



January 13, 2021

To the Bethel and 4J School Boards and Superintendents Chris Parra and Cydney Vandercar,

We, the members of Eugene Education Association write to you to make clear our position on returning to in-person learning. We are individual educators, many of us are parents and grandparents, we are members of families, members of this community, and we are the teachers, counselors, coaches, nurses, and specialists supporting the learning of students in Bethel and 4J. We stand together as a union for the educational well-being and safety of our students as well as the safety of each other.

We want our students back in our classrooms. We are witnessing firsthand the challenges our students face with online learning and the struggles their families are experiencing through the COVID-19 pandemic. We see the disparate impacts of the virus on our communities of color. We know that in-person interaction with teachers and peers is the best way for our students to learn, but learning can only occur when students and educators feel physically and emotionally safe. We are working with determination and dedication to create learning opportunities and to connect with students through distance learning - because it is currently the only safe way for school to continue.

Students and educators deserve to be safe at school. We call on the Bethel and 4J school districts to remain in Comprehensive Distance Learning until the following safety conditions are met:

- Both doses of vaccinations are readily available to educators, including all staff in schools, and time allowed for these vaccines to become fully effective
- Lane County health metrics are at the levels currently set for a hybrid of onsite/distance learning (specifically a county case rate between 50 - 99 cases per 100,000 over 14 days and test positivity rate below 8%)
- Classroom conditions are safe (including class sizes and furniture to accommodate at least 6 square feet between each person, adequate PPE, proper ventilation, adequate nursing staff for every school, and sufficient custodial staff for cleaning protocols)

Until these conditions are met only staff who volunteer to be in-person with students should be expected to do so. And until vaccinations are available to the community at large, including students, districts should continue to provide the option of an online-only pathway for learning.

Educator voice is critical for successfully bringing our students back into our classrooms. We must be part of designing trauma-informed strategies for re-engagement into school, including social and emotional learning, behavioral health support and community building activities. The schedule, class configurations and curricular focus need to be created

with the educators who will live this experience with students. Our plan must also allow educators the capacity to continue putting energy and attention into distance learning, both for the hybrid students who will spend at least half their learning time online and for the students who choose to remain in CDL - many of whom may have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19.

The morale of educators has suffered tremendously under the anxiety created by the pandemic. Meeting the safety conditions outlined above and providing meaningful opportunities for educators to co-create the path back to a new and improved “normal” will not only have a positive impact on staff morale, but will also ensure that our Districts retain the highly qualified educators who have built positive and impactful relationships with students throughout this stressful time.

We are proud to be part of the Bethel and 4J communities, and we stand ready to join efforts in both districts that put the safety of students and staff first. We look forward to continuing this work with you in the best interests of our students, educators, and the Eugene community.

Respectfully and In Solidarity,

Sabrina Gordon, Eugene Education Association President

Curt Nordling, Eugene Education Association Vice President - Bethel

Imelda Cortez, Eugene Education Association Vice President - 4J

And the following 705 individual members of EEA (204 Bethel EEA members):