

Sunday, January 10, 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LAKE OSWEGO TEACHERS DON'T WANT TO DIE OR KILL THEIR FAMILIES

(Lake Oswego, OR) Lake Oswego teachers responded with fear and anger at the news that the Lake Oswego School District will be the first large school district in Oregon to reopen to in-person instruction. The Lake Oswego Education Association held a virtual town hall meeting and survey last week and the results were alarming.

“Teacher after teacher has said they are afraid. They are afraid for their students, their families and themselves,” said Kelly Fitzsimmons, LOEA President. “They are especially bewildered why the district is not waiting for vaccines to become available or even basing the decision to return on county health metrics.”

A survey by the union found that 76 percent of the responding members were opposed to returning either until a vaccine is available or until the district uses health metrics to decide when to reopen. Another 13 percent said they were reluctant to return but would do so if asked. Only about 11 percent said they looked forward to returning to the classroom.

The survey was offered at the end of this week and over 330 out of 440 members responded, a response rate of 75 percent.

While the survey shows widespread alarm and resistance to returning, Fitzsimmons said a flood of emails and comments made at a virtual town hall show the concern of individual educators.

“We have heard from educators who care for elderly parents, who have health conditions that make them vulnerable. Some are on the verge of panic, on the verge of quitting.”

One question often repeated by LO educators is why the district wants to reopen when the death toll and infection rate is climbing. “The timing seems so callous and dangerous.”

“There is no one more committed to education than teachers. Teachers want to be in the classroom. Teachers miss their kids. But they want to live and not be responsible for killing those their families or sickening their students.” said Fitzsimmons. “We should wait for the vaccine to be available or at least be making decisions to return based on data.”

The Lake Oswego Education Association represents the teachers, counselors, speech language pathologists and psychologists that educate the children of Lake Oswego.

For more information, please contact Fitzsimmons at 530-913-8083