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RSD families:

The Redmond School District has made the difficult decision to delay our reopening plan for all students until the week of Feb. 22.

We know this is disappointing for many families. In the meantime, Limited In-Person Instruction will continue and schools will expand the number of students served in that program.

When we settled on our Feb. 2 date to return to in-person learning, we did so with the promise that we would keep an eye on local COVID-19 case counts not just in our county, but in Redmond and in our schools. Unfortunately, the numbers are not dropping like we'd hoped they would. After every other major social event this year, COVID cases have predictably risen and fallen, but that has not yet happened after the winter holidays.

From Dec. 20 to Jan. 2, 625 people countywide were positive for COVID-19. That has steadily increased -- between Jan. 3 and Jan. 16, there were 793 positive cases. That means 410.9 cases per 100,000 -- the state's advisory metrics encourage schools to remain in comprehensive distance learning if the county is above 350 cases per 100,000 people. Locally, the number of Redmond School District staff and students who are currently sick or in quarantine has also risen dramatically. With so many people sick or in quarantine, it would be difficult if not impossible to staff our schools and restart in-person learning. In addition, as we saw from the 31-person COVID-19 outbreak at St. Charles Redmond this week, the virus is still very active in our town.

There is good news. As you may know, our teachers and staff have begun to be vaccinated, and the vast majority of those who want the vaccine will get their first shot this weekend. By delaying the return of students to in-person learning until the week of Feb. 22, we can feel more comfortable knowing that staff and teachers have been fully vaccinated.

Many of our staff members are highly trained and will be difficult to replace if forced to quarantine. A start date after the second shot of the vaccine will create stable schools that are much less likely to have to periodically shut down due to cases of COVID-19. A fully vaccinated staff member will not have to quarantine if exposed to the virus.

We know how important it is to our students and the families we serve to bring our students back into our buildings. Many of our students are not doing well with distance learning and our goal is for students to succeed. But our top priority has to be the health and safety of our students and staff. This is a hard decision, but we believe it's the right one.

We look forward to welcoming our students back the week of Feb. 22, and we thank you for your continued patience as we navigate these extraordinary circumstances.

Charan Cline, Ed.D.
Superintendent