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ED300 COMMENTS ON READY SCHOOLS SAFE LEARNERS GUIDE

PORTLAND, Ore. ED300 has released its comments on the Ready Schools Safe Learners Discussion Guide dated May 26, 2021.

“Oregon families and children have sacrificed too much in our society’s confrontation with COVID and it is imperative that the State prioritize their social, educational, and physical needs going forward” said Rene Gonzalez, co-founder of ED300. “RSSL has been a major barrier to implementing a stable and holistic educational environment for Oregon’s children; come this Fall we are asking that the document have a light hand, prioritize the complete needs of children, and sunset automatically.”

ED300 Comments to ODE and OHA

We have reviewed the RSSL Discussion Guide released on May 26th, and we submit the below feedback. All changes to RSSL should reflect that the document exists to serve educational and emotional needs of students, not solely comfort of educators who have had availability of vaccination for months.

Fully Support:

1. 5 full days of in-person learning with pre-pandemic instructional hours/schedules restored.
2. Prevent districts from limiting extracurricular activities.
3. Distancing is a guideline where possible, not a mandate; priority is fully open schools in person.
4. Recognize disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Latino/a/x, and Pacific Islander communities; and on students experiencing disabilities and students living in rural areas.

Concerns:

1. Quarantine rules currently do not follow epidemiological evidence. RSSL should remove all cohort-related quarantine rules requiring groups of people to quarantine regardless of mitigating factors; vaccinated students and teachers do not need to quarantine even if exposed to Covid positive person; students and staff without symptoms and/or who test negative do not need to quarantine. Quarantine protocols (ten days post exposure) should be limited to students and staff who test positive for Covid.

2. ODE should continue to update mask guidance to match health guidance. As cases, hospitalizations and deaths are minimized and significant vaccination rates achieved, masks will soon be unnecessary for children, even those that are not yet vaccinated.

3. ODE's continued emphasis on "technology as a critical component of on-site instruction model". Hybrid and CDL have been academically, socially, and physically (eyesight, weight gain, etc.) harmful to students. In-person instruction should return to a pre-pandemic approach to technology.

4. School staff are not allowing children to access water. This is unhealthy and there are no data showing water fountains or water bottles can transmit Covid. Rules around eating and drinking should follow public health guidelines, not be made up by school safety committees who have no medical training.

5. Discontinue use of chemicals to clean student desks and work spaces, often performed by students at staff request. These practices are harmful to human microbiota and the environment, do not prevent Covid, and should be discontinued immediately.

General Comments:

1. Simplify the RSSL document significantly. The document is too long, leading to confusion and muddled implementation of guidelines.

2. RSSL must contain a sunset clause spelling out clearly when and how restrictions will be completely removed (e.g. less than 5 hospitalizations per total 100K of population would be an evidence based sunset metric).

About RSSL. Ready Schools Safe Learners is a nearly 90-page document originally produced by the Oregon Department of Education in coordination with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA). The document continues to impose significant distancing and quarantine requirements, originally established prior to broadly available COVID vaccines.

About ED300: ED 300 is a bipartisan advocacy group consisting of parents, medical professionals, educators, and sports associations, that has successfully lobbied for the reopening of schools and restarting of co-curricular activities. ED300 is advocating for the full reopening of schools and co-curricular activities and now has nearly 40,000 members, representing well over 100,000 Oregonians.

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