

Members of the board, superintendent Sproles, guests listening in, we are here tonight on the verge of a school year that will be like no other in Bethel's history.

My name is Curt Nordling, I am the vice president of the Eugene Education Association, and I am here to loudly send the message: Our educators want schools open, safely, five days a week. Safely. Open schools is something we are familiar with. But doing so during a pandemic? No, we aren't. Please pause and consider this question: What will the next two weeks bring?

Our educators returned to their buildings this morning. Every emotion from excitement to fear. We all want to return to normal. We want to return to educating young people five days a week. Unfortunately every light is flashing red and it is not a matter of if there will be problems, but when and to what extent.

That brings us to layers of protections:

Will the PPE be adequate? Two layer fabric masks are realistic, but KN95 masks are unlikely for all of our young people and staff.

Is the ventilation system where it should be? The state recommends MERV13 filters (which we don't have), open windows (some classrooms can), and frequent air exchanges for all classrooms (>>>). What will the next two weeks bring?

Social Distancing? 3 feet to the greatest extent possible. Between large classes sizes in some grades, and a teacher shortage this is something we will struggle to achieve but if we want our young people safe, we must ensure adequate social distancing.

Cohorting? That is a tool that can be utilized at the lower grades but just simply isn't something that can be achieved without hybrid schedules at higher grades.

ICU beds are mostly full around the state and those in the medical field has been described as on the verge of collapse. What will the next two weeks bring?

EEA wants to work with the district to ensure that as many layers of protection are put in place so we don't shut down. So that when we open next week, we stay that way. We need social distancing and improved ventilation, we need creative solutions: eating outdoors and screen testing for COVID. What will the next two weeks bring?

If you are able to and not yet vaccinated, please consider getting vaccinated. If you are a parent that doesn't have a plan for if your child has to quarantine for two weeks, please consider preparing now.

Like I said, this will be a school year like no other. I hope everything goes well, we can go back to "normal" and everyone will be safe. One more mask, one more air filter, one more vaccine. Every additional layer allows our doors to remain open, let's work together to ensure that it stays that way. Because we just don't know what the next two weeks actually will bring.