

Dear Bethel Families,

With the first day of school just around the corner, excitement about the upcoming school year continues to grow! We are eager to see all of our students and families and are working to make all of the necessary preparations for the 2021-2022 school year.



I'm reaching out today with health and safety information for the 2021-2022 school year. But before launching into the specifics, I would like to acknowledge the collective and individual challenges we have faced in recent months and take a moment to recognize that the anticipation of this school year may prompt feelings of anxiety and stress, along with excitement.

Regardless of whether you're feeling anxious, excited, or a mix of both - we are here to support you and your family. Our ability to support our students and their families, make strong connections with our school community, and ensure that our students are learning has not changed despite all of the shifts the last year has brought to our community. We know that together, we can do this, and that the lessons we have learned about ourselves and our students in recent months have helped to prepare us for a successful school year.

The Bethel school community is strong, resilient and knows how to take care of one another. With the following procedures in place, I am confident that we will be able to provide safe and healthy learning environments where students can continue to grow and thrive. We've got this, Bethel.

## **Health and safety updates**

A number of COVID-19-related updates were issued by state and local agencies over the summer. In an effort to get families the most up-to-date information, we're sharing an overview of health and safety protocols that will be in place this school year.

As we all experienced last year, these protocols are frequently updated based on the latest data about COVID-19. The protocols below are accurate as of today, but could change depending on further guidance from the Oregon Department of Education or the Oregon Health Authority. If you would like further specifics from the state, please review the [Ready Schools Safe Learner Resiliency Framework](#) for additional clarification.

## **In-person learning, five days a week**

We are thrilled to be welcoming students and staff back to buildings for full-time learning, for the 2021-2022 school year, as recommended by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE).

## **Focus on care + connection**

For the first two weeks of the school year, the Bethel School District will focus specifically on creating spaces where children feel safe, cared for and connected to the learning environment. We will focus our collective efforts on building relationships and community and creating welcoming spaces for everyone. Mental health is a cornerstone of good education and we believe that taking this time to connect with one another and make meaning of the last year will help us to set the foundation for the year ahead.

Care and connection events will look different at each school, but staff across the district will be united in their goal to connect with each student and help them feel welcome and cared for.

## **Layered safety precautions**

Right now, the best tools to protect individuals from COVID-19 are vaccination for those eligible, physical distancing, face coverings, adequate ventilation and airflow, hand hygiene, and staying home when ill or exposed to COVID-19. Multiple layers of health and safety precautions will be in place in all Bethel schools and buildings for the 2021-22 school year.

## **Masks**

In accordance with requirements from Governor Brown, all students and staff are required to wear facial coverings indoors, regardless of vaccination status (Oregon [mask mandate](#)). Beginning Friday, August 27th, masks became required in most public outdoor settings when physical distancing is not possible ([Oregon mask mandate](#)). During the school day, masks are not required during outdoor recess or when a classroom is meeting outdoors. However, physical distancing is still highly recommended when possible in all school environments. [CDC Guidance on Masks](#)

In addition to the [statewide mask mandate issued by Governor Kate Brown](#), Lane County Public Health (LCPH) issued an Emergency order Tuesday, Aug. 24 that strongly encourages wearing a mask outdoors when six feet of distance cannot be maintained. Read the guidance here: [bit.ly/3B71NsY](https://bit.ly/3B71NsY)

## Masks and sports (from OSAA)

### Students

- Students are not required to wear a mask indoors or outdoors when practicing or playing a competitive sport at any level.
- Students not actively participating (i.e. on the sideline during an indoor or outdoor competition, etc.) are required to wear a mask. Students are required to wear a mask when in the weight room.
- Students will not be required to wear a mask when **actively participating** in outdoor sports. Students who are not actively participating must wear a mask at school-related events when they are not able to physically distance from others, regardless of vaccination status.

### Coaches, support staff and contest officials

- Regardless of vaccination status, coaches, officials and spectators are required to wear a mask during indoor practices or competitions. This includes weight training regardless of location. Coaches and support staff, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear a mask during outdoor practices and competitions when six feet of physical distance cannot be maintained.

### Spectators

- Spectators (5 years and older) are required to wear a mask at indoor practices and competitions, regardless of vaccination status. Spectators (5 years or older) are also required to wear a mask at outdoor practices and competitions when six feet of physical distance cannot be maintained, regardless of vaccination status. This includes the football stadium and other spaces where spectators gather. This is part of a [statewide mask mandate](#).

## Masks and other school activities

- Students are not required to wear a mask indoors when playing an instrument that requires the mouth. Choir students are required to wear a mask during indoor practices, but are exempt from this requirement for performances.
- Capacity limits are not required for indoor events, but increased physical distancing and ventilation can help limit the spread of COVID-19, especially when case counts are high in the community.

### Physical distancing

OHA and ODE strongly advise that schools support and promote physical distancing in all daily activities and instruction, maintaining at least 3 feet between students to the extent possible. Physical distancing for students and staff will be maintained to the extent possible inside all Bethel schools.

### Handwashing, disinfecting, and sanitizing

Bethel will continue to disinfect high-touch surfaces, promote frequent hand-washing and hand sanitizing and provide regular access to soap, water, and alcohol-based sanitizer. School leaders will continue to prioritize and encourage hand washing throughout the day as appropriate.

## **Ventilation**

All heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems continue to maximize outside air circulation in schools and buildings. Air filters are maintained and replaced, as necessary, to ensure the proper function of HVAC systems. In general, HVAC systems are regularly cleaned, maintained and cleared of any debris to ensure proper functioning and performance.

## **Positive cases, exposures and quarantine**

The Bethel nurse team is working diligently to identify and perform contact tracing in collaboration with LCPH during this time of greatly increased COVID-19 cases in Lane County.

## **Vaccination**

Vaccination remains the safest and most effective way to prevent serious illness from COVID-19 and all of its variants (OHA). All K-12 school district employees, substitutes, and volunteers are required to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by October 18, 2021. [This statewide K-12 mandate announced by Governor Kate Brown](#) will allow Bethel to help reduce the spread of COVID-19, adding another layer of mitigation for our younger students who have not yet had the opportunity to become vaccinated.

The Bethel Health Center and Lane County Public Health are offering a number of vaccination opportunities across the district, including a clinic from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. every Thursday at Cascade Middle School. All vaccination opportunities are free! Learn more here: [Lane County Vaccine Clinics](#).

## **Staying home when sick**

Staff and students are expected to stay home when they are sick. Families will continue to screen their students prior to every school day and keep them home if they are exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. [CDC: What to do when you are sick](#)

## **Visitors in schools**

At this time, outside visitors and volunteers will not be allowed to visit classrooms or common spaces in schools. However, parents/guardians can enter school offices to pick-up students or conduct necessary business.