

Wednesday, May 27, 2020

- There are currently 6,229 confirmed positive cases in Oklahoma and 322 deaths from COVID-19,
- Suspected hospitalizations continue to drop. These statistics look very optimistic.
- Phase 3 of Governor's Reopening Plan will begin June 1.
- Next week, the all district call will be Monday, June 1 at 1:00 pm to accommodate the schedule of Oklahoma State Department of Health interim epidemiologist, Dr. Aaron Wendelboe and to avoid a conflict with the CCOSA Conference. Dr. Wendelboe will be available to answer questions. He and his team have been involved in the guidance that the OSDE is developing.
- FBI asked that district leaders be made aware of a scam (email coming). Teachers approached via an email that appears to have come from an education leader and asked to purchase gift cards to students and send card code to the return email address. It is a scam.
- Reopening plan (guidance) will be published soon on OSDE website. A session about the guidance will be presented at the CCOSA Conference on June 4. It is important to remember that these are recommendations rather than requirements. It provides a framework to be adapted by the local school and community needs.
- Dr. Wendelboe has indicated that where we are right now with the COVID-19 situation is the very best that it is going to be. Once we reopen as a society, we know cases will rise. It will not continue to improve as we reach into the Fall. We will reach higher numbers, and the best hope is that we can keep the numbers stable.
- Graduation and Phase 3: is there a lifting on the number of people who can attend graduation? Dr. Wendelboe has indicated that safeguards should not be discarded. We should continue with social distancing and common sense. Continue to be safe and smart about social distancing as you make graduation plans.
- Can districts make their own modified schedule for the Fall? Yes—guidance will be forthcoming at the CCOSA Conference next week. Districts should have Plan A and Plan B. An important consideration is the layout of your campus and the number of students in each class. Mobile classroom units are also an option.
- Can districts proceed with finding their own methods for providing for distance learning? OSDE is working on this. Meetings will require cooperation with multiple governmental entities. No answer today --- OSDE is looking for ways to get reduced rates. Or, possibly a way to use OETA towers for educational materials only, like is done in South Carolina. This will allow content download/upload.
- Flex schedules and meeting days/hours requirements: look to the language in the Statewide Virtual Charter School Board (SVCSB) or create a local policy for when, what, how to measure attendance, etc. This will be in the next round of OSDE guidance. On state board agenda tomorrow is to allow districts to use Saturday as a school day.
- Social distancing guidance is just that, CDC guidance – needs to be acceptable, feasible, and practical within a local community. Rolling down the windows reduces possibility of transmission – use this mechanism in driver's ed or on bus routes. Masks can become a

new staple. If this is impractical in earlier grades, emphasize hand washing. It's important to layer safeguards and to build a culture of care for others.

- Requirements or guidance for cafeterias? Big open spaces are good, but it is better to keep smaller cohorts of students together so that contact tracing is better reflected.
- It's all about layering different safeguards to reduce risks. Zero risk would be closing school. And, we don't want to do that again.
- No uniform start date for Oklahoma school districts. Some schools may want to start the same time as their neighbors, but that is a local decision.
- Two days in/ three days virtual schedule: is this permissible? How would it be coded? Yes – attendance will be based on the local attendance policy for the program being offered and given on the virtual days.
- Driver's Ed can start in June (see <https://sde.ok.gov/sites/default/files/FAQS%20FOR%20PUBLIC%20SCHOOLS%20-%20COVID-19.pdf>)
- Masks: what if parent objects? Thinks that it's unhealthy? Superintendent is not aware that masks are not healthy --- unsure that doctors/ hospitals would wear if unhealthy. Brad Clark was asked if district can require wearing of masks: local policy decision, may need to change student and employee dress code policy. Advise common sense application of making exceptions for medical conditions. Will check with health department about the dangers of wearing a mask if a person has asthma.
- What is your opinion of the OSSAA Board decision not to adopt the guidance provided by OSSAA staff? In conversations with Supt. McDaniel, a Board member, Superintendent Hofmeister believed that it was supposed to be guidance, but OSSAA is a separate, private organization. Common sense should prevail as we look at ways to reopen. Everyone is trying to provide guidance that will help each school district keep their staff and students safer. Is thankful for all of the hard work that went into the guidance. Recognizes that each community has different needs, but we should all continue to provide safeguards for those in our care. It is not going to get better for a while, and we will know more once we have contact tracing fully in place. The situation will either be the same or get worse.
- Has there been any contact tracing that goes back to a school activity? Not yet – too early to have these results.
- If parents refuse to send a child to school, should a virtual option be available? Yes – fear may be connected to an immune-compromised family member. We don't know the details, so for those parents and students, districts should provide a distance learning option. It is not optimal for a family to enroll in a whole different school. Children should be able to attend distance learning options in their home districts.
- What is the liability of a district where COVID-19 may have originated in a school? Brad Clark thinks that schools are granted exemption within the Governmental Tort Claims Act that would provide exemptions to liability.
- Are there more details for the Governor's Phase 3 Reopen Plan? It was said this morning at a meeting that we are on track to reopen on June 1. The Department of

Commerce website would provide that information; nothing has yet been posted (<https://www.okcommerce.gov/covid19/ours-plan/>).

- What about teachers who are reluctant to return to school? This is a challenge – must be a balance. A person must fulfill the role identified in his/her contract. If it is possible for the contract to be fulfilled from home, then that should be explored. Some states are encouraging early buy-out for retirement; Oklahoma can't afford that. Oklahoma doesn't have any solutions at this point. Make sure that you consult with local legal counsel and check with local district policy and what it provides for accommodations.
- If people over age 65 are willing, they should be able to return based on any additional guidance from the Governor for Phase 3.
- Child Nutrition waivers: currently are under nation-wide waivers. For example, meal patterns to July 31. All others through August 31. Waivers can be extended through September at this point by the Secretary of Ag.
- Summer leagues and use of school facilities: this is a district decision.
- Edmentum and ExactPath: is this an acceptable benchmark? Not for RSA.
- Budget for next year: FY22 – conflicting opinions about the economy. Governor believes that the downturn will continue and will need additional cuts in FY22. Legislative leaders believe the economy will bounce back more quickly and will be able to help meet the needs in FY22.
- School Report Card for FY21: how will it be modified? Expect there to be an adjustment, perhaps, in Chronic Absenteeism. Safety is more important than a school report card indicator. Oklahoma will participate with other states to find a way to meet federal requirements. No School Report Card this fall.
- Are there uniform procedures for how to deal with a staff member or student who tests positive? Will include guidance that connects school with local health department or state level if the local does not respond quickly enough. Wants the decision to close a class or a pod for a day to be a local decision with professional guidance and input. Oklahoma State Department of Health interim epidemiologist, Dr. Aaron Wendelboe will be on the call Monday, June 1 at 1:00.
- CARES Act funding: any more coming? Timeline about the incentives grant? OSDE has identified the rubric and expectations for the incentives grant. Working on final details and will have more information soon.
- The hope is to have Math and Reading diagnostic tool with personalized learning plan for each student. SDE has not finalized the plans yet. The hope is that it is free or deeply discounted at the state level.
- Monday, June 1 at 1:00 phone call with Oklahoma State Department of Health interim epidemiologist, Dr. Aaron Wendelboe.
- CCOSA Conference Breakout session next week June 4 on the reopening/re-entry plan.

Wednesday, May 20, 2020

- In Oklahoma, there are 5,532 positive diagnoses of coronavirus, 299 deaths, 159 hospitalized, and 746 discharged from the hospital. Numbers are positive and moving in the right direction for Phase 2, which is underway, and possibly for Phase 3, which could begin on June 1.
- Transportation is probably districts' greatest challenge. The ideal plan is to separate students with an empty seat between them and to permit seating only in staggered rows, but for most districts this is not feasible. Districts could also stagger times and routes, but this is not feasible for many either. Also, districts could bring in different students on different days and have A and B school attendance schedules, but OSDE understands that may not be possible in some districts.
- For all districts, it is "doable" to open bus windows whenever possible to limit progression of the virus. There are far fewer cases of coronavirus tied to a person touching things. Cases arise largely from viral particles in the air that are inhaled by others. Circulating fresh air can reduce transmission.
- Talk with parents about the district's plans for transportation so parents can make other arrangements if they choose. It may be that buses will be used only by those who have no other way. Letting parents know of plans now will help them make the arrangements they need. Encourage those who can drive their children to school to do so to create space for those who can't.
- It would also be helpful to have siblings sit together on the bus and to ask MS and HS students to wear masks so you can separate younger students from one another.
- Using CARES Act funds to buy additional buses is acceptable. If you choose to use CARES funds this way, you could use as reasons for the purchase in your application, promoting social distancing and promoting distance learning. If you purchase a bus with CARES funds, you'll have that deliverable long after this pandemic is over.
- Monty Guthrie with OSDE is working on getting quotes for providing Wi-Fi on school buses. In working with bus salespeople, he found that it takes about \$1,000 to make a bus into a hot spot and \$2,000 to provide multiple services on a bus. But it doesn't have to be a bus. Older service vehicles could also be used for a hot spot. Any bus salesman you work with can point you in the direction of a vendor who can handle this type of installation in a bus.
- Regarding OSDE's reopening plan, [the CDC published its plan earlier this week](#), which provides helpful info for schools for summer and fall. OSDE is continuing to work on its framework to open schools in the fall. They hope to have it out by the end of May and think it will be useful.
- Four Child Nutrition Waivers have been extended. (1) waiver for meal service time flexibility (permitting serving 2 meals at a time) extended through 8/31/20; (2) waiver

for non-congregate feeding (permitting grab and go or delivery) extended through 8/31/20; (3) waiver for meal pattern flexibility, covering certain meal components, extended through 6/30/20 (could possibly continue to be extended month by month); and (4) waiver to allow parents or guardians to pick up meals extended through 8/31/20. This information has been updated in [OSDE's FAQs](#). Also, a waiver has been extended through 6/30/20 for unexpected school closures for at risk schools, which provides a third meal for schools that were previously approved to provide this.

- Child nutrition folks like to be included in conversations about their district's child nutrition plans. Summer planning and SSO are going full force. Please feed as much as you can in your community.
- In one of these weekly conversations, Superintendent Hofmeister would like the state's interim epidemiologist to talk with school leaders. OSDE folks talked with him and found it very helpful. Will get you the date for this conversation. This call won't be held on June 3 during the CCOSA Conference. It will be exciting to have an all-virtual conference.
- Think about in the foreseeable future if these calls are helpful and if you want to keep going. OSDE will keep putting out written guidance. OSDE will continue the calls if participants want to or can stop and pick them up closer to school starting. In the chat, the indications are that the calls continue to be helpful.

#### Questions and Answers

- Regarding Incentive grants and the LEA application, when will state pricing for LMS and CMS contracts be available and what state contracts will be available for purchase? OSDE is still having conversations with stakeholders and others and negotiating the lowest possible price. Not sure when this will be available or what will ultimately be available. Details will be in OSDE's plan. You can use the state rate for other tools you might choose.
- Is there an OSDE-approved vendor list or contract for hot spots? OSDE is working on this now. They think they've identified a vendor, and there's some interest at the state level to put some money toward that.
- What will be in the OSDE framework? There will be different categories touching on school operations, public health, school meal programs, transportation, whole child supports (including mental health and social emotional growth), well-rounded academics, including an opportunity for students to have use of an online tool that school districts have received for free that's individualized with a focus on marking the end of each grade level and identifying an individualized student path tailored to each student's weaknesses and closing gaps that s/he can swiftly move through. This is what OSDE wants to do for math and reading K-12. This will be available for all districts and

will be part of a contract that OSDE would want to provide free access to use. Attention to school personnel is another category, including suggestions and considerations. There are areas around distance learning, flexible calendars, and finance and support. Health and safety will be at the top of your minds. OSDE will add to this framework as time passes and data and science tell us more.

- How can districts secure PPE, hand sanitizer and other supplies? What efforts are there at the state level to help with this? Michelann Ooten in School Safety and Security at OSDE has worked on this (see notes of 5/13/20 meeting). OSDE is in contact with Secretary Rogers and others about how to collaborate at the state level to obtain these items. We know you're competing for these items, and OSDE will continue to work on this. Also, one district got PPE, etc. from its county emergency management program. Try that.
- How do districts approach virtual days and putting them into school calendars? OSDE understands this is a real need. This will be fully addressed in OSDE's upcoming guidance.
- Will virtual days count as instructional days for purposes of funding and attendance? The short answer is yes. Attendance is addressed on pages 8-10 of the [OSDE FAQs](#). Much of this is based on local decisions and policies. OSDE is happy to work with districts on this. Districts should have policy in place for how distance/virtual learning days will be implemented and how this will be communicated to parents. There is language in an Oklahoma statute that could be interpreted to prevent virtual for non-resident students. We need emergency rules to address this to make sure it's available to resident and non-resident students. The proposed emergency rules should be available for the May SBE meeting.
- Can districts use unobligated Title funds for technology and, if so, must the district amend its plan to do this? This is a broad question. On Titles 1 and 4, yes, do amend your plan. On Title 2, if using it for general tech, you may want to move the purchase to Title 1 or 4. Title 2 is the most restrictive for this.
- What are the requirements for web filtering and device management for hot spots? OSDE will be addressing this in the guidance coming out.
- Regarding 12-month staff members in vulnerable populations, can districts require them to come back to their building to work? How should they be treated in the fall? This is addressed in the [OSDE FAQs](#) at page 7. It's also addressed in the Governor's executive order and his [OURS Plan](#). This is a local determination, but it's encouraged that you make accommodations for employees in these populations.
- Can a district buy tires or equipment for buses with CARES funds? OSDE doesn't see why not.
- Are bus driver trainings available? OSDE is working on that.

- Regarding Child Nutrition, get your March and April claims in. Districts can pull their numbers for CEP between April 15 and June 30. Districts also need the enrollment list for the same period as direct certification. Reach out to your foster agency and local tribe(s) for their most current information, too. What is the timeline for those recently unemployed parents when there's a month delay to become eligible for SNAP benefits? Get the direct certification info from the WAVE on June 3 or 4 to get the most current information, which will include May data. This could help you capture more students for CEP.
- Can driver's ed begin in June? This is answered in the [OSDE FAQs](#) on pages 33-34. Yes, you can. Try to do the curriculum portion virtually or in small groups, with social distancing.
- Can virtual days count as days and hours? Yes, they can.
- This is in state statutes, found on [oscn.net](#) – Brad Clark will post this info.
- Will there be a math online curriculum or tool? Yes, Edmentum has a statewide contract and will have a statewide rate to buy this so districts have access to Exact Path for math and reading. Can start this summer. There are different options available, but districts can use placement points to be on grade level by end of year. This is an adaptive, individualized plan. It can even go down grade levels. It's also a tool to set starting points based on linking studies with STAR reading and NWEA MAP. OSDE doesn't mean to be mysterious, but it 44isn't' quite done securing this. It provides a diagnostic element, and it has virtual differentiation grouping.
- The Math line item in the state budget refers to Imagine Math. This is a very good program. Superintendent Hofmeister has seen success with it. OSDE has confidence that it's worth exploration and would be a good option for students. They're exploring how many schools and students will be able to benefit from the \$1 million appropriation. It was funded by OSDE before the state went through the economic downturn. This is a legislative priority, and they put it in the budget.

#### Closing remarks

- Superintendent Hofmeister appreciates the really neat things done with graduation this year. It's remarkable. Some are saying they have to do it next year, too! Schools are setting new precedents. There are great media pictures from different communities. They're very special. Districts are going beyond what they imagined. For those trying to have a traditional ceremony as usual, OSDE knows you're planning to be as safe as possible. Thank you for doing so much more than you've had to do in previous years, in new ways.

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

- So far, there have been 4,852 positive cases of coronavirus diagnosed in Oklahoma and 278 deaths. There are 218 individuals currently hospitalized. Positive cases are continuing to decline. A recent poll reflects that 69% of Oklahomans want the economy to reopen; more than the percentage that wants restrictions to continue in place. OSDE is mindful of this, and science will guide its actions.
- Today OSDE released [CORONAVIRUS/COVID-19 FAQs FOR OKLAHOMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS UPDATED MAY 13, 2020](#) (FAQs), addressing questions that have been posed on these calls. The updates address graduation ceremonies, accessing school buildings, summer school, school calendars for the 2020-21 school year and updated child nutrition waivers. Please review the updated [FAQs](#) in detail.
- Districts hosting in-person graduation ceremonies during Phase 2 of the Governor's OURS Plan, which is anticipated to begin on May 15 and remain in effect at least through May 31, are required to follow specific and detailed protocols found on pages 5 - 6 of the [FAQs](#). OSDE encourages districts to host in-person graduation ceremonies only after Phase 3 of the Plan begins, which is expected to start on June 1.
- Districts may have in-person summer school beginning with Phase 2 of the OURS Plan. However, OSDE encourages districts to hold virtual/distance summer school at least through Phase 2. If districts proceed with in-person summer school during Phase 2, they are encouraged to adopt social distancing guidelines, limiting classes to no more than 10 students at a time OR maintaining 6 feet of space between students. OSDE encourages districts to be aware of the provisions of the OURS Plan concerning reopening schools and providing services. See pages 7 -8 of the [FAQs](#) for more information.
- Regarding school building access during Phase 2 of the OURS Plan, see page 7 of the [FAQs](#). OSDE encourages districts to adopt policies about screening of individuals, including employees, before entry into buildings. Relevant symptoms to look for are found on page 7 of the [FAQs](#). If an individual seeking entry tests positive, they must be denied entry until at least 3 days or 72 hours have passed since their recovery, including the absence of a raised temperature without benefit of fever reducer. An individual who tests positive must also show improved respiratory function. Finally, at least 7 days must have passed since the individual's symptoms first appeared. OSDE strongly encourages schools to close for at least 1 day after being notified that a student, employee, or other person who was inside a district facility has tested positive. Local or state health authorities may determine that additional closure days are needed. During closure, the district must disinfect at least the area(s) the infected person accessed inside the building.

- Regarding school buses, see pages 15 - 16 of the [FAQs](#). OSDE recommends cleaning buses during and after the school day with safe, recommended cleaning products. Distancing practices are recommended on transportation routes with at least 1 seat between students and children seated in staggered rows. OSDE also recommends changing routes as needed to have fewer children on the bus and keeping windows open to recirculate air to reduce the risk of transmission. As to drivers and other transportation staff, districts should also be vigilant about the risk of transmission and develop contingency plans for staff and buses.
- Regarding school calendars, to prepare for the potential for disruption in the fall, consider the adoption of multiple calendars, including one that is primary and others that are contingent. Among the calendars should be those that reflect a traditional plan, rolling disruptions, longer disruptions, an early start, traditional start and late start. OSDE suggests incorporating virtual/distance learning into school calendars. Boards may want to take action to authorize their superintendent to make calendar adjustments on an emergency basis. Boards might also choose to consider the adoption of policies regarding equity in distance/virtual learning and virtual attendance. See pages 8 – 9 of the [FAQs](#).

Yes, districts can put virtual days in their school calendars, and those days count the same as traditional instructional days. Boards may choose to consider the adoption of policy regarding the school calendar, how virtual/distance learning days will be incorporated and how students, staff and parents will be notified of those days in advance. Districts should focus on communication about virtual/distance learning days and set expectations for student participation and consequences for failure to participate. They should also define attendance and presence/absence for virtual/distance learning days for both staff and students. For virtual instruction, districts should seek to make equipment available to students and families without charge, and if they can't provide such equipment, they must be prepared to take steps to ensure that all students have equitable educational opportunities. All graded courses offered must be aligned with the Oklahoma Academic Standards. Districts are not required to provide technology – devices, connectivity and/or bandwidth - to all students, but all schoolwork must be equally rigorous and accessible. If districts do this, virtual/distance learning days count the same as traditional instructional days. See pages 9 – 10 of the [FAQs](#).

When considering development of an attendance policy regarding virtual/distance instruction days, consult other available resources, such as [House Bill 2905](#), which, if approved by the Governor, establishes new requirements for virtual charter school attendance.

#### Questions and Answers

- When can an in-person graduation ceremony first be held and when is Phase 2 of the OURS Plan expected to take effect? Per the [FAQs](#), in-person graduation ceremonies can

be held when the state enters Phase 2, which is anticipated to begin on May 15. OSDE recommends waiting until after June 1 to hold in-person graduation ceremonies. From earlier conversations with the Governor, he wasn't comfortable with traditional in-person ceremonies taking place until after June 1, but review pages 5 – 6 of the [FAQs](#) if you're having an in-person ceremony during Phase 2. Superintendent Hofmeister appreciates the creative solutions districts have found that provide a safe celebration with social distancing.

- Can a district count virtual days for attendance if it doesn't have one-to-one technology? This question is answered on pages 9 - 10 of the [FAQs](#). How a district measures attendances for virtual days is a local decision. Districts can choose to borrow what will be required of statewide virtual charters under [House Bill 2905](#).
- Can Summer Reading Academies be conducted virtually with the times required by the Oklahoma administrative rules? Yes, they can be held virtually, and OSDE encourages this. The Oklahoma administrative rules require that academies take place over four weeks of four half-days per week. Yes, those timelines are in place and must be followed.
- Is there a limit on the number of virtual/distance learning days that can be included in the school calendar or does OSDE have a suggestion about the number? There is no limit in state statute or rule. This is a local determination as to the needs of and fit for the community. OSDE will be providing additional support guidance for districts and will be covering this, looking at best practices and legal requirements. This information will be part of its school reopening guidance. OSDE plans to get this out before Memorial Day, as fast as possible. OSDE wants you to know what to expect so you have a framework to work from.
- What considerations should districts have in mind when developing school calendars? Should they plan for distance learning on certain days or for a week at a time? Does OSDE have any recommendations? This is part of thinking through how we do school. OSDE expects times of closure in response to the virus. Districts should be planning to keep students connected, and assimilating this model on an ongoing basis could make it more seamless for when they must use it. There are many suggestions in the [FAQs](#) about how to structure school calendars.
- Little League Baseball and Softball leagues are asking about access to district property. Is access allowed? OSDE has had many conversations with epidemiologists about this. This isn't in the FAQs. It's going to be in the framework. There are recommendations about accessing facilities, but not about these particular sports. OSDE is not going to get ahead of conversations with OSSAA. The evidence about the spread of the virus indicates that being outside presents less risk than being inside. Look at this sport by sport. Compare outdoor Little League and indoor wrestling, and you can see lots of

differences. Look at each sport and consider how can we apply social distancing to this right now. Focus on the sporting audience and how they'll be situated. For the Little League players, this might be doable, but what about the dugout? OSDE needs more conversation about this with OSSAA.

- Is there any update about companies providing a state bid or contract for devices or hot spots? OSDE is working on this and wants to have this information when the framework is opened. OSDE hopes some CARES Act funds are used for this and is advocating for more funds from the feds. The amount to schools is a very small portion of the CARES Act. There are currently more efforts underway to get more \$ in the current package under consideration.
- As to CARES Act grants, will additional funds be available from the state for incentive funds and is this limited to state contracts? When will the info go to districts? OSDE hopes to have this figured out when the framework is released, but that may not be possible. It's working to try to expand capacity to offer more resources to districts through other partnerships and trying to leverage every advantage possible to stretch your federal \$. OSDE is aggressively working on this.
- When can non-essential 12-month personnel on continuing contracts return to work? This doesn't change from previous local decisions about essential personnel. In Phase 2 and beyond, the school personnel returning to work extend beyond previously-designated essential personnel. This is a local decision. OSDE urges accommodations for those 65 and older and those who are part of a vulnerable population.
- Can a district make provisions for students whose parents feel uncomfortable returning to school? Can the district place such a student on a virtual program? Yes, if the district is operating a blended program or virtual academy. Yes, also, if the district doesn't have that but the student is on an IEP or 504 Plan, and the team determines that this is needed for individual reasons related to that child. Other than these circumstances, it would be concerning to do this. Districts must have very clear policies about this.

There will be guidance in the framework about blended and fully virtual options. There will be considerations about how to address this issue in the framework.

- How can districts secure personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff members? OSDE recognizes that PPE is costly and wants to be able to point you in the right direction. They're in discussions with the State Department of Health about this. Michelann Ooten in OSDE's Safety and School Security area is its liaison with OMES, and she's helped districts already get PPE. She'd be the one to contact at this point, at [Michelann.Ooten@sde.ok.gov](mailto:Michelann.Ooten@sde.ok.gov).
- OSDE has been and is working with the state epidemiologist, who is a parent of kids in public school. They have a robust team that's suggested ideas to OSDE. The point is to have an aligned response so there will be a very clear understanding of what needs to

occur when outbreaks happen in the community or in school – to a staff member or student. Evidence is pointing to different responses based on what you see. If there are two cases in a school, there will be different responses if the two individuals are in the same classroom or in different areas and not associated. The state will be looking at evidence through contact tracing. It will be learning from other countries and what they're seeing emerge. This info has been gathered for each country, and we are learning from it. They'll be ahead of us by many months so there will be much to see about their experience with school reopening. Other states have also restarted school, and we'll have that info, too. OSDE is trying to provide a very detailed decision tree developed by a group that's very invested in science and research. Districts will be working with health experts – state and local – on these issues as well.

#### Closing Remarks

Please reach out to the members of Oklahoma's federal delegation about how critical it is that schools have funding in any additional relief package. This is a dire situation. We have about 13% unemployment and a downturn in the economy. We need additional relief. Collections are alarming as compared to other years.

Look at the updated [FAQs](#). Some outdated parts have been removed and lots of new info added.

OSDE is not answering the questions that are asking for speculation. It will continue to think about student needs and how to "find a way." It will be looking and fighting for ways to stretch \$, has applied for grants and is trying to leverage funds for districts to make SDE CARES Act funds go further. OSDE personnel will continue to be available on Wednesdays for these calls even if they don't have all answers. Superintendent Hofmeister thanked everyone for what they were doing and for reaching out to OSDE and bringing questions. Thank you for honoring students graduating. Look for good news regarding the reduction in the need for remediation as students move to post-secondary. OSDE is putting out a news release about this today. Dropping remediation need is a great testament to school efforts.

Wednesday, May 6, 2020

#### Updates

- There are currently 4,201 positive cases, 253 total deaths and 230 people currently hospitalized. Two weeks ago, there were 2,800 positive cases, 164 total deaths and 292 people hospitalized.
- Regarding high school graduation ceremonies, OSDE's guidance remains the same as expressed during the 4/29/20 call. For specific information, refer to formal guidance from the State Department of Health, the Governor's Open Up and Recover Safely (OURS) Plan, CDC guidance, and OSDE's FAQs, plus guidance from other organizations. Don't allow in-person graduation events on school property until Phase 2 of the OURS Plan, which begins, conditionally, on May 15. Strongly encourage in-person graduation on school property only after June 1, when Phase 3 of the OURS Plan begins, conditionally. If a district plans an in-person graduation event on school property between May 15 and June 1, the district must have appropriate social distancing in place, with everyone in attendance at least six feet apart, not share microphones and limit student guests, because Phase 2 permits groups of no more than 50 people. Think about all aspects of graduation ceremonies and how the virus might be spread. There are many creative things happening in schools. OSDE understands that each district has unique issues to deal with.
- Regarding uniform start dates for the 2020-21 school year, there have been lots of conversations about this possibility statewide. Many districts are already making changes to their 2020-21 school calendars and developing alternate calendars. There is NO consensus on a uniform start date for Oklahoma schools. Let this issue go. It isn't something to worry about. Think instead about the possible need for intermittent quarantining throughout the 2020-21 school year. Oklahoma districts are unlikely to need a statewide shutdown next year. OSDE will be following the science and data on COVID-19. It's also working on guidelines and a planning framework (Framework) that identifies things to consider in a number of areas for planning purposes, rather than imposing state requirements.
- Regarding OSDE's end-of-year distance learning survey, OSDE needs to learn from districts and needs their input. This will help OSDE decide how to invest \$. Send just one response per district. The survey was resent to districts today, and the survey link is in the administrators' newsletter sent yesterday. Responses are due by 9:00 p.m. tonight. OSDE has about 300-350 completed surveys so far

#### Questions and Answers

- How does OSDE plan to count virtual and blended instruction days for the 2020-21 school year? OSDE will be specific about this in written guidance. Here, speaking generally, virtual, blended and regular in-person instructional days should all count the

same. At least one district is talking about having one virtual day per week or every so often to keep its students accustomed to this system of instruction, and that's an option for districts.

- What's new about CARES Act \$, LEA applications and when LEAs will receive those applications? The application form is being tested today. Production is anticipated on Thursday and release on Friday.
- Is CARES Act funding the only \$ districts will receive through the Title I formula? No, there's more available from several sources. Districts will receive a portion of the funds going through the state. Another source of funding is the GEER fund through the Governor's Office. Another source through the CARES Act was mentioned for reimbursing expenses students couldn't use that had to be paid back. These funds must be drawn down or spent by December 31, 2020. OSDE doesn't have the go ahead yet to tell districts about this potential sources. OSDE needs to check on this first before providing more info to districts to make sure it understands how this works.
- When can 12-month school employees and teachers be asked to come back into school buildings? Also, can school building be opened for summer programs on June 1? Yes, that is the date the Governor is looking at for (conditional) openings according to Phase 3 of the OURS Plan, and it seems reasonable. Nevertheless, districts must follow all CDC guidance protocols for safety even during Phase 3. We are currently in OURS Plan Phase 1 (schools are closed), and Phase 2 will follow on May 15, dependent on certain conditions being met.
- Will OSDE issue written guidance on graduation ceremonies? For traditional graduation ceremonies, scheduling depends on what OURS Plan phase we're in and the size of the gathering. It's not a smart idea to bring lots of people together even outside until after June 1. Also, make every possible safety provision you can even when there's an "all clear." Make plans for virtual graduation ceremonies in May and plan for in-person in June. Some smaller districts are making plans for in-person ceremonies in May outside with people being separated on a big field and parents in cars. OSDE doesn't plan to issue more written guidance about this. If you want to talk through graduation issues, contact your RAO.
- What is happening with unemployment claims and fraudulent claims? The fraudulent unemployment claims often seem to be submitted using an old address. This happened to Superintendent Hofmeister and is happening across the state and country. This fraud isn't just targeting school personnel. If this happens to you, send the info to the Oklahoma Attorney General and register the fraud with the Oklahoma Employment Security Commission at [fraud@oesc.state.ok.us](mailto:fraud@oesc.state.ok.us).
- Is there a line item for textbooks in the OSDE budget for this year and will there be flexibility as to how the funds can be spent? Yes and yes. Districts can submit an

application for flexibility to SBE. Such flexibility hasn't been uniformly granted. Districts should access the established process, and their applications will be considered on an individual basis.

- What is the state education funding outlook? The proposed percentage cut to the state funding formula for the 2020-21 fiscal year is 4.6%. The budget bill must still be heard in the House, which is expected to happen tomorrow.
- For teacher emergency certification, does the teacher apply or the superintendent? The District makes the request to OSDE's Teacher Certification Section. Around Memorial Day, Teacher Certification will start accepting applications for next year.
- Are there sources of funds to help parents afford devices or internet access? It's OSDE's priority to provide this. OSDE wants federal relief funds to go to provide this at students' homes. OSDE is involved in creative conversations about a potential pilot program. It will also be pursuing a federal Reimagining School grant for connectivity. An association of telecomm companies is providing ideas about community access, like providing access to a whole apartment complex rather than lines to individual apartments. This same concept could be applicable to a neighborhood, too. OSDE is also aware of Data Casting technology that hasn't been used here. OETA is working with groups in South Carolina to see how they're using PBS towers to get learning content to homes without internet access. This issue is as important to Superintendent Hofmeister as having electricity and running water. OSDE is prioritizing this issue in spending and collaboration.
- Should school districts expect additional \$ cuts next spring? If referring to this spring, no. If referring to the future, there could be sectors that are under collecting. The House and Senate Appropriation Chairs seem optimistic about next year. But many school people are also good at predicting. So, brace yourselves for two rocky years. There are no answers, just speculation.
- What does school reopening look like for fall? If things look like they do now, plan for reopening. But we don't know what will happen when people are mixing. The state will have more data by July. OSDE's expected Framework will include items about what to do now, before school opens, when traditional school opens and when something happens. A variety of association partners and stakeholders are helping with the Framework process, which should be ready in mid to late May. It may help districts to build multiple calendars. When thinking about a start date, keep in mind that some schools may need to close for a week or more during the school year. That closing cushion might be provided if a district decides to build into its school calendar a start date that's a little earlier than in the past. Also, think about lost learning and how to close gaps. Don't think many students will be able to close that gap in just one semester. The loss could continue for a year or more.

- What does OSDE recommend about the transportation of students? OSDE is seeking guidance about this, and the issue will be included in the Framework. Public education is meeting public health and talking with state epidemiologists to make sure they have well thought-through plans and examples. The Framework will cover how to keep kids safe on buses. Also, schools may need to change the way they have kids in the cafeteria. Students may need to have breakfast and lunch in their classroom. There are things we can do to minimize the risk of transmission to students.
- Will the CARES Act cover the funding cuts in the state's budget? No, it's not allowed to be a "backfill." Districts will use their CARES Act funds in the way that makes sense in their community during this virus. OSDE will be going after as many grants as it can and will try to have a more coordinated effort. Why should individual districts try to negotiate deals with vendors when the state could maybe make a better deal?
- Is state testing expected in spring 2021? Yes, expect it to resume. Didn't have it this year due to the federal waiver. We'll have testing in 2021 unless there's another federal waiver. Expect every state to see a decline in achievement and work to lessen that loss.
- Is there any update on ESY and can it occur in a virtual format? Yes, ESY can be provided in a virtual format and, as we move forward, districts can consider other formats, and service delivery could change.
- Will spring 2021 testing establish a new baseline? OSDE is working with others and will provide a fair, valid and reliable decision made by a full team of technical experts. OSDE will lean on their advice.
- When instruction resumes in person, schools may decide not to mix classes and instead try to keep classes separate. Teachers may move from room to room instead of students.
- Are there any directives yet about how to complete the driving with an instructor part of summer driver's ed courses? No, nothing has been released yet. The rest of the coursework can be completed virtually.
- Does OSDE expect sports to resume in fall? OSSAA and schools will decide this. OSDE wants to know, but it doesn't decide. Expect specific guidance to be coming out pretty soon. OSDE understands that districts are under pressure for this, but be careful in making decisions. COVID-19 isn't just about hospitalizations and death rates. People who get sick and survive can have a long-lasting impact. We would hate to see more suffering than necessary. Expect to see creative thinking about getting sports back, but expect guidance about how to address health and safety concerns first. The state will have contact tracing in the future and will be able to find out what event caused an outbreak. Would be devastating to find out that a district sports event caused such an outcome.

- Can districts provide RSA academies in a virtual format? Yes, these are local determinations. OSDE is looking at the required duration for these academies, too.
- School and district leaders are also community leaders. Establish a tailored approach for your school and district. Feel free to run your ideas past OSDE.
- OSDE understands that you want to provide accurate information to your community. You don't want to have to claw back information provided to parents and patrons. So OSDE understands that you really depend on guidance. OSDE is working collaboratively with others on the Framework and guidance, including those at a national level, stakeholders and state epidemiologists. Expect there to be a decision tree to help districts have a more uniform approach to situations, with answers that are tailored based on what is happening in that community.

#### Closing Remarks

- Take time for some self care. Your school, district and community need you refreshed, clear-headed and clear-eyed, so you can feel like you're part of this big effort to solve problems. Celebrate with your graduates. Tell your community we're planning to respond appropriately to different scenarios. Superintendent Hofmeister expressed gratitude for each school and district leader. OSDE is looking for ways to support you financially as you support others.