

HEA Office Hour
January 7, 2021

Dear Members,

I want to apologize to those of you who tried to join us for last week's office hour and were not let into the meeting. It was apparent at the onset of last week's gathering that 100 Zoom participants put us at capacity. We are in the process of upgrading our HEA Zoom account to allow for up to 300 members. I have summarized the meeting for you below and will begin to provide weekly summaries from here forth.

In Solidarity,

Jill Golay

Jill highlighted the [letter to Governor Brown](#) that she sent on behalf of HEA in solidarity with the presidents of Beaverton, Portland, Eugene, and Salem/Kaiser. Many members have shared that they are reluctant to return to in-person learning without being provided the opportunity to become vaccinated. Teachers shared how heartbreaking it was to come back to work after Winter Break to discover that students had lost family members to COVID. Many have family members currently battling COVID. Members shared that a recent Harvard Publishing [COVID-19 basics - Harvard Health](#) stated that the new COVID variant is even more contagious and to flatten the curve, we should stay home to limit our contact and that being outside is safer and if you must be indoors with anyone outside of your household, increase air circulation by keeping the windows open as much as possible. Jill shared that HEA will be sending out another short survey next week. Overall, members share they want to be vaccinated, have ample time to get their classroom ready, and options so they can feel safe. Transfer 101 with HR, Brian Haats, is scheduled for January 21, 2021, from 4 to 5 p.m.

The following are the questions that were asked by members and answers provided.

Q: Do we need both vaccines to be covered.

A: We have been told that we need both to be covered completely.

Q: Who is working on a vaccination plan for us?

A: HSD is meeting with county and state health officials and with county health organizations. The district nurses have also been supporting.

Q: If you are vaccinated, can you be a carrier?

A: That is still unknown by scientists.

Q: Does the vaccine prevent you from getting the virus

A: Not sure, but it is 95% effective to prevent you from having severe symptoms.

Q: Are we responsible for teaching in quarantine or when sick?

A: Not if you are sick, but if in quarantine and NOT SICK, due to others being sick and able to do CDL, you would still teach CDL.

Q: Is there anything we need to know before we fill out the district's survey

A: No, HR needs to know if you need accommodations.

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Q: What are the metric cutoffs?

A: The county ratio is currently 200 cases to 100,000. We have heard that the new guidelines could be 350 to 100,000.

Q: Where would vaccines be given?

A: The district has offered various options and is working with Washington County to make a plan, including the possible use of district facilities.

Q: Will spouses be vaccinated?

A: Just employees.

Q: Will those who are at high risk for COVID get HSD accommodations for your job?

A: HR will meet with you but doesn't guarantee you accommodation if you are high risk. The ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) will govern some of their decisions, but it comes down to whether the request for accommodation is "reasonable" and whether it causes "undue hardship" to the employer (legal terms)

Q: Is there a COVID sick bank, and when can you use it.

A: Not at this time, but it may be something HEA will try to get through negotiations. There IS the current HEA sick leave bank, though.

Q: Has the district surveyed families to see if they want to come back?

A: Yes, approx. 66% of students want to return to their school building.

Q: Is it true that the Governor said that we must start LIPI by January 19th.

A: No, she said that she would release new metrics by January 19. She also strongly encouraged schools to reopen by February 15 but did not mandate it.

Q: Will the district offer the Leave of Absence option?

A: Yes, it is in our contract, and HR has said that they would grant an LOA.

Q: What if you don't want to get vaccinated?

A: That is your choice.

Q: Can you take a leave of absence for less than a semester or year?

A: That is at the district's discretion unless the leave qualifies under another type of leave like medical, family, or bereavement.

Q: Can there be an option for teachers who do not want to go back to be able to continue to work in the CDLworld?

A: I hope that is an option, but I do not know yet. We are working on this in negotiations.

Q: Do we know how many students have exited HSD for other learning opportunities?

A: Approximately 800

Q: Do we know what our day will look like when we do return to a brick and mortar setting? What will our class look like? What will our schedule be with students?

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A: The mini bargaining team is just starting to look at various schedules, weighing the pros and cons of each.

Q: If we start up and feel like we need to take a break, is that possible? Like an LOA?

A: Yes, you can request an LOA.

Q: At the elementary level, will we still have prep/planning time during the workday like in the past when our students were at specials?

A: Our prep time in a return model will not be with kids exiting to physically attend PE or Music, but we will ensure you get that time during the day, nonetheless (kids may be doing virtual PE or Music, just not in person, during that time).

Q: If we quit, can we apply for unemployment?

A: No, the only time a resignation would qualify for unemployment would be if there were some legal harassment or other legal issues that caused the resignation, or if an employee resigns "in lieu of termination."

Q: Can teachers be held responsible or liable for COVID if they make a mistake?

A: Anything you do while in employment with the district, and unless you are found to be grossly negligent, is covered by your employer, the district. Also, HEA members have a \$1 million liability policy with the union.

Q: What is it looking like around safety and wearing a mask.

A: Guidance from the state is very clear, and there are no exceptions unless very specific on an IEP or documented by a doctor. The protocol is everyone wears a mask.

Q: If a teacher is asked to do LIPI on January 19th and does not feel safe, what should they do?

A: I do not anticipate anyone to be required at this time. The district is to solicit volunteers first. Please reach out to me if you feel like you being told rather than having the opportunity to volunteer.

Q: What kind of disability can we get if we get sick and are a long hauler and need additional disability?

A: You have medical insurance and have a long term disability benefit as part of your negotiated benefits. Part of the relief package called FFCRA expired on December 31st, but we hope the Government will renew it. We are looking into a COVID sick bank. OEA is looking into whether workers' comp laws can be interpreted differently to cover you when you contracted from your place of work.

Q: How do you teach 7-year-olds and maintain 6 feet of social distance?

A: It will probably be a challenge, but social distancing requirements are in the guidelines, and we are going to work and do our best to make sure that the guidelines are enforced.

Q: Is somebody working with OHA to get us a vaccination?

A: Washington Superintendents just met with Governor to discuss the needs

Q: What happens if you get COVID and we have lingering effects?

A: Long term effects do happen to some people. We do not want anyone to have to take leave and use their own sick leave for something out of their control, but this is complicated. For now, FMLA (family leave) sick leave and long term disability will be the best resource for that, and if someone has short term disability, it could apply as well. Short Term Disability is something that staff can purchase at the start of each insurance year.

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Q: What are the chances that the district will allow for short term disability leave.

A: It is a product provided by a company that you can purchase and not in the district's control. If you already have it, it would apply to many medical or parental leave situations, but we can't say how the policy would apply to COVID. We are hoping that the FFCRA will be reenacted with our nation's transition of power. We will be talking about leaves during mini bargaining.

Q: How do we stay safe when we are face to face?

A: We are working to allow educators to stay online if they are at high risk, and we will be negotiating language to ensure your safety.