



June 24, 2020

Superintendent's Message: Three Options for School Reopening and Town Hall Meetings

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff,

I want to provide an update on the ongoing progress toward our school reopening plan. I realize that many people want specific details now, but we ask for your patience to allow for a more thorough process that will address our community's needs as much as possible. As of the date of this letter, here is what we know.

We know that the California Department of Education (CDE) and Center for Disease Control (CDC) have provided recommendations for counties in the state of California to consider and interpret. We know that the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) has provided guidance for the 80 school districts in the county, now in the process of developing specific district plans for reopening.

I am in communication with several neighboring superintendents to discuss how to address challenges each community will face with what is recommended by CDE, CDC and LACOE, while we await further direction from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH).

Because there is no clear directive, only recommendations, from the state and county, each district has to develop a plan based on their local district needs. As a result of this, you may hear variances from our neighboring districts, but you will also see similarities to the options we are considering. Each district will make the decision that works the best, based on its assessment of community needs.

We surveyed our staff and parents in order to gather information about your opinions towards reopening of school in the fall. Based on the survey data and what has been recommended from CDE and LACOE, we are considering the following three reopening options:

A. Choice of In-Class OR Distance Learning: This means all students return to school in-person five days per week. A family who does not want in-person instruction can opt for distance learning only. Teachers would be either in-person teachers or distance learning teachers. We recognize the need to improve our ability to offer distance learning, and we are working on that regardless. In this model, the pros and cons include:

Pros

- Provides students with social development, a routine, and a more robust educational experience, including special needs students, five days a week
- Allows parents/guardians to return to a regular work schedule



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- Allows families to choose distance learning only
- Provides preschool daily with 10 students maximum, per class, but at a higher fee. Our fully fee-subsidized students would still be attending at no cost.

Cons

- Might not be able to provide recommended 6' physical distancing, given size and availability of classrooms (our district does not have funding to add classes to achieve reduced class sizes)
 - *Also applies to before-after school child care setting and transportation (fewer seats available on general ed and special needs buses)*
- Increased costs associated with personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning products, staff overtime and increased staffing
 - *Acquiring sufficient PPE is a potential issue*
- Inequity for families who have to return to work, but do not feel safe with possible lack of physical distancing in classroom and/or on bus
- Not all staff will be able to return to work, presenting staffing issues

B. Hybrid (In-Class AND Distance Learning): In this model, students are split into two cohorts: 'A' and 'B,' and we would alternate their in-class and distance learning experiences by days or weeks. In this model, the pros and cons include:

Pros

- Provides students (including those with special needs) with social development, a routine, and a robust educational experience two days or four days at a time
 - *Distance learning days would be a rich learning experience connected to the in-class experience.*
- Can potentially better provide 6' physical distancing in classrooms, thereby reducing exposure to others
- Smaller class sizes providing for increased adult supervision to help implement health standards with mask-wearing, hand-washing and physical distancing

Cons

- Students home three days or a week at a time may create a child supervision issue
- Potential lack of before- and after-school child care for previously-served families, with anticipated higher fees to account for reduced class sizes
 - *Increased costs associated with personal protective equipment (PPE) and cleaning products*
 - *Acquiring sufficient PPE is a potential issue*
- Less social development, daily routine, and in-person educational experience
- Inequity for families who have to return to work
- Fewer seats available on general ed and special needs buses

The hybrid model provides for a day each week during which no students would be on campus to allow for cleaning between cohorts and for teacher preparation in order to effectively deliver a combination of in-person and distance learning. Teachers would teach both in-person and



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distance learning to their class or classes.

C. Distance Learning Only: In this model, all students participate in distance learning only.

Some specific programs can be served in-person, potentially including arts, labs, athletics, and specific special ed programs. In this model, the pros and cons include:

Pros

- Best way to prevent spread of COVID-19
- Clearer expectations than spring 2020 regarding grading, live vs. pre-recorded instruction, option for frequent face-to-face instruction for specific groups of students, and better communication with families
- Some distance learning for preschool may be an option
- Allows students to learn and staff to work from home
- Least expensive model
 - *Factoring in costs associated with personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning products, staff overtime and increased staffing*

Cons

- Child supervision issue for families is significant (parents/guardians cannot return to work or will need to find child supervision)
 - *Inequity for families who have to return to work*
- Impact to student physical well-being, mental health, and educational experience

There are nuances that would need to be sorted out with each option. We are also working with the Santa Monica-Malibu California Teachers Association (SMMCTA) and Service Employee International Union (SEIU) representing our classified staff, to reach agreements regarding each option being considered.

Some factors that will influence a decision to reopen include the physical and social-emotional wellbeing of our students and staff and our ability to deliver high-quality instruction. We have begun to meet with specific parent groups, including PTA Council, District English Language Advisory Committee (DELAC), Special Education District Advisory Committee (SEDAC), and other committees to seek input regarding the possible options.

Our district will host three town hall meetings to review the survey data and seek further parent and staff input regarding these options. The town hall meetings will be held on June 30 for elementary programs in Santa Monica, on July 1 for secondary programs in Santa Monica, and on July 7 for all Malibu programs. All town halls will be held at 6 p.m. on Zoom. Details will follow.

Once community input has been gathered, district staff will then make a final recommendation to the school board at the July 16, 2020, regular board meeting, and information will go out to the community as to what has been decided on July 17.

We understand the ongoing challenge this unknown situation presents for you. I can assure you



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that we are working on this every day, reviewing the frequent updates from our guiding

agencies. We are working toward the option our community desires that offers the best in health and safety for our students and staff, along with the best we can provide academically and socio-emotionally, while taking fiscal aspects into consideration.

Have a nice summer, stay well, and please continue to take care of each other.

Sincerely,
Dr. Ben Drati
Superintendent