Returning To School Talking Points: Staff and Board Members

Part I:

- As an educator I'm so very happy and proud of LCSD7 and the ability to start school face to face.
- Everyone has worked so very hard to make sure that everyone is safe, and that all COVID-19 safety protocols and procedures are followed and enforced.
- School will look different but we are ready to provide a safe and quality education on all levels.
- Our classrooms look different and we need everyone to wear a mask and keep (social) physical distancing. I wear the mask for our students, to keep them safe.
- Stress that we will make this work and that we will be making adjustment almost every day, so please ask parents to check the website, listen to the school messenger and check the Facebook pages daily, especially these next couple of weeks.
- It is important that every student stay in their assigned Cohort throughout the day, wear their mask at all times, keep social distancing, and wash their hands.
- We are Lake County Strong. We are LCSD7 strong and by cooperating and working together we will make sure that our students will have a successful school year despite all the various challenges that we will continue to face this year.

VARIOUS RESOURCES: Part II

What is Cohorting?

Cohorting (sometimes called podding) is a new term for a strategy that schools may use to limit contact between students and staff as part of their efforts to limit transmission of SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19). These strategies work by keeping groups of students – and sometimes staff – together over the course of a pre-determined period of time. Ideally, the students and staff within a cohort will only have physical proximity with others in the same cohort. This practice may help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by limiting cross-over of students and teachers to the extent possible, thus:

- Decreasing opportunities for exposure or transmission of SARS-CoV-2
- Reducing contact with shared surfaces
- Facilitating more efficient contact tracing in the event of a positive case
- Allowing for targeted testing, quarantine, and/or isolation of a single cohort instead of school-wide measures in the event of a positive case or cluster of cases

Cohorting strategies are common practice in many elementary schools across the United States. Many elementary school students have the same teacher and classmates during the entire school year. Implementation of this strategy varies, depending on setting and resources. For example:

- Schools may keep cohorts together in one classroom, and have teachers rotate between rooms.
- Schools may alternate cohorts by days or weeks, with cohorts assigned to specific days or weeks.
- Schools may adopt a hybrid approach, with some cohorts assigned to in-person learning and others assigned to online learning.

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How is cohorting different from class size? Are there maximum or minimum cohort sizes that might help reduce SARS-CoV-2 transmission?

To date, there is no published scientific study on optimal maximum or minimum cohort sizes in reducing SARS-CoV-2 transmission among school-aged children in a camp or school setting in the United States. However, CDC modeling demonstrates that smaller cohort sizes are generally associated with less transmission in schools. Smaller cohorts means more limited contacts, but there is no specific threshold for optimal size. Even with smaller groups, cohorts may not be truly independent of one another. Families may have children of different ages (i.e., siblings) who act as connections between cohorts within a school. Teachers, especially with specialized expertise, may also connect multiple cohorts within a school because their expertise is used/needed across cohorts. Use of masks and distancing when possible are particularly important when teachers are moving amongst groups of students.

Cohorting may be implemented as one of a variety of mitigation strategies that schools can use to help minimize SARS-CoV-2 transmission. It is important that schools balance community transmission risk, various mitigation strategies (e.g., limiting class sizes, use of masks, proper hygiene, school cleaning), and students' educational and emotional needs when developing plans for reopening.

What can school staff do to protect themselves and others from getting sick with COVID-19?

School staff can take everyday preventive actions to protect themselves and others from getting sick with COVID-19:

- Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol**.** Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or inside of elbow, throwing the tissue away, and then washing hands.
- Avoiding touching one's eyes, nose, mouth, and mask.
- Maintaining distance of at least 6 feet from other adults, and from students when feasible.
- Wearing a mask especially when other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, including tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- Staying home when sick, or after being in close contact with a person with COVID-19.
- Limiting use of shared objects (e.g., gym or physical education equipment, art supplies, games) when possible, and cleaning and disinfecting these objects frequently.

How can students ride the school bus safely?

School systems can implement a number of strategies to reduce the risk of transmission on buses:

- Drivers should practice all safety actions and protocols as indicated above for other school staff (e.g., hand hygiene, masks). Similar to frequently touched surfaces, buses should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily using EPA-approved disinfectantsexternal icon.
- Drivers can create distance between children on school buses, including seating children one student per row facing forward and skipping rows between students. However, students who live in the same household may sit together if needed. Schools may consider alternative strategies to accommodate the reduced number of students in buses, such as staggered pick up and drop off times or additional bus routes.
- Schools should consider having spare, clean masks available to ensure all students wear masks on the school bus.
- Drivers can open bus windows to increase circulation of outdoor air, but should ensure that doing so does not pose a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling).
- During dismissal, schools may provide physical guides, such as signs and tape on the sidewalk, to ensure that students and school staff remain at least 6 feet apart while waiting for transportation.
- We have two daily bus routes in LCSD7 and we have separated the elementary and high school students from each other as much as possible.

At what point should schools close for in-person learning?

The decision to close schools for in-person learning should be made together by local officials – including school administrators and public health officials — in a manner that is transparent for students, staff, parents, caregivers and guardians, and all community members.

The decision to close schools for in-person learning will take into account a number of factors, such as:

- the importance of in-person education to the social, emotional, and academic growth and well-being of students;
- the level of community transmission;
- whether cases have been identified among students and staff;
- other indicators that local public health officials are using to assess the status of COVID-19 in their area; and
- whether student and staff cohorts have been implemented within the school, which would allow for the quarantining of affected cohorts rather than full school closure.

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Part III

LCSD7 will strive to do the following to support our students and staff:

Discipline in Schools:

■ Acknowledge students have had inconsistent behavior and academic expectations for the previous several months. Expectations and appropriate behavior should be explicitly and regularly retaught.

■ Focus on positive and effective discipline practices within a multitiered system of supports.

■ View behaviors through a trauma-informed lens and as a potential symptom of deficits in regulatory skills and a prolonged adjustment period.

■ Implement culturally responsive, restorative practices.

■ Avoid punitive discipline such as suspension or expulsion that forces the student to leave the school environment, except for the most severe cases that put other students or staff in danger.

■ Anticipate student defiance or resistance as a method of establishing control. Many students may feel disempowered, victimized, abandoned or resentful. Others will have lost trust and faith in the school's ability to care for and protect them or may experience emotional numbing. Adults working with these students should develop ways to empower students and provide unconditional positive support to build trust.

The Bottom Line for LCSD7 is that we all must take **extra time for relationship building**.

Addressing Staff Needs:

■ Recognize staff may have:

● Potentially experienced their own loss or stress (financial, personal, social, physical/medical)

● Seen negative comments about the school's response or feedback from families

● Not been able to say goodbye to certain students or staff members who aren't returning to the school
■ Establish systemwide approaches to address secondary traumatic stress and compassion fatigue (e.g., tap in, tap out; buddy classrooms; boundary setting; self-care in the background).

■ Self-care should become part of the school culture rather than be the entire responsibility of each individual staff member.

■ Identify community resources available to support school staff.

■ Increase communication efforts to ensure school staff are aware of the district's employee wellness benefits (e.g., employee assistance programs, mental health and wellness insurance coverage, FMLA).

■ Work with human resources to determine procedures for taking sick leave due to COVID-19 concerns with themselves and/or their family. RELATED RESOURCES: Coping With the COVID-19 Crisis: The Importance of Care for Caregivers Resources to Promote Self-Care Support for Teachers Affected by Trauma (STAT) Tips for self-care

Access to School-Employed Mental Health Professionals and School Nurses:

The need for access to school-employed mental health professionals (e.g., school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers) and school nurses has never been higher. SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS SHOULD:

■ Ensure at minimum a maintenance of existing positions, and aspire to national recommendations

● School psychologists: 1:500 students

● School counselors: 1:250

● School social workers: 1:250

● School nurses: 1:750*

■ Connect with community providers as needed to address gaps

■ Consider ways to increase accessibility virtually by posting information on the website and creating pathways for families and students to connect as needed

*Note: This ratio is recommended when the student population is healthy. Districts heavily affected by COVID-19 may want to consider a much lower ratio of school nurses to students. RELATED RESOURCES: Role of the School Counselor Role of the School Psychologist Role of the School Social Worker School nurses workload: Staffing for Safe Care

Part IV

HEALTH PRACTICES AND PROTOCOLS

Age and stakeholder appropriate practices and protocols have been developed in partnership with the lake County Health Department, our medical advisor, and in accordance with all CDC and OHA recommendations.

- Teachers will engage in instructing students in these protocols and practicing these routines.
- Set aside time at the beginning of the school year, as well as frequent reminders, to review and assess, and reeducate if deficient and assess again at least once a month (duration will depend on age group) the new policies and protocols with all staff and students.
- Communications plan includes signage, webinars for families, staff, and students, making resources available, and allotting practice time for staff and students.
- All supplies meet the CDC and the Oregon Health Department guidelines. School and offices have been stocked and reserves are currently being built.
- Protocol for a single point of contact.
- Communication to families about a child that may have symptoms consistent to Covid-19.
- Students or staff should stay home if he or she is feeling sick or has recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 (14 days).
- Staff and students who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor their health (14 days)
- Staff and students who have tested positive can return to school when released by the Lake County Health Authority.
- CDC's criteria can help inform when employees should return to work:
    - If they have been sick with COVID-19
    - If they have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19

Social Distancing (Physical Distancing)

- Classrooms have been engineered to maintain the appropriate social distancing between desks. Signage helps to maintain appropriate social distancing in all areas.
- School operations, such as transitions, arrival, dismissal, and drills have been modified to maximize distancing between groups.

Use of Face Coverings, Masks, and Face Shields

- **LCSD7 Face Mask Protocol is that everyone must wear a mask while in school**
- LCSD7 has additional masks on hand for students and staff to ensure that everyone in our schools, buses, and sites are abiding by the face mask protocol.
- Additional masks are on hand on buses and at school entrances, additional PPE available at all school building offices.

HEALTH MONITORING PLAN

For individuals who present signs of Covid-19 or may have been exposed to a person that is Covid-19 positive:

- Staff and students will be instructed to stay home, per CDC guidelines, if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 symptoms for 10 days.
- Staff and students who have recently had close contact with a person with COVID-19 should also stay home and monitor their health for 14 days
- Staff and students that tested positive can return to school when:
    - He or she has remained in quarantine for 10 days; he or she continues to have no fever for 24 hours, and after presenting a signed note from a medical provider clearing them to return to work/school.

CONTAINMENT PLAN

Exposure Tracing, Isolation, Dismissal

- If staff or a student is ill with symptoms related to COVID-19, the School Nurse Protocol will be activated.
- Staff or students who present symptoms consistent with Covid-19 will be sent home.
- A Case Report form will be completed for every student who has a laboratory confirmed positive COVID-19 test (form provided by the Lake County Health Department). Upon completion, this form will be sent to Lake County Health Department to begin contact tracing.
- Any student or staff who appears to have symptoms that possibly could be COVID-19 will be instructed to contact their primary medical doctor for evaluation.

CANCELLATION OF CLASSES, REMOTE LEARNING & REOPENING PLAN

During a period of minimal or moderate community spread of COVID-19, if there is a positive case within a school, staff and students may be dismissed for two days to allow time for the officials to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting the school and for custodial staff to clean and disinfect the affected facility.

- The Superintendent will make the decision to close in consultation with the Medical Advisor and the Director of the Lake County Health Department.
- This determination will be on a case by case basis.

Part V:

Additional District Needs:

The LCSD7 anticipates that additional costs will be incurred in a variety of areas, including the following:

- Additional teaching and paraprofessional staff may be required in order to reduce classroom density necessary to maintain appropriate social distancing;
- Extra bus drivers have been hired to meet the needs of the extra route requirements. Drivers will ensure that students wear their masks while on school buses;
- Additional nursing support staff is needed to monitor isolation rooms, conduct health assessments, and manage health protocols within LCSD7 school buildings; We have hired a school nurse and she will start sometime in mid-October.
- Additional classroom space may be required in order to reduce density and maintain appropriate social distancing, and to house our afterschool daycare program.
- Additional classroom materials will be needed in order to avoid materials sharing among students (classroom books, art materials, science materials, etc.)
- Additional technology, including technology staffing, hardware, software, licensing, video conferencing, internet access and extra hot spots.
- Enhanced building cleaning and sanitizing will be necessary, resulting in increased staff costs, contracted services costs, and material/supply costs. We are in the process of hiring a new LCSD7 custodian.
- Extensive Personal Protective Equipment, including masks, gloves, gowns, face shields, and plexiglass shields and partitions will be necessary to have on-hand.
- School furniture has been replaced, where classrooms rely upon multi-person tables, rather than individual desks. Temporary partitions will be necessary so that larger spaces, such as gymnasiums, auditoriums, and cafeterias can be converted to temporary classroom space. Our staff has made most of these barriers/partitions.
- Touchless thermometers devices will be in place soon at each major LCSD7 building entrances.
- Hand sanitizing dispensers and sanitizing produce for each classroom will be needed;
- Additional social and emotional support will be needed for students in the current environment, necessitating the need for more social workers and counselors. (This is an ongoing process).
- Additional Specialized Learning staff will be needed to cover services in a manner consistent with reduced cohorts and groupings. Each building has an assigned building compliance officer(s).