

August 6, 2020

Hello OWS Community,

As you all know, the Board of Trustees met last evening to discuss the 2020/21 School Year in light of County, State, and other restrictions due to COVID. We delayed our regularly scheduled monthly meeting a few days in pursuit of more guidance from the Governor and OSPI (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction) which we felt might aid us in making informed and well-rounded decisions regarding our community. We do not take these decisions lightly nor our responsibilities as community and board members lightly, and it is our standard practice to have as much information as we can before making any decision, especially one as far-reaching and impactful as deciding how and when to start the year.

Tonight the Board of Trustees voted in the following ways:

1. To follow the new recommendations for reopening schools set forth today by Governor Inslee and the State Superintendent Chris Reykdal (which can be found here: <https://medium.com/wagovernor/inslee-announces-education-recommendations-for-2020-2021-school-year-4d510fe16f4>).
2. To change our first day of school to Monday, August 31, 2020.

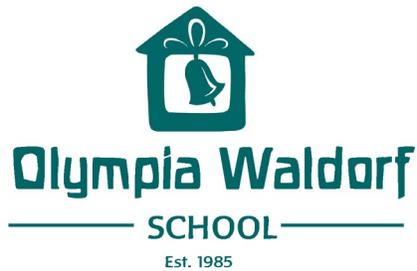
In following these guidelines, because Thurston County is a moderate risk county, this means we are able to open EC and Grades 1-5 in person, and open our Middle School in a hybrid model. In addition, as discussed in our all-school-meetings this summer, we will also be providing an online option for our students. In either “full day” or “by subject” live-streaming, students off-site will be able to interact and be part of the on-campus learning community. As you may recall, we set 8/31 as our modified start date if any online learning was required. Utilizing that date will give some time for staff and faculty to plan accordingly. We will be reaching out about those options in coming weeks.

Although this situation is fluid and can change, we are excited for the opportunity to at least start the year safely on campus. Throughout the summer we have been planning for in person learning, and have heard from you in community surveys, emails, and phone calls that in person is the preferred if we can open safely. We are happy to report that because of the hard work of our staff and faculty, by 8/31/20 we will have met all the required Department of Health regulations for opening the school in person as well as the new Governor / OSPI recommendations. This includes providing 6 feet of space between desks, having numerous outdoor spaces for learning, staggering recesses and games classes, and much more. As a small community of students we are in an ideal position to utilize the DOH guidelines and safely open. We are also in contact and will be continuing to meet with the Thurston County Health Department given the new re-opening recommendations of the Governor.

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You will continue to receive regular communications from the board or administrative staff with updates as we move towards our first day of school. We are closely monitoring every piece of new information available to us and are fully ready to adapt as needed. As has been said many times, our flexibility as a small community is a huge asset to us as we navigate this new reality.

I know this affects us all in different ways, but please understand that we believe we are making the best decision we possibly can given the information we have and the community we are a part of. Please reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns of any kind.

In service and on behalf of the Board of Trustees,

Bary Hanson
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