

# ECHO SCHOOL DISTRICT

**EFFORT. COMMITMENT. HONOR. OWNERSHIP.**

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Dear Parents,

First I would like to acknowledge how much we appreciate your understanding and patience as we have navigated through the ever changing landscape of the COVID -19 pandemic. At times it has felt as though things have changed daily, even hourly at certain points. We know the stress and difficulty this has put on parents, families, students, and extended families. The staff of Echo School District wants nothing more than to have your kids back in school. Our staff has been excitedly working on the logistics to have students return to school in the hybrid model for the last few weeks. However, after over 7 hours of meetings with different members of the Oregon Department of Education the last few days, we are going to have to delay the start of in-person instruction for at least two weeks.

We know that this is not the news that many of you are happy to hear; we are not happy to have to give it. When the governor announced on December 23<sup>rd</sup> that all mandatory guidance, on the return of face-to-face instruction, was now advisory and local districts had the control to return to school if they chose, a very important piece of information was overlooked. That issue is the lack of liability coverage, relative to communicable diseases (COVID 19), in how the language was developed. Without the state providing this coverage, it would leave the school district in danger of our ability to provide quality education to all students in Echo for years to come. The staff, administration, community, and school board of Echo have worked very hard to build a quality, sustainable educational system that can weather the storms of economic downturns and changes in the needs of students. If we advance with face-to-face instruction without this coverage, provided by the state legislature, it would put all that past hard work and planning along with the future of our district in danger.

Oregon School Board Association (OSBA), Oregon Department of Education (ODE), and Coalition of Oregon School Administrators (COSA) are working very hard right now to fix this issue and believe they will have it resolved in the next few weeks. While our schedule is on hold, our planning and preparation will continue. If nothing else, this “hold” will allow us additional time to insure that we are returning students safely to in person instruction. Our staff will continue to communicate our plans for the return of students, answer questions/concerns from parents, and prepare the building and staff for such return. In the mean time we will continue to run our daily schedule as has been conducted for the past few weeks of instruction.

Thank you, for your support and understanding during these difficult times. Please let us know if you need any support during this transitional period.