



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

June 11, 2020

Superintendent's Message: School Opening Process for Fall

Dear Parents, Guardians and Staff,

This week has brought an end to a school year that will, undoubtedly, go down in history as “one for the ages.” For decades to come, people will ask, “Where were you when...?” Just consider some of the events that occurred during the 2019-20 school year: a deadly world-wide pandemic and the continuing impacts of the world’s response, a successful launch of astronauts into outer space through a private/public partnership, and the national and global recognition of systemic racism in the modern world following the murder of George Floyd. These unique events will definitely mark the 2019-20 school year as a defining time in our history.

With all those events and more swirling around us and impacting our conversations, our families, and in many cases, our livelihoods, it is difficult to know what our lives will look like next week or next month. While it is indeed a challenge, I would now like to brief you on some processes and conversations in which our district is engaged as we plan for the beginning of school in August.

Classes will resume on August 20, 2020, our originally planned start date. Like all school districts in the county, SMMUSD will honor and respect the health and safety guidelines for reopening of schools, as recommended by the California Department of Education (CDE), the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE). Our goal is to keep our students and staff safe and healthy (physically and mentally) while maintaining excellent teaching and learning. Having an actionable and more definitive plan to address both goals will be presented to the community in early July.

The process in which we are engaged includes the following:

1. Our Teaching and Learning Council (comprised of a teacher representative from each school site and Santa Monica-Malibu Classroom Teachers Association representatives have met and will continue to meet to discuss, evaluate, and establish best teaching and learning expectations for distance learning. This will help with coherence around best teaching practices across our district.
2. Our principals and district leadership staff have met and continue to meet to discuss operational and structural options for delivering instruction in a safe and effective way. How should we/can we offer instruction? Should we re-open classrooms, continue distance learning, or offer some type of hybrid instruction?



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3. During the week of June 15 and 22, staff will meet with PTA Council, the District English Learner Advisory Committee, the Special Education District Advisory Committee, and the Local Control Accountability Plan Parent Advisory Committee, to discuss the preliminary results of the staff and parent survey data regarding reopening schools and aspects of the CDE and LACOE guidelines for schools reopening, as well as provide input on possible ideas for reopening. A full survey report from Hanover Research will be posted online when available in a few weeks.
4. In early July, our Board of Education will hold a special meeting workshop to discuss the recommendations from staff.
5. In mid-July, a message will be sent to the community outlining our district's reopening plans.

I realize many people want a definitive answer as to what school will look like. Based on information presently available, we will most likely provide a combination of distance learning and an on-campus experience. LACOE and CDE recently published their recommended guidelines, and every district in the county is currently processing how it will meet the educational needs of students while addressing the safety concerns outlined in the guidelines. This is a complex puzzle, and we will keep you informed as we move through the process. You can find the guidelines, if you would like to review them at:

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/documents/strongertogether.pdf>

We know that regardless, many families will face challenges in balancing work, school and childcare. We appreciate your ongoing patience as we evaluate and plan with the focus on what is best for creating successful outcomes for our students.

Thank you, stay safe, and have a good summer break.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati
Superintendent