

Governor Kate Brown Announces Statewide School Closure for Students in Oregon from Monday, March 16 through Tuesday, March 31

(Salem, OR) — In consideration of staffing challenges and health concerns due to the public health threat of coronavirus, Governor Kate Brown today announced a statewide closure of Oregon K-12 schools from Monday, March 16 through Tuesday, March 31.

"Schools are critical institutions that provide important services for all our students, but especially our most vulnerable, and during this crisis I have worked hard to ensure those critical services continue. So many of our families depend on school in order for parents to go to their jobs, and for students to access health care and receive nutrition assistance," said Governor Brown.

"However, I have heard from superintendents, school board members, teachers, parents, and students that it has now become impossible to functionally operate schools due to workforce issues and student absences. Schools are experiencing critical shortages in staff, and superintendents are concerned for school personnel who are at elevated risk such as those over age 60 and those with underlying medical issues.

"I want to be very clear: sending Oregon children home will not stop the spread of the coronavirus. While children are home, when at all possible, they should not be in the care of older adults or those with underlying health issues that are most at-risk from COVID-19.

"This is a trying time for our community and I am reluctant to increase the burden on families who are already struggling to adapt to and stay healthy during this crisis. However, we are left with little choice in light of school districts' staff capacity and operational concerns. I want to thank all of the teachers and school employees who have worked hard to keep our schools open until now."

Per the Governor's directives and with the support of the Oregon Department of Education and the state's Early Learning Division, during the closure:

- School districts are directed to develop plans for returning to school that accommodate ongoing impacts of coronavirus. Staff should utilize the final two days of March to finalize plans for operating schools under updated measures, with students expected to return on Wednesday, April 1.
- Districts are tasked with developing plans to continue nutrition services during the closure.
- The Oregon Department of Education will examine the impact the closure will have on instructional time.
- School districts will ensure adequate cleaning supplies for increased cleaning protocols following the closure.
- The Early Learning Division will support child care programs and will work to identify resources to support child care needs for our most vulnerable families, as well as health care professionals and first responders.

"We are in close communication with school districts across the state, and they will be communicating regularly with their school communities throughout the closure period," said Colt Gill, Director of the Oregon Department of Education. "Due to the evolving nature of this crisis, these timelines will be reevaluated in late March in consultation with school administrators."

Governor Brown will be available to answer questions in a teleconference tomorrow, March 13, at 11:00 am with state agency directors and superintendents. A teleconference number will be provided in a morning advisory.

Members of the media who plan to call in or need additional information should contact Kate Kondayen at [Kate Kondayen](mailto:Kate.Kondayen@ode.or.gov) or 503-689-0248.