.
 - Alignment with the Oklahoma Academic Standards (OAS).
 - Policies for measurements of attendance for students and staff, awarding of credits for course completion, and participation in extracurricular activities.
- Some movement at the federal level to receive some additional financial relief.

Questions and Answers

- For districts with students in two counties, which county should they use for purposes of the OSDH color-coded? Districts should go by the county reflected in the WAVE. Districts should remain in touch with local county health departments.
- Regarding the recommendation for masks for a community in Yellow according to the OSDH color-coded map, how can we get the community on board if they aren't open to wearing masks? Point to Oklahoma experts and their recommendations. For example,

the Oklahoma Academy of Family Physicians and the Oklahoma Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (<https://www.okaap.org>) have indicated concern for a statewide return to in-person learning. From Oklahoma Chapter of AAP website:

<https://www.okaap.org/3399-2/>

- How are the county code numbers in the OSDH color-coded system determined? Same as the Harvard plan. Per capita and a 7-day rolling average.
- Where does the 25 come from for the Orange levels in the OSDH system? This number was recommended by an Oklahoma weekly discussion group that includes physicians and scientists and aligns with the Harvard plan.
- What are OSDE's next steps since the SBE decided that the [Oklahoma School Safety Protocols](#) would be recommended and not mandatory? The ball is in districts' courts. The emphasis is on wearing masks. We'll get more blanket suppression if all are doing their part by wearing masks in all communities. We need to avoid these hospitalizations, long-term health complications and deaths. Get the information out about the benefits of mask-wearing. This practice reduces the transmission risk to others by 70% and to the wearer by 30%. We need this to keep schools open. Partner with your local health department to keep students, staff and others safe.
- What is the difference between the Orange levels in the OSDH color-coded system? The difference is the number of students that can be served in schools. Orange Level 1 is 25% of the school population and Orange Level 2 and Red are 15%.
- Quarantining. Suggest using a seating chart to help with contact tracing. The OSDH recommendation is that each district have a contact tracing lead to help do the tracing more quickly. In an elementary school when children are in a classroom all day together, then a quarantine may apply to all of these children and the classroom teacher, but it may not apply to all in other class set-ups.
- What about quarantine for a staff member who sees lots of students/goes into lots of school settings? How do tracing then? If the staff member is vigilant to do social distancing and is seeing students in a large setting like a gymnasium, maybe don't need to quarantine everyone, but Superintendent Hofmeister stated that she can't tell you all the answers, but you can get answers by taking contact tracing training. Make every effort to limit the size of groups and keep cohorts together. That can be effective to reduce spread and for contact tracing.
- Are districts allowed to start school before sending their distance learning plan to Accreditation if the plan has been approved by the local board? Brad Clark thinks the answer is yes. The new distance learning Rule adopted by SBE states that districts must upload their distance learning plan within ten days of adoption. However, OSDE doesn't yet have a process set up to do the upload.

- What are the required components of the district distance learning plan? They're in the Rules (<https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/documents/files/Emergency%20Rules%20-%20virtual%20education%20update%20-%2020210.35-21-2.pdf>).
- Is there any consideration for a waiver or leniency for seniors for the requirement to complete six rigorous hours? Oklahoma law requires that students be enrolled in six rigorous courses. This hasn't been waived.
- Will standardized testing take place during the 2020-21 school year? Yes, it's expected to take place. Prepare as if it's going to happen. It's too far away now to think about a waiver. Doesn't sound like this is under consideration at the federal level at this time.
- Why are 25% of students allowed at school for Orange level 1 and 15% for Orange level 2 and Red under the recommended Protocols? Districts still need to serve students. These percentages should cover students with disabilities and those with no access to online. Social distancing would be much more important at those levels as spread is increasing.
 - What do these %s mean? They refer to total enrollment at a school site. Since the Oklahoma School Safety Protocol isn't a mandate, use what works for your district. Expect that the Protocols will be revised as science indicates. The state will have a greater opportunity to collaborate with national and state experts as time goes on. Also, OSDE's Return to Learn Framework will have a whole document update soon.
- Who makes the quarantine decisions based on contact tracing? Local health departments make the decisions about quarantining. They would like a representative from each district in the county. Johns Hopkins has contact tracing training that anyone can take. Contact tracing needs to happen rapidly. Superintendent Hofmeister urges district reps to take the Johns Hopkins training, which is free.
- How do districts submit distance learning plans and when will that process be available? It will be an upload through Accreditation. The process is being actively being developed now, and it's like the process used to upload school calendars.
- What about a new federal relief package? From a call today, Superintendent Hofmeister knows that E-rate funding is on the table in at least one of the three plans submitted for consideration in the U.S. House and Senate. All plans will be negotiated. There are promising signals that there will be another relief plan that's significantly larger than before. Can't say yet what it will include. There's talk about delaying the Congressional recess in August to work on it. If the HEALS Act (the Senate Republicans' plan) goes through, schools would have four months to spend lots of money. That bill would incentivize districts to provide in-person instruction. The smallest amount proposed in the three completing plans is 70 billion for K-12 education. The CARES Act was for 30 billion. This is encouraging and seems inevitable. Must work out the details.
- What information is out about the Learn Anywhere Initiative? This is Governor Stitt's plan. Doesn't really have info to share other than what's in the press release. That website will be up shortly, and there will be more info in a day or two.

- What is the documentation of recommendations by the Oklahoma Academy of Family Physicians and the Oklahoma Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (<https://www.okaap.org>)? From Oklahoma Chapter of AAP website: <https://www.okaap.org/3399-2/> Most all K-12 students are recommended to wear a mask at school and out in the community. Same with staff members in schools. Open schools in Green and Yellow according to the OSDH color-coded map. Also, look at the timing of COVID-19 tests coming back. It's harder to do contact tracing when it takes more than three days to get test results. By then, there's the potential for lots more exposures to have occurred. Continuing to partner with these two groups.
- Exact Path webinars started last week and are ongoing. There are three to choose from depending on the diagnostic used. They're on the Exact Path Getting Started page that's been emailed out.
- Can a district provide lunches for a student who chooses to participate in virtual learning? Yes, districts can provide them with breakfast and lunch through the national school lunch and school breakfast program claimed categorically based on child's eligibility. Can do this through a grab and go model. Yes, can do delivery. Can do breakfast and lunch five days a week M-F. Any student doing virtual won't be able to get dinner right now. Waiting for guidance on what happens with a student who participates in an enrichment activity. If districts have to close, are all meals free again to students? No, USDA would issue guidance if this arises.
- District COVID-19 liability issues are quite tricky. Senate Bill 1946 provides an exemption from liability if the "person" who was sued is following certain "guidance." This is tricky because so much guidance has been issued and there may be questions about what "orders" issued by the Governor or President are actually considered orders for purposes of this law. Suggests districts follow the most recent guidance issued.

Closing Remarks

- This will be a challenging time, but we're a great team. We'll get through this. Families are looking to you as leaders to provide a calm and steady hand. You're the leader your community needs. Superintendent Hofmeister stated that she's praying for you.

Wednesday, July 22, 2020

- Currently in Oklahoma there are 28,065 positive cases of COVID-19 – a sizable increase from the previous day, but this number includes a backlog of cases. There have been 474 deaths, and 630 are currently hospitalized. We must be vigilant by wearing masks, practicing social distancing and washing our hands.
- Hot spot grant applications are due by Friday, July 24, at 11:59 p.m. Shelly Perkins of OSDE can answer questions about the applications, so contact her at shelly.perkins@sde.ok.gov.
- OSDE still expects to announce the hot spot awards on July 31 and that they will be shipped to schools one week later. Remember, Verizon has more hot spots for sale to districts for \$60 each, plus the monthly service fee of \$10. Districts can transition their current Verizon hot spots to this deal. Call Verizon directly about this.
- Districts must complete OSDE's PPE survey today. Submit one response per district. Please check in your district that someone is completing the survey. Superintendent Hofmeister is optimistic that OSDE can make a purchase on behalf of districts.
- OSDE has reopened the Certification office on Tuesdays and Thursdays for dual results background checks. For more information, see the [OSDE Certification page](#).
- The Consolidated Application is now open except for the immigrant and migrant portions of the application. OSDE will send a notice to districts when all sections are open.
- 352 districts (64%) have shown interest in the Exact Path tool. 261 have signed up. It's not too late to sign up.
- OSDE is launching the Network of Learning with input from the experts at CCOSA for those interested in a new high-quality virtual learning option. Districts must provide notice of their interest by Friday, July 24. Contact Aaron Espolt at aaron.espolt@sde.ok.gov for more information.
- The Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) has color coded the state map by county in green, yellow, orange and red (<https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov/covid-19-alert-system>). Green is the lowest zone; yellow is a caution zone; orange is the danger zone; and red is an emergency zone. OSDE is presenting a recommendation to SBE at its 9:30 a.m. meeting on July 23 that will follow along with the OSDH map.
- This is OSDE's recommendation to SBE:
 - Green is the lowest zone and the one where we want to be. In the green zone, there is no requirement to wear masks in schools.
 - In the yellow caution zone, students in grades 4-12, all staff and school visitors will wear masks. Students in grades PK-3 will also wear masks, but can remove their masks if they're with their cohort. Most Oklahoma districts are in yellow.
 - Orange is divided into two parts. Orange level 1 (14.39-25 cases per 100,000 people) is nearing the danger zone. Masks are required, and the district must

prepare to transition to virtual or distance learning. No extracurricular activities are permitted unless social distancing can be observed.

- In orange level 2 (25-50/100,000), the district must transition to distance or virtual learning, although 25% of students may be in school buildings. This 25% would cover students with special needs and others who must be there in person to facilitate learning. There is a mask requirement in school buildings. No extracurricular activities are permitted.
- In the red zone, all restrictions from orange level 2 continue in place, except that only 15% of students can be in school buildings.
- Teachers are expected to be in school buildings whatever the color zone – green, yellow, orange, or red.
- OSDH will update its county map weekly by color. So, districts may be in a different color zone from one week to the next.
- The top concern is to help communities stay tied to data with a spectrum of safety protocols as surges and peaks occur. The goal and expectation is that instruction will take place in person until it can't according to the most recent map. There will be mask-wearing exemptions applicable to some students with disabilities. OSDE's recommendation is that special education can and should be provided at a school site no matter the district's color zone.

Questions

- Hot spot grant. Will hot spots be CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) compliant? Yes, they will come in compliance. Districts can add additional security features.
- Are districts out of pocket any money if they receive a hot spot grant? OSDE pays the cost of the device - \$60 each. The district must pay the \$10 per month service fee for at least six months for each hot spot for which it receives a grant. This hot spot deal through Verizon can extend through June 30, 2021 or the national emergency, whichever comes last.
- Is this hot spot deal only available with Verizon? Yes. Superintendent Hofmeister wishes it wasn't limited, but this is what we have now. Additional funds to pay for something else could be coming.
- Regarding the county color alert system, how can you access the numbers of cases? Go to <https://coronavirus.health.ok.gov/covid-19-alert-system> and look at the top left for the most recent date. Click that, and you'll see the counties and a number of cases per 100,000 for each county. How we behave as communities now – like wearing masks – can lead to declining numbers. McCurtain County, for example, has dropped its number. It can be done. Numbers may dissipate or spike based on community transmission.
- How will this system impact districts with numbers changing weekly? Districts need to become accustomed to watching their numbers. They'll need to project and plan for the

future. If you don't think ahead, you'll just have to shift as numbers change. Remember, OSDE hasn't presented its recommendation to SBE yet. SBE may make changes and adopt something different.

- At age 10, a child can spread the virus with the same impact as an adult. For students in PK-3 – teach them how to wear masks. Fourth grade and up will wear masks. PK-3 students are capable of following modeling. OSDE is recommending masks with a clear panel for teachers in PK-3 and special education. OSDE is trying to get those.
- Won't measuring cases as the OSDE alert system does disproportionately impact small communities? Densely populated areas are at greater risk.
- Is the OSDE recommendation posted on the website? No, because it's with SBE members and still potentially being revised. Changes may continue to be made during the July 23 SBE meeting.
- Once adopted, when will this system go into effect? It will take effect right away and stay in effect until September 30, 2020.
- Can teachers in PK-3 also remove their masks? Are face shields acceptable? Face shields can be used if a person can't wear a mask. But they provide protection only to the wearer, not others. PK-3 teachers should wear masks at all times when with students.
- Does wearing a mask limit the amount of quarantine time that might be needed? No. Masks limit the spread. A recent JAMA article included the results of a study of transmission by two COVID-19 positive hairdressers. No clients got COVID when the hairdressers and the clients wore a mask. They're hopeful that wearing masks on both sides (teacher and student, for example) can provide 85% protection.
- Are recommendations or requirements going to SBE? Both. The green zone is all recommendations. The yellow, orange and red zones all have some mandates and restrictions.
- What about districts in multiple counties? Which county do you go by? Use your designated county. This information will be in the WAVE.
- OSDE is looking to provide some PPE for districts that may be hard to find, like face shields, gloves and gowns. OSDE may be able to tap some CARES Act funds and is working with the Governor's office. The first focus is on things that will be hard to get.
- What are the leave options when a teacher must be out for quarantine? Options – sick leave; emergency leave; FMLA; Families First Act, with 80 hours of leave may also be an option. Suggest you use that Families First Act leave first because it's scheduled to end on December 31, 2020. OSDE will support anything districts can do to help employees. It's up to you.
- Is either SBE or OSDE going to request a statewide delay of the start of school? No. It's important to be together in school. Get in and establish relationships, make connections. Kids are depending on school being there for mental health supports.

- When returning from another state, must staff be quarantined for two weeks? No, not aware of this, but will check.
- As to coaches and athletes during practice, if the district is in the orange or yellow zone, must they wear masks? Superintendent Hofmeister and Brad Clark would advise that, although an exception may apply.
- If you're going to another county in a different color zone, abide by the zone of the county you're in.
- Is there any information on enrollment codes that may be different? Anticipate a set of enrollment and attendance codes at least by the time of the SBE meeting – July 23.
- Under OSDE's recommendation to SBE, students aren't required to wear masks at recess.
- If the teacher is at the front of the room and the closest student is six feet away, can the teacher remove mask? No. Need to maintain your protection. Teachers can take it off if no one else is in the classroom.
- Will SBE be mandating other things, like temperature checks? No. Districts can determine that. If everyone has a mask on, it will help overcome a faulty thermometer or other thing. If an individual doesn't have a temperature, they can still carry the virus.
- At SBE's July 23 meeting, it could adopt something more restrictive than OSDE's recommendation.
- Are bus drivers expected to wear masks? Yes. In one district, the drivers are wearing a clear mask and clear shield. It will also retrofit fans to fit on buses. Then the drivers can drop their masks under some circumstances when the shield is on and fan is running.

Closing Remarks

- Superintendent Hofmeister stated that she's never seen such hard work or such great leaders shouldering such responsibility. They're contemplating so many details and wrestling with decisions. She is asking for families and teachers to extend grace and patience. Science is still investigating the virus. Districts must be ready to shift. We're all going to learn a lot this year. Superintendent Hofmeister stated that she is very proud to do this work with school leaders. Adults in schools and families need to model what we want our students to do. She stated that she is praying for you.

Wednesday, July 15, 2020

- As of today, there are 22,813 confirmed positive COVID-19 cases in Oklahoma, with 1,075 of those just in the last 24 hours – an Oklahoma record. The latter number includes Governor Stitt. According to the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH), as of today, there are 427 deaths and 571 hospitalizations, almost half of which are in ICU. We've had nearly 5,000 new cases in one 1 week.
- A mask, according to the CDC, is a critical tool to reduce transmission. Masks are useful for the wearer and for others in the area. A large number of Oklahoma districts have already decided to require masks of staff and students. OSDE is also hearing from lots of staff and parents. Believes SBE will take up a mask requirement next week. More details to come about what that might look like. They're working with health experts on this.
- State aid initial allocations. For a variety of factors, they won't be released today. Hopeful they'll be released at end of next week.
- OSDE put out a PPE survey on 7/14. Districts are concerned about getting PPE. The survey results will be used to prepare an "ask" for PPE for districts. Survey is open till 7/22 at 5:00 p.m.
- Hot spot grants. The application opened in GMS on 7/14. Quick turnaround is necessary. Completed application must be submitted by 7/24 at 11:59 p.m. Recipients will be announced 7/31. Verizon will ship hot spots to grant recipients within one week after that. Grant recipients must agree to pay \$10 per month service fee for each hot spot for at least six months. The hot spots provided under the grant will be available as long as the national pandemic continues or June 30, 2021, whichever is later.
- Can only apply for and assign hot spots from the grant to low income students and only 1 per family unless there are more than 3 children in a family, then can assign 2. Can't award to teachers or staff, but district can purchase additional hot spots for non-low income students and for staff and teachers at \$60 per hot spot. If the district purchases hot spots, the service fee is still \$10 for each. Verizon pricing info is confidential, so only share it with those who need that info to process payment, etc.
- There are 3 prompts in the hot spot grant application – (1) how do the hot spots connect to the district's distance learning plan, (2) how do they connect to local initiatives and (3) what is the district's hot spot deployment and implementation plan. Districts must attach their 2020-2021 distance learning plan and technology survey to their application. OSDE will be looking for the hot spots' connection to virtual learning and how hot spots will support the district's virtual learning plan. Bonus points will be awarded to those who didn't receive an incentive grant or received less than \$150 per student in CARES Act funds. Apologized if Verizon is not available in your area.
- At the July 23 SBE meeting, emergency rules will be presented re distance learning. The information included in the rules is what's already in the OSDE FAQs and Framework. Among other things in the emergency rules, districts are required to have plans to

measure attendance and credits and to provide access to all students. There will be processes about reporting attendance and absences through the district student information system (SIS). OSDE will provide the Rules and attendance codes in the near future.

- Showed Exact Path video. Exact Path professional development starts on 7/20. Districts don't have to be rostered to participate in the PD, but would be more meaningful for them if they were. Districts can still sign up for Exact Path. All districts can join in the PD.
- Superintendent Hofmeister stated that we'll all get through this. We'll persevere. We'll pull together to make it happen. There's promising info re possible vaccines. "You're doing amazing work, and you're amazing. No one has gone through this in 100 years. What we're doing is monumental." This work impacts millions in OK. Superintendent Hofmeister stated that she's proud of you and proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with you. Getting through this will require flexibility and pivoting.

Questions and Answers

- PPE survey. How suggest districts calculate the number of masks needed for students, considering that surgical masks are recommended to be changed every hour? Consider cloth masks that can be washed, along with single day use masks. Haven't heard of masks that must be disposed of after an hour.
- Any info about the Oklahoma death rate per positive cases recently? No, doesn't have that info today. Has seen data that indicates the positive spread per capita in Oklahoma. That data puts OK among the leading states for virus spread. Doesn't have the source for this info. Death rate is important, but need to focus on living with the virus. The data we receive doesn't include the conditions of those who are leaving hospitals. Don't discount that information. That includes amputations due to blood clots and lung scarring. In conversations with OK public health officials, they're commenting on the rise in pediatric cases.
- More info about what is going to SBE re masks. These decisions must be based in evidence, research and expert opinion. Makes sense to have a tiered system that corresponds to the path of the virus in active areas in the state. Anticipate a graduated recommendation that goes through the spectrum, including masks for all staff and students or closure of schools in areas with a highly volatile, highly dangerous spread. Not comfortable discussing the nuances of this plan. Still needs to vet it with others. Need to have the most specific response we can so a community without spread doesn't have to mask the same ways as those with great spread.
- Masks. Can a district require students to wear a mask if it doesn't provide masks? Districts do require students to provide supplies. Of course, you can regulate in schools for safety and well-being. This is along the same lines.

- Oklahoma students already have among the lowest health outcomes in the U.S. They have more asthma, diabetes and co-morbidity. Also, our staff members have more health conditions, and their average age is higher. Some of you are hearing of teachers fearful to return to their schools. We have an obligation to keep safety top of mind. These are reasons will ask SBE to do a multi-tiered response re PPE. Data says wearing a mask protects others and the wearer, to some extent. Wearing masks can simulate herd immunity and help minimize risk.
- The safest thing is virtual on-line school. The CDC notes this. But must balance this with homes that aren't safe. School staff members are frequent reporters of abuse. When there's a virtual on-line setting only, ER cases increase, as do injuries from neglect and abuse. For many families, it's important that students return to a school building.
- Thinking of pushing back school start date or suggesting to districts that they do so? Each district should consider this based on their community. The answer depends on what's happening in your area. Work with local health officials to make this decision.
- Hot spot grants. Is there an expectation that districts attach their distance learning plan for 2020-21? Yes, OSDE wants to know what you've planned for 2020-21. Over the school year, a lot of students and staff will be in quarantine at some point because of a case in a classroom. OSDE is working on a template for a 2020-21 distance learning plan, but there's no set date to complete it. Not sure it will be out by the 7/24 hot spot application deadline. The template, when done, will be in the accreditation upload. As to the hot spot grants, OSDE wants to see you'll be doing some virtual online distance learning that would justify an award of a hot spot grant. That's a key piece in asking that you attach your plan. The grants will be competitive, so they're looking at ways to differentiate districts.
- Face shields vs. masks. Will a face shield satisfy a mask requirement? No. A face shield with a mask provides "extraordinary" protection. A face shield alone provides no protection to others. It may provide some protection in very low grades where students might not wear masks.
- Will the mask requirement from SBE extend to districts in areas with very few cases? It depends on what you're seeing. OSDE is trying to get a system that provides greater flexibility than across an entire county. Just because you have one positive case in a county doesn't mean the virus isn't more prevalent in that county.
- Hot spot grant app. The assurance statement provides that the district must distribute hot spots to students within two weeks of receipt. Is that flexible? No, it's a hard deadline. Get them deployed to eligible students as fast as possible. All devices under the contract with Verizon have to be activated by a certain date. The other option for hot spots – other than through the grant – is for a district to do a P.O. off the state contract at \$60 per hot spot with the same \$10 per month service fee. How does a district make these purchases? Get in touch with Verizon directly. OSDE will do this if requested.

Verizon knows these inquiries will be coming. Also, Verizon will have regularly scheduled meetings with districts. Expect the roll out soon.

- What about use of employee sick days for a teacher if the teacher gets COVID or has a student that gets it? This depends on local policy. Sick leave or FMLA can be tapped, as could the Families First COVID Relief Act. Other options could also arise.
- What about the potential for requiring staff testing before reporting back to school? That could tell you if you have asymptomatic cases. It may create some overconfidence in the event of negative tests. Other countries have lots of testing and rapid turnaround for teachers and students. If we had that capability, we could do that, but we can't. If an individual has symptoms or has been exposed, there will be a quarantine whether or not they took a test.
- Thoughts about temperature checks for staff and students upon entering buildings or bus? There's some backing off on this as a district requirement because some touchless thermometers aren't accurate and fever isn't always present with COVID. But we can get into a routine of taking our temperature and, if have a 100 degree temperature, then stay home. The temperature is 100, not 100.4 degrees, per the Oklahoma state epidemiologist.
- If parent won't require student to wear a mask, can student be made to stay home? It's best to be extra careful and wear masks. Districts should look at what's feasible and practical. Virtual opportunities are available for those who won't wear a mask. However, there are exceptions, such as for some students with disabilities. This is about changing a culture so children can be in school and learn. We need to act to protect others. It's our responsibility to think of the collective good.
- OSDH spoke to superintendents and said it won't be able to share identities of those tested positive or who have been told to quarantine. There are exceptions to this with public health and in an epidemic. Thinks this is a misunderstanding. OSDE shares the concern expressed by the superintendents. There's an exception in FERPA and a similar one under HIPAA that in a health or safety situation, info can be shared with the appropriate officials. Will continue to have conversations with OSDH about this.
- Superintendent Hofmeister stated that if you're thinking it's going to be fine, it may. But returning to school will be the first test for Oklahoma for 700,000 kids and 80,000 staff and teachers together. The virus might not be in your community now, but there's a likelihood of it impacting your school, community, etc. We want to be able to open schools for as long as possible for the sake of kids. There are probably lots of people who are asymptomatic, but have the virus and are walking around spreading. This situation will overwhelm county health officials if we don't go forward safely. That's a factor in whether and how to mandate masks.
- What is guidance for staff over 65 or with vulnerable conditions? They're at risk. The average age of an Oklahoma teacher is over 50 years old. We're trying to protect this

work force. Oklahoma has poor health outcomes for children and adults. This is why OSDE wants a more uniform calibrated response re safety. Each individual makes the decision. Some people are saying they're frustrated by their district's unwillingness to take a stand on masks, so they're deciding not to work in a school this year.

Superintendent Hofmeister stated that a superintendent told her she sees no masks on people on the street, but anonymous surveys show 75% approval for wearing masks at school. Districts may get different results from anonymous surveys.

- Emergency drill requirements. They're still as important as in the past. They can be done without lots of students participating at once. OSDE has looked at other states. It's important to continue with drills, but not to do them with everyone at once.
- Bus transportation. If district personnel take a student's temperature at the bus stop and the student can't board, what does it do if the parent isn't at home? It's possible some districts are going to take temperatures before bus boarding as opposed to screening at school. You need to create awareness in parents to look at this issue in the morning – take the student's temperature at home to avoid these circumstances. If an individual is sick or feels they have symptoms, then they need to stay home. Don't let the desire to be present at school overcome this.
- A student tests positive in the class. Who needs to quarantine? This is addressed in the [Framework](#) at page 14. What about other students in the classroom for 30 minutes or more with the student? If those students spent more than 15 minutes in close contact with the positive student, they have to quarantine. Assigned seating at elementary level may help with contact tracing. Same with keeping a cohort of students together. Whole class quarantine may be necessary under some circumstances.
- Superintendent Hofmeister stated her thanks and appreciation. She said that you may be waiting to put out your district reopening plan because you don't want to have to change it. However, families and communities want specificity in a crisis. All of us have to be willing to flex. "We have what it takes to get through this." Kids will see your leadership and see teachers as people who care for them. It's important to get back to school together, to make connections and stay in school as long as possible. Keep up your resolve.

Wednesday, July 8, 2020

- Wearing masks is fundamental.
- Return to school. Knows you're working diligently on plans to return to school. Reference [OSDE's Return to Learn Framework](#) as you develop your plans. Communicate with everyone – teachers, parents, etc. - regularly even if you're still working on your plan.
- Exact Path. There's been an "incredible" response to Exact Path. 335 districts have shown interest or signed a contract. 189 districts are fully deployed for use. If you haven't returned the form yet, move swiftly so you can start ASAP. The OSDE data team has made the rostering process for students using Exact Path very simple. Once you have returned the form and students are rostered, you can start using Exact Path.
- Hot spots grant. OSDE has 50,000 hot spots from Verizon that will be disbursed through competitive grants. Using ESSER \$ to OSDE for this work. Grant requirements will be released this week. Thinks application will open 7/14. It will have a quick turnaround. Other states' school districts are also working with Verizon to get hot spots. Don't want Oklahoma districts to have to wait on Verizon because Oklahoma moved too slowly. Applications will be due 10 days after grant opening (7/24 at 11:59 p.m.). Grants will be awarded around 7/31.
- Districts that get a hot spot grant must pay the monthly service fee of \$10 per month for unlimited data, which will continue through the pandemic or 7/31/21, whichever is later.
- Can only assign these hot spots to low income students and only one per family unless there are more than 3 children in a family. Can't award to teachers or staff, but district can purchase additional hot spots for non-low income students and for staff and teachers at \$60 per hot spot, which is the same amount that OSDE paid. Essentially, there is one big statewide family plan through Verizon to operate these 50,000 hot spots.
- There are 3 prompts in the hot spot grant application – (1) how do the hot spots connect to the district's distance learning plan, (2) how do they connect to local initiatives and (3) what is the district's hot spot deployment and implementation plan. Districts must attach their distance learning plan and technology survey to their application. Bonus points will be awarded to those who didn't receive an incentive grant or received less than \$150 per student in Care Act funds.
- Nutrition. USDA has issued extensions to several waivers that now extend through 2020-21. The first is for non-congregant settings. Meals can be delivery or grab and go. USDA also granted waivers for meal service time, parent and guardian pick-up and meal pattern flexibility if the district has exhausted all other options. USDA also granted a waiver that provides offer versus service flexibility for high school students. They can get a full meal at lunch without worrying about offer v. serve.

Questions and Answers

- What about use of face shields? A mask with a face shield is effective. A face shield alone isn't as effective as a mask. Agrees that children need to see teachers' faces and vice versa. Superintendent Hofmeister wants to see masks for teachers and students as part of school district plans. Tuesday, will have a meeting with new Oklahoma State Department of Health Commissioner Fry. Will ask him about this. A face shield provides further protection on top of a mask. As to N95 masks, OSDH has asked that these not be used in schools as they are needed in health care settings.
- Hot spots awarded via OSDE grant. How will devices and troubleshooting work? Technical issues are the district's responsibility, but they'll have a direct line of communication with Verizon. Verizon will host regular calls with districts to work through technical issues. Management and deployment fall to districts once the hot spots have been disbursed.
- Emergency drills and social distancing. Will there be a waiver of emergency drills for the 2020-21 school year? Will take this issue up with OSDE legal. If the issue is going to go forward, it should be on SBE's July meeting agenda.
- Waiver of Oklahoma standardized testing? Other states are talking about this in the context of those states, which have value added measures (VAMs) for teacher evaluations and other issues that Oklahoma doesn't have. Superintendent Hofmeister hesitates to jump into this conversation before school starts. We have these assessments for a reason – to take a snapshot in time to consider the civil rights of students in federally protected groups – those with disabilities, English learners, those in poverty, and due to color, race, ethnicity. Talking about not having assessment at this point is inappropriate when we consider the reason for the assessments. Hope you understand that Oklahoma doesn't have to think about VAMs and only has US History in addition to the federally required assessment. Also, there is no waiver available right now. Anticipates this will be a year of great challenges, but doesn't want to open the waiver door today.
- Are districts concerned about teachers being too afraid to return? What about the propriety of having those over age 65 and in vulnerable populations return to work? Superintendent Hofmeister is hearing from some in these groups that they're fearful. Whether to return is a personal decision. Superintendent Hofmeister states that it's possible to keep teachers and staff safe. It depends to some degree on behavior in our state and communities now. Mask wearing is the single most effective thing we can do besides hand washing. There is a new concern about virus transmission through aerosol. Given that, it's far more important that we wear masks. OSDE is part of a group reviewing what other countries that addressed the virus did successfully, and success is attributed to mask wearing and other factors common to those countries. What didn't work in other countries? Israel started with mask wearing, but lifted the requirement because of the heat. With that, COVID went out of control there, and school was cancelled. The group

studied data of 12-15 countries. It can be safe enough to work if masks and social distancing are used and hand washing takes place regularly.

- We know school will feel different. We need great teachers in schools. Superintendent Hofmeister heard from an Oklahoma teacher with a large online presence that if students wore masks and face shields, that would relieve teachers' minds. Shields alone might not help due to the aerosol nature of the virus, but masks will help. Face shields are open so it would seem that the virus could go under the shield due to its aerosol nature. Will ask the new OSDH Commissioner about the efficacy of face shields used without a mask.
- The CEC says children under 2 shouldn't wear masks. If there's a choking hazard, students also shouldn't wear them. Does SDE think students over age of 2 should wear mask? Yes, when feasible.
- Quarantine. Is there an OSDE requirement for a 14-day quarantine when a student or staff member is exposed to someone who tests positive? This is addressed in OSDE's Return to Learn Plan. Yes, a 14-day quarantine is required from the last time of exposure to the person who tested positive. (See information about the nature of that exposure below.) An isolation period (for the person who actually tested positive) may be shorter in duration than the quarantine period (for a person who's exposed to the person who tested positive). Should there be a COVID test at the end of this 14-day period? That's not required now by CDC.
- If one person in one grade is COVID positive, must the entire grade be quarantined? The fact that one person in one grade is positive doesn't mean everyone in that grade would be quarantined. Who would be quarantined depends on whether social distancing was in place and who was exposed to the positive person for 30 minutes. Contact tracers will get to work on the issue, and notice of exposure would go out.
- Is there a "trigger" for when schools would close due to COVID? Districts will make this decision along with the local/county health department or OSDH, similar to how decisions are made for closing a school due to influenza. Visit with your local/county health department about this. The trigger is likely to be much like the trigger for influenza – a certain % of students are out for that illness. For the flu, the trigger is often 80% of the school's students are out. Understands that schools would want to have a specific set percentage. OSDE will discuss with OSDH. Also, OSDH will be doing color coding of counties according to COVID-19 risk. OSDE will have something that corresponds with these color codes. Would be great to have some uniformity across the state.
- Should staff members and students be tested for COVID before the start of school? It shows whether the person has the virus at a particular point in time. Exposure can occur after that.
- Will new teachers be able to get certifications and background checks before the school year begins? Yes. There are sites that can do finger printing. But, for new employees,

they save money by having OSDE do their fingerprinting. They can get access to this through OSDE by making an appointment.

- Should districts contact trace or leave it to the health department? Districts will work with their health department. You'll work together. Start working with them now – establish relationships and discuss who to connect with and what you can expect from your local/county health department. If there's no swift response from the local/county department, call the state epidemiologist. OSDH is indicating it's not tracking down someone a COVID-positive person walked by or shared an elevator with; it's someone they spent at least 15 minutes with without social distancing.
- When will districts get state aid allocations? The goal is July 15. OSDE has all ASRs in and is working as quickly as it can. As to Title I applications, OSDE hopes to get them out next week. They're in test right now.
- OSDH has indicated that it has lots of signage that schools can use, along with videos about proper wearing of a mask. OSDE can put this info out in its Admin Newsletter.
- Look for the hot spot grant application coming out soon.