

# Message From the Superintendent

## School Year to Start with a Distance Learning Academy



July 20, 2020

Dear SYSD Families & Colleagues,

In light of California's current coronavirus data, Governor Newsom issued a [new order](#) last Friday, July 17th that schools in California counties on the state's monitoring list for rising coronavirus infections would be required to open schools this fall with a [distance learning instructional model only](#). San Ysidro, as a District in San Diego County, will need to follow that order. As of July 16th, 31 of 58 counties were on the monitoring list, including San Diego county. Governor Newsom's new order delineates that schools can open for in-person instruction after the county they reside within has been removed from the state's monitoring list for 14 consecutive days.

Thus, to ensure the safety and health of our students and staff our [school district will reopen our schools with a rigorous Distance Learning Academy](#). The first day of school for students is **Monday, August 17th**. The district anticipates that the minimum duration of the Distance Learning Academy for all students will be through the end of September. As the world continues to navigate the complexities and ever changing challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, our district has dedicated an extensive amount of time researching, planning and preparing for the new school year. Beginning in October after the county has been off of the state's COVID watch list for 14 consecutive days, the district will offer a **Blended Learning Program** (2 days in class & 3 days online) option. Thus, if our schools are able to reopen families will be able to choose between remaining in the Distance Learning Academy or transitioning to the Blended Learning Program.

### **Assembly Bill 77: Education Budget Trailer Bill Section Regarding Distance Learning**

California Assembly Bill (AB) 77 indicates that a district may offer distance learning for the 2020-2021 school year under the following circumstances:

- As a result of an order or guidance from a state public health officer or a local public health officer
- For pupils who are medically fragile or would be put at risk by in-person instruction
- For pupils who are self-quarantining because of exposure to COVID-19

In accordance with Senate Bill 98 and Assembly Bill 77, our district's distance learning program will provide:

- Instructional continuity
- Access to connectivity and devices
- Content aligned to grade level standards that is provided at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction
- Daily live interaction with certificated employees and peers for purposes of instruction, progress monitoring, and maintaining school connectedness

### **Senate Bill 98: Education Omnibus Budget Trailer Bill; Continuity of Learning & Attendance Plan Section**

California Senate Bill (SB) 98 which was authorized on June 29, 2020, requires that the governing board of a school district adopt a **Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan** by September 30, 2020 in lieu of adopting a Local Control Accountability Plan for 2020-2021. The State Board of Education will release a template for the Continuity of Learning & Attendance Plan by August 1, 2020. This plan will include, but not be limited to:

- A budget overview for parents
- Consultation with required stakeholder groups (teachers, principals, administrators, other school personnel, local bargaining units, parents & pupils)
- A public hearing
- A description of how the district will provide continuity of learning and address the impact of COVID-19 on pupils, staff, and the community
- A local education agency shall offer in -person instruction to the greatest extent possible
- Distance learning that provides instructional continuity, access to devices and connectivity, measuring student participation and assess pupil progress, and additional supports for ELLs, students with exceptional needs, pupils in foster care, and pupils experiencing homelessness
- Plan to address pupil learning loss mitigation
- Staff professional development
- Monitor and support the mental health and social and emotional well-being of pupils and staff
- School nutrition
- Pupil engagement and outreach

Note, **student attendance will be taken daily** in accordance with SB 98 with our distance learning program. Thus, it will be important for students to attend school every day online!

### **Revised 2020-2021 School Calendar**

Our Governing Board took action on June 25th to revise the 2020-2021 school calendar from a July 20th start date to August 17th in light of the COVID-19 health crisis. This later start to the school year has provided precious time to our district to successfully plan for the new school year.

Here is the district weblink to the **2020-2021 student calendar**:

<https://www.sysdschools.org/domain/55>

Here is the district weblink to the **2020-2021 various staff calendars**:

<https://www.sysdschools.org/Page/1023>

### **Upcoming Student Chromebook Distribution Events**

The district has ordered an additional 3,788 chromebooks for distribution to all preschool through 8th grade students that need access to a device for the start of the school year. Please stay posted for notifications regarding upcoming *Chromebook Distribution Events*.

### **Student Internet Access Options**

In spring of 2020 the district partnered with Cox Communications to provide low cost internet access to all families who qualify for free and reduced meals. In addition, this year our district is also working with the San Diego County Office of Education to provide a limited number of internet hot spots to families within our district. Please stay posted for more information.

### **Distance Learning Academy: Parent & Student Virtual Orientation**

The district will provide a Parent & Student Virtual Orientation for the Distance Learning Academy that all students will begin the school year with. Please stay posted for the date/s that this orientation/s will take place.

### **Virtual Welcome Back Staff Event & Professional Development: Wed, August 12**

Our district will welcome back all staff on Wednesday, August 12th during our Virtual Welcome Back Staff Event and Professional Development Day. Colleagues, please stay posted for more details about the time, login and topics for this event.

### **Management Team Leadership Academy: July 30-31**

The annual management team leadership academy will take place July 30th to July 31st. Details will be sent to the management team via email.

### **State & County Guidance for Safely Reopening Schools**

The state has determined schools may reopen in consultation with the county health department after the county has been removed from the state's watch list for 14 consecutive days. From June to July, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the California Department of Education (CDE), the San Diego County Health Department and the San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) released detailed guidance for the safe reopening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. When schools reopen our district is committed to following the [Safe Reopening Plan for K-12 Schools template](#) developed by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Department and the San Diego County Office of Education if future state and county health department guidance allows us to physically open schools. The district is negotiating with our labor bargaining teams regarding the safe reopening of schools.

The Safe Reopening Plan for K-12 Schools is based on guidance articulated by the California Department of Public Health in its [COVID-19 INDUSTRY GUIDANCE: Schools and School Based Programs](#) and is compliant with Section 4 of the [county public health order](#). These guidelines are also aligned with the COVID-19 Safety Protocols set forth within the [California Department of Education's Guidebook for Safe Reopening of Public Schools](#).

The new state guidance for schools released on July 17th establishes a tiered structure for when a classroom, school or district should shut down in-person instruction in the event a student or staff person tests positive for COVID-19:

- A classroom cohort must stop in-person instruction if there is a confirmed case within the cohort

- A school must stop in-person instruction if multiple cohorts within the school have confirmed cases or once more than 5% of the school's population has tested positive
- A school district must stop in-person instruction if 25% of their schools are closed with a 14-day period

### **Safety & Health Protocols for Reopening Schools**

Upon reopening our schools our district will implement the San Diego County Health Department's school guidance for preventing COVID-19 which includes for schools, but is not limited to:

1. Washing hands
2. Frequent sanitation protocols
3. Social distancing at 6 feet apart, as practicable
4. Face mask guidelines
5. Stay home if you're sick
6. Daily health screenings & temperature checks

### **Reopening of Schools Task Force**

The district launched a Reopening of Schools Task Force in May 2020 under the leadership of the Executive Director of Education Services, Manuela Colom. The Task Force has over 35 members representing key stakeholder groups (i.e. parents, teachers, certificated and classified team members, union leaders, & administrators). The Task Force has met weekly to biweekly since May for a total of 8 meetings to date.

The Task Force is focused on the following guiding principles:

- Create a safe and healthy environment for students, staff and families
- Accelerate Learning
- Provide Social-Emotional Support
- Family Engagement

The Task Force has delineated two structured phases to the launch of our new school year. These phases include, but are not limited to:

- Preparing Buildings for Reopening: *All classrooms in every school have been restructured so desks are 6 feet apart. Much smaller classes of approximately 12 students at a time can attend in person class sessions.*
- Establishing Social Distancing & Sanitation Protocols
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for Students & Staff: *All staff and students will receive a cloth face covering. Clear face shields will also be available for staff.*
- Creating School Schedules
- Adjusting Reopening Date
- Negotiating with bargaining units
- Planning a Continuum of Learning & Robust Instruction
- Planning Options for Various COVID Health Orders
- Planning Virtual Welcome Back Events
- Developing a Plan to Provide Access to School Meal Programs
- And more!

The Task Force is composed of both a full committee and strategic sub-committees that specialize in planning within the areas of: *Facilities/Transportation, School Logistics, Instruction, Community & Parent Engagement, and Meals.*

The Task Force has provided board updates regarding their progress at the following board meetings: May 14th, June 12th, and July 16th. During a Special Board Meeting on Tuesday, July 28th the Task Force and district administration may propose a “Safe Reopening Plan for K-12 Schools” so we are prepared if our schools are allowed to reopen.

### **Instructional Program Options**

When the state and county health departments indicate that our schools are able to physically reopen for instruction our district will offer to families two instructional program options based on staffing availability:

- 1. Distance Learning Academy**
- 2. Blended Learning Program (2 days at school & 3 days online)**
  - a. *Partial and total classroom and/or school closures related to COVID may occur with the blended learning program sporadically throughout the school year based on state classroom/school closure guidelines regarding positive COVID cases*

The district's Reopening Schools Task Force has relied upon parent survey data that indicates the majority of our families (45%) prefer our schools open in a blended learning model (partial week in school and partial week online), about 26% favor our schools open full time, and about 28% indicated a preference for distance learning only. In order to adhere to the guidance that recommends social distancing at 6 feet apart our district is only able to allow approximately 12 students in a class at a time, thus, opening our schools full time Monday through Friday is not a viable option. Therefore, our district's Reopening of Schools Task Force has primarily focused on building an instructional delivery model for both a **Blended Learning Program option** which would allow students to attend school 2 days per week (and online 3 days/week) along with a **Distance Learning Academy option**.

In accordance with AB 77 our district will also offer a **Distance Learning Academy option**.

In order to properly staff both instructional programs the district will send out a second family survey shortly to determine staffing availability and family needs with regards to both the Blended Learning Program and Distance Learning Academy options. Note, the Blended Learning Program will launch when state and county health officials allow our schools to reopen.

### **School & District Office Support & Contact Information**

School and district office staff will be available to **respond to phone calls and emails by Wednesday, July 22nd**.

Also, principals will begin their work year on Wednesday, July 29th and you will be able to contact them via phone call or email.

Click on the link to view the **directory** for school offices and administrators:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/e/2PACX-1vTF2MSFXFZozUIbgxeLCRGdp08jY5CiMQ4jbghjneNfCMMArufxPI47I658DynvO0QxpegX5qrlMbNx/pub>

At this time our district office and school offices are not yet open to the public. Our district will send out a notification when a date has been established to reopen office locations.

### **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Distribution**

Last week our district began distributing PPE to employees. Cloth face masks will be provided to all employees and students. Optional clear plastic face shields will be provided to employees as well.

All classrooms and departments will have access to hand washing stations and hand sanitizer for students and staff. Additionally, the district will have clear plexiglass barriers for school and department office front desks and teacher desks. Signage is being posted throughout all schools and departments regarding hand washing, face masks, and physical distancing.

### **Final Thoughts**

Our district is honored to serve the students and families within our community. Our team is working hard to ensure that we protect the safety and health of our students and staff as we plan to launch the new school year. We are also diligently planning a rigorous academic program for our students.

Please don't hesitate to contact the district office or your school's office staff for additional information, questions or concerns. Our district sincerely thanks our San Ysidro family for its patience, care, feedback, and concern regarding the best possible fall school start. Together we are a strong, united team for our students!

Sincerely,

Gina A. Potter, Ed.D.  
Superintendent