



Colton School District 53

Dave Kline, Interim Superintendent

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August 2021

Dear Colton Community and Parents,

I am excited to join this district where we can partner to make changes while hopeful to see more support for rural districts, like Colton, from our county.

The board of directors for Colton School District has asked me as the superintendent to submit letters to various County Commissioners, State and Federal politicians, as well as ODE's Superintendent, Colt Gill and the Governor of Oregon Kate Brown. Attached is the letter to the Governor's office and it is almost identical to the letters sent to all of these decision makers which expresses the desire for the district to request local control be returned to Colton and its local board and district superintendent.

I appreciate all of the perspectives on this mandate from the Governor. The board and I stand together in this matter to allow families to determine their path for their child's education. The challenge that our community faces is one where we need to support all perspectives, but that Colton should make decisions for the local community. Unfortunately, the OHA is deciding right now outcomes that are predicated from more of the county's metro population.

The last 17 months have had immense challenges, and Fredrick Douglas once said, 'if there is no struggle, there is no progress'. Colton plans for progress in order to see our students become successful

Go Vikings!

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August 13, 2021

Dear Governor Brown:

Thank you for all you are doing to advocate for what is in the best interest of students, staff and families in the State of Oregon in the area of public education.

The Colton School Board of Directors, along with myself, are writing to urge you to advocate for local control when it comes to decision making around masking requirements and school safety requirements. We believe that local decision making is in the best interest of students, staff, and our community if we want our students and school districts to succeed.

As you are well aware, you announced in late June that all future decisions around Covid-19 protocols would be made at local levels with the State providing recommendations for guidance. You later reversed this decision without taking into consideration local School District input of the ramifications, unintended consequences, and inequitable outcomes that will negatively impact the quality of education and success of the students, staff, and families in our schools.

It is with frustration that Colton School District would have to comply with your *Mask Mandate* of July 29 for Oregon Public Schools. The Oregon Department of Education (ODE) and Oregon Health Authority (OHA) are developing an Oregon Administrative Rule to require masks indoors for K-12 schools. Furthermore, the arbitrary rule to allow another agency to hold districts indefinitely under a state agency COVID protocol defies the local governing school board to effectively provide the least restrictive environment for students. It discriminates against regions in the State that have not had significant problems with outbreaks. It will have a negative impact on enrollment, engagement and attendance, especially in our rural area. And it makes it difficult at the local level to insure the best possible outcomes for student success.

That being said, both the Colton School Board of Directors and I are asking you very clearly to advocate that local control is in the best interest of public education and serving our students, families and staff. The Colton School District will continue to advocate, lobby, and stand up for Colton's values to retain local control and decision-making that is in the best interest of our community and the Colton School District. This community demands to know why cannot local or regional decision-making opportunities be given to rural school districts, not just in Colton, but throughout the state. The obtrusiveness of this mandate is a one-sized, fits all decision around the data collection throughout the entire state. Additionally, will the OHA decision around OAR 333-019-1015 be a permanent part of Oregon's public school landscape forever or is there a time table where professionals and local

A partnership of parents, students, school and community dedicated to quality learning and the continual pursuit of excellence.



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districts can have the opportunity to make decisions again for their local community?

The Colton School District will do everything within our power to maintain local control over the educational experience in the best interest of our students, families and staff. Our collective goal is to allow families and staff to make informed decisions and honor each family's wishes for their own student, while supporting anyone who chooses to wear a mask for their own protection.

The Colton School District Board of Directors, as well as the chief administrative officer, demand a need for local control in masking and demand guidance on enforcement and the need to align school guidance with the US Center for Disease Control and Prevention and authorize necessary action to in connection therewith the following deliverable actions:

- This mandate and threats of civil penalties do not consider our districts' successful experience in mitigating COVID-19 on our local campuses over the course of the state's restrictive response to metrics and a one-size fits all approach.
- Walk back the governing authority decision for school safety protocols be removed from locally elected school board members; where liability, risk and operational penalties will be reported through third parties; that will further add work to small districts, and it will add further financial burdens, while reducing the efficacy of a whole child education.
- Recognize the significant number of requests for parental choice coupled with other parents advocating for continued masking to maximize COVID-19 prevention;
- Exert the need and advocate for further guidance from the State of Oregon on how to enforce the State's masking requirement when the District can no longer suspend students for willful defiance, nor can a student's educational rights be taken away to remove them unwillingly to independent study or online school;
- Advocate for Parental Choice for masking and vaccinating their children;
- Publicly declare that OHA and Elected State representatives changed the guidance to schools to avoid taking responsibility for the enforcement of such directives, while simultaneously using non-elected officials to create the statutes used by districts to enforce actions with students, and thus created confusions within



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the public, school boards, and educational leaders on how to implement said guidance;

- Recognize that the District is required to comply with Oregon Department of Education's Ready Schools Safe Learners guidance, to the extent that such guidance can be understood and successfully implemented.

In the meantime, the Colton School District supports liberty for all families. Our district is excited for the students to return to full-time, in-person learning. This mandate serves as an impediment to that goal for all the above said reasons. We urge you to advocate for what is in the best interest of students, families and staff in the State of Oregon – and what was formerly promised: local control for decisions around Covid-19 protocols. Our staff will be intensely focused on returning to in-person learning, doing our best to provide a safe learning environment with the ultimate goal that every child can and will succeed!

Albeit the district does not agree with the state's decision to remove local control from the districts. I cannot recommend anything more than to comply with the order. Besides the penalties, the district liability is too great to defy the Governor's order. The district's compliance with the OAR is essential to keep students in the school buildings. I assure you that the district will honor the compulsory education requirements during the school day that the OAR spells out.

We are urging you to advocate for what is in the best interest of every student, staff and family in the State of Oregon: local control.

Regards,

Sid Gunter

Board Chair, CSD

Eric Dilg

CSD School Board

Dave Kline

Superintendent

Jeremy Baurer

CSD School Board

Cezanne Decristoforo

CSD School Board

Tim Behrens

CSD School Board