



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

April 29, 2021

Superintendent's Message: Full Reopening, Teacher Planning Time and Mask Wearing

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff and Community Members,

I want to provide an update regarding the progress of our full reopening to date, provide clarification regarding teacher planning time for the remainder of the school year and address current mask wearing protocols.

Our school facilities are fully open!

First, I want to thank our certificated, classified, and management staff for working diligently to fully reopen our schools following the school board's direction to staff at the March 17 board meeting. This direction came once the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), LA County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) and the California Department of Public Health announced that students could be three feet apart inside of a classroom, instead of the previous guideline of six feet. Many steps needed to take place in order to achieve our full reopening including:

1. Determining the classroom capacity at all schools to align with the new three-foot distancing guidance
2. Preparing classrooms with new seating arrangements and new and different furniture, in some cases, to create three-foot distancing
3. Ensuring all safety protocols were in place, as directed by the LACDPH
4. Hiring more support staff as well as increasing the hours of various support staff roles to help principals implement the safety protocols
5. Preparing new schedules at the school sites and communicating the safety protocols to school communities
6. Identifying the students who would return for in-person learning as well as those who would continue with distance learning
7. Securing the necessary staffing and adjusting to meet the need for both in-person and distance learning elementary school students
8. Securing an agreement with the Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Associations (SMMCTA) that would allow for us to bring students back for full days and hours of in-person instruction.

All of the above actions were necessary to allow for reopening fully. Thanks to staff and parents all doing their parts, we have successfully reopened our schools for full-day, in-person

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1651 Sixteenth Street • Santa Monica • California 90404-3891 • (310) 450-8338 • www.smmusd.org

Board of Education: Keith Coleman • Craig Foster • Jon Kean • Maria Leon-Vazquez

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Superintendent: Dr. Ben Drati

instruction, and this hard work is something to be celebrated. Although there is always room for improvement, we have learned from each day and continue to make adjustments to make the experience better, more efficient and a valuable experience for our students.

We have achieved something most districts in LA county have not been able to do: secure an agreement with our bargaining units and implement the three-foot physical distancing protocol just as we went on spring break. To this date, we are one of seven out of approximately 87 school districts in our county to fully reopen. The remaining districts are either in a hybrid model or distance learning-only model. I commend and thank SMMCTA for continuing to engage and produce 11 addendums to the original Memorandum of Understanding agreed to in August.

Teacher planning time

A section of the most recent addendum honors the original agreement in regard to student work days, where students will learn asynchronously for four days while teachers prepare for a full return to in-person learning. Each school site has used some of the four days already, and the remaining allocated days will be fulfilled prior to the end of this school year. The principal of the schools with outstanding prep days will communicate with their respective communities as to when they will execute the remaining student work/ teacher prep days.

Some parents have inquired as to why these four prep days are necessary, and my response is that the past 13 months have been a roller coaster for staff as they made frequent adjustments to their instructional delivery due to the changing circumstances associated with the pandemic. These four days were agreed to in order to provide the necessary opportunity to prepare and complete professional responsibilities. I am satisfied and happy with our decision to reopen fully, and I am thankful to SMMCTA, SEIU, and our management team for their diligence to fully reopen and provide our teachers with the necessary tools to be ready in mind, body, and spirit for a full return.

Please note that childcare will not be available during the school day on teacher planning days. After school care is still be available. Check with the Child Development Services department.

Masks required

We understand that the CDC announced that wearing masks is no longer required outside if a person is fully vaccinated (two weeks following vaccination). We are awaiting direction from our guiding agency, LACDPH on updated protocols. For now, all students must still wear masks indoors and outdoors.

We are looking toward a strong finish to a challenging year.
Thank you for your partnership in educating and nurturing our students!

Sincerely,

Ben Drati, Superintendent