



January 27, 2021

Superintendent's Message: School reopening and COVID-19 update

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff and Community Members,

This is an update regarding COVID-19 and the district's preparation towards the continued ramping up of on-campus services.

Los Angeles County continues in purple tier

As a reminder, schools in Los Angeles County may not reopen for in-person instruction until the county has been in the substantial (red) tier for two weeks. LA County is still in the restrictive (purple) tier. The LA County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) "strongly recommended" that in-person services and instruction on TK-12 campuses be paused, except in rare cases where it is absolutely necessary, through the end of January. Our anticipated expansion of in-person programs for special education, English learners, and athletic conditioning will restart in February. Programs that were already in place on our campuses are still being conducted.

We are following LACDPH reopening protocols and guidelines. This means that despite some parents wanting us to reopen now, we are unable to make any decision that is not approved by our guiding health agencies.

Safe Schools for All: Governor's plan

Governor Newsom announced his proposed "[Safe Schools for All](#)" Plan, on December 30, which will require legislative approval. The plan states that as soon as a county's COVID-19 cases reduce below 28 (or fewer) per 100,000 residents that schools may open grades TK-2 starting February 15 and grades 3-5 starting March 15. LA County's current rate is 77 per 100,000 as of January 26. The plan calls for testing of staff and students. Participating districts can apply to the state to receive grant funding per pupil to support the costs associated with meeting the plan's requirements.

As part of this plan, we will be submitting our safety plan for reopening, along with our plan for distance learning plus for the remainder of this school year as our model. This model aligns with the governor's plan to get students back on campus for learning and activities. Please note, our application and acceptance is an opportunity for us to reopen under the governor's proposal, but it is not a guarantee. We will still have to reach an agreement with the bargaining units for us to execute both the governor's new proposal described above as well as our reopening to distance learning plus plan once we are in the red tier.

TK-2 waivers

The Safe Schools for All plan supersedes the previous LA County Office of Education (LACOE) and the LACDPH program for TK-2 waivers. This means that our submitted waivers will not be moved forward and, instead, we will be following the governor's plan to reopen TK-2 and 3-5, based on the county's case rate reduction to meet the requirements.

Distance learning plus development in progress

Our school board approved the distance learning plus concept as the model for TK-12 reopening when LA county reaches the red tier. The process for developing the details of the

distance learning plus structure and schedule is currently underway. The district has set a goal to have a detailed plan developed and endorsed by our bargaining units and approved by the school board in February. The steps to develop the specific plan is collaborative with principals, staff, and parents and includes:

- Principals met with district leadership to discuss distance learning plus ideas as a group, while incorporating expectations from the school board (1/12, 1/15, & 1/22)
- Principals met with their staff to discuss the ideas and establish consensus at the site level (1/15 – 1/22)
- Principals will meet with their respective parent reps / groups and staff to establish consensus for schools site plans (1/25 – 2/5)
- District staff and I host districtwide meetings with principals, staff and parent representatives at the elementary and secondary levels. The staff and parents will be the same reps who represented the school sites at the district meetings held in November when the concept of distance learning plus was selected as the best model for the spring. The purpose of the meetings is to establish consensus on districtwide expectations while providing some level of flexibility for school sites. The dates and times for the district-wide virtual meetings are:
 - Elementary group (2/8 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.)
 - Secondary group (2/10 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.)

For details of what your school site is considering, please stay engaged with the principal and admin staff at your school(s), with regard to distance learning plus when the county reaches the red tier.

Vaccinations and testing for district staff

The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has created a phased and tiered system to determine who should receive the COVID-19 vaccine first. The first rounds started in December for healthcare workers, and we are currently in phase 1A, tier 3, which includes our school nurses, health office specialists, specific special education staff, and staff who are 65 and older. All other education workers are next in phase 1B, tier 1, which is scheduled to begin in early February (depending on vaccine availability). Having the staff vaccinated by spring will definitely help with the level of in-person instruction we may implement.

We are working with local health partners to develop a plan to regularly test staff as we expand school services. We are looking at schedules, frequency, options and budget needs for testing.

Vaccines for children under 16 are just now in clinical trials. Our plans for students to return have not yet included student vaccinations as a criteria.

Outlook

Governor Newsom announced on January 25 that based on projections over the next few weeks of cases and hospitalizations, he has lifted the stay at home order.

This is good news and a reason to be optimistic. In the next few weeks, we will share how our schools will be delivering distance learning plus, once LA County moves into the red tier.

Please continue to take care of yourselves and each other.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent