

Dear Educator--

During this time of profound uncertainty and anxiety, Portland educators, like most others across the country, are dealing with a total upheaval of our lives. Since the shutdown of schools, educators have been juggling the task of caring for their own families, supporting children and elders at home, while desperately trying to figure out how best to serve our students.

As we navigate this new terrain, we continue to advocate with district leadership in PPS that **the plan moving forward must center equity and students' emotional needs, and must be responsive to the needs and realities that students, families and educators are facing in this crisis.**

First and foremost, we must make sure that the path forward does not widen the inequities in our society that already put some of our students at a disadvantage.

In this global pandemic, lesson plans, taking grades, and aligning our “distance” curriculum must take a secondary role to the mental health and safety needs that many of our students are facing. No district should be requiring students to be graded on what they can learn independently in whatever living situation they find themselves, or students to follow a strict schedule that assumes unlimited access to technology.

Many of you have also voiced concerns about the significant challenges that educators face under our new circumstances. In addition to creating

a new model for connecting with students and supporting their learning, many teachers are caring for their own families, facing limitations with wifi and other technology, and navigating housing/space limitations.

Earlier this week, the Oregon Department of Education put out guidance for “Distance Learning for All.” While the ODE guidance makes frequent references to equity, and points out many of the barriers to educating our most vulnerable students, it offers few solutions. We know that many of our students do not have reliable wi-fi, a quiet place to work, or adults at home who are able to devote their time during this crisis to guiding them through virtual learning modules or suggested activities. It is imperative that as a public school system, while we offer learning opportunities to all, **we must focus our attention on reaching out to and supporting our students facing the greatest challenges. Their most pressing needs may not be academic.**

If you are concerned about the new guidelines, consider writing to Governor Kate Brown and Director of the Oregon Department of Education, Colt Gill.

Feel free to cc me, our Superintendent, and our state president.

To:

Colt Gill: colt.gill@state.or.us

Kate Brown’s chief of staff: nik.blosser@oregon.gov

CC:

PAT president: patpresident@oregoned.org

PPS Superintendent: gguerrero@pps.net

OEA President: john.larson@oregoned.org

We continue to work with PPS to make meaning of the state's guidance and will continue to share everything we know.

In the meantime, please remember that we are the professional educators. You know what your students and families need. Despite the cloud of uncertainty that surrounds us, trust your judgement on how to best work with your students given the tools and opportunities available.

Portland Association of Teachers

<http://www.pdxteachers.org/>

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