



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 19, 2021

Superintendent's Message: Preparing to return as fully as possible when LACDPH allows

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff and Community Members,

Many of you have heard that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has made a decision to reduce the currently recommended physical distancing within classrooms from six feet to three feet. While this change informs our plans for returning to school, it is important to be aware of some key facts.

As mentioned previously, we are obligated to follow the guidelines set by the California Department of Public Health and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH). Based on current law, we would be acting illegally if we were to violate the state and local directives. As of yesterday, LACDPH informed us that they needed to examine this new guidance from the CDC and would most likely need a few weeks to do so. That's their language, not ours.

However, with our scheduled return from spring break on April 12, our government agencies have ample time to engage in this process without affecting our return to in-person instruction.

Regardless of their decision, **we are preparing now so that our schools are ready for any reduction of physical distancing requirements. We will be ready to adjust quickly to any change in the guidance we are required to follow.**

We find ourselves at a real inflection point for our return to "normal school" and this is both exciting for some and scary for others. One person's joy at this news is equally concerning to a different person coming from different circumstances. As we have said before, **we are committed to expanding as safely and as inclusively and as broadly as possible based on science and the direction of the governing bodies. We also remain committed to providing the best instruction and best educational continuity for all of our students.**

As more news becomes available we will share it with you. And please, as we find ourselves so close to this moment, we urge you to make safe and sound decisions over our two-week spring break. Please be mindful of the travel advisory we shared with you earlier this week.

Video report on reopening

In case you were unable to join us for our school board meeting on March 17, I am sharing my report on school reopening with you. Here is the report, excerpted from the full meeting recording. [Watch reopening video report, 031721.](#)

[Health symposium](#)

We invite all parents, students, staff and community members to join us for a very special symposium “Our Schools and COVID-19” planned for Thursday, March 25 at 7 p.m. The event will be moderated by State Senator Ben Allen and panelists include, Dr. Jamie Lloyd-Smith, UCLA Professor, Dept of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Studying COVID-19 Aerosol and Surface Stability; Dr. Rita Kachru, UCLA Health, Associate Professor and Section Chief, Clinical Immunology and Allergy and SMMUSD Health & Safety District Advisory Committee Member; Will Nicholas, Ph.D., Director, Center for Health Impact Evaluation, LA County Department of Public Health and myself. Please see this [flyer](#) for more information. We hope you can join us to hear from our expert panel, your most frequently asked questions and concerns.

Please stay safe and continue to take care of yourselves and each other.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent