



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

May 10, 2021

Superintendent's Message: Welcome Back, COVID testing, Vaccinations and Meal Service

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff and Community Members,

With only 16% of California's kids back at school, we in SMMUSD are thrilled to be welcoming students again to our campuses. Our in-person attendance numbers continue to rise. We are seeing between 80% and 92% at our elementary schools, between 68% and 80% at our middle schools and Samohi and Malibu High at 58% and 46%, respectively.

Getting schools open safely has been our top concern from the moment when we were forced to close. Our teachers responded by becoming distance learning experts. And now they have risen to the occasion again. These are your kids' schools. We know it's important. Teaching kids is what we do.

Thank you to our School Board for its leadership on this issue.
Thank you to our teachers. Thank you parents. And, welcome back!

We do ask all families to finalize their decision with regard to in-person or distance learning by May 14, 2021, in order to allow for the continuity of teacher and learning. Following this date, parents will no longer be able to switch between the two options.

As we head into the final stretch of the 2020-21 school year, I'd like to provide some important information and updates for you and your family.

COVID-19 Testing

I want to remind you that we have established a COVID-19 Surveillance Testing Program. This is a voluntary program, and we are partnering with Valencia Branch Labs to conduct primarily asymptomatic surveillance testing. The recommended frequency is once per week for those who choose to participate. Testing is available for SMMUSD staff and students who are participating in on-campus programs. This is not open to the general public.

SMMUSD testing sites will be at John Adams Middle School (JAMS) on Mondays and Thursdays and Malibu Elementary School on Tuesdays. The district will be conducting PCR (Polymerase Chain Reaction also called a molecular) testing which is considered the gold standard in COVID-19 testing. The testing is done with a nasal swab. The swab is self-administered for adults and older students and by a parent or health staff for a younger student.

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

Laurie Lieberman • Jennifer Smith • Dr. Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein

Superintendent: Dr. Ben Drati

The sites are supervised by SMMUSD nursing staff. Hours, registration and more information is available [online](#).

We highly encourage staff and students to take advantage of this testing.

We have been conducting staff training to administer antigen testing at each school site. We expect this to be ready soon. We will provide you with information and your principals will share the availability of this testing at your site.

Vaccine availability for all age 12 and older

COVID-19 vaccines are now available for everyone age 12 or older. The FDA approved the 12-15 age range today. This is good news for our middle school and high school families.

Vaccines are free regardless of insurance or immigration status. You will not be asked about your immigration status when you get a COVID vaccine.

Students age 16 or 17 must choose a vaccination site that offers the Pfizer vaccine. You will be turned away if you go to a site that does not offer Pfizer. This is because both the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines are only authorized for use for people age 18 and over. The type(s) of vaccine offered are shown in the vaccination location listings below.

A parent or legal guardian must accompany at 16 or 17-year-old.

Many locations are offering vaccinations. This [LACDPH website](#) provides more information and required proof to get a vaccine.

Venice Family Clinic is offering vaccines to our community. Please check their [website](#) for more information and appointments.

Work together - the risk is real

As LA County reopens schools we all must keep working together to slow the spread of COVID-19. The LA County superintendent's Student Advisory Council has begun the "Risk is Real" campaign to remind everyone to take precautions so we may continue on toward the path of full reopening to pre-pandemic measures.

The campaign reminds us that:

- COVID-19 vaccines are available for anyone aged 16 years and older who lives or works in LA County — regardless of immigration status. With over 700 locations, it's never been easier to get vaccinated, and the best way to prevent the spread of this disease.
- Keep physically distanced and keep any gatherings small.
- We want to remind our families and staff that masks are required by staff and students, except while eating or drinking on our campuses. This protocol comes from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. We will follow this and all protocols until directed otherwise.

Grab-and-Go Meals for distance learning students

Students who continue with distance learning may still obtain meals on school days at several Santa Monica locations:

- John Adams Middle - Main Office, 7:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m.

- McKinley Elementary - Need to contact the office there in advance for pick up in the front courtyard (Email Melissa Russell - m russell@smmusd.org)
- Samohi - Michigan and 7th gate - 7:30-9:30 a.m.

Please note that meals were available in Malibu, however, families were not utilizing the program. If the need arises, please contact your school for arrangements.

Final thoughts

We are thrilled to be back on our campuses, while continuing to provide distance learning education to students who are still at home. We are looking forward to some carefully coordinated celebratory year-end activities and events that you will hear about from your principals and PTA leaders.

We celebrated and acknowledged teacher appreciation week, national nurses day and lunch hero day last week. We cannot thank our teachers, nurses and food service staff enough for their part in the education, health and wellness of our students throughout the year. We appreciate you every day.

I want to also thank the rest of our staff, parents and students for continuing to follow health and safety protocols, your continued support and for helping us reach our long-awaited return to campuses.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent