



September 5, 2023

Superintendent's Message: Welcome to the 2023-24 School Year

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, Students and Community Members,

Welcome back to school!

Welcome back after a well-deserved summer break. I hope you had an opportunity to relax and enjoy summer with your family and friends.

I would like to thank teachers, staff, administrators, parents and students for the very smooth start to the school year. Our leadership team and school board members visited our campuses on the first few days of school and reported happy, smiling students and educators and staff ready to support student belonging and success.

Access and opportunity for all students continues as front of mind awareness so that all students may reach their full potential. As your new superintendent, we will continue our focus on diversity, equity and inclusion, with the addition of three focus areas: belonging, curiosity and empowerment.

More than 1,000 staff members joined together on August 21 for professional development and personal growth opportunities at our annual convocation. All staff, whether an administrator, teacher or classified employee understands their value and importance to our school community and system. Everyone has a place and importance to the system, and brings their own story to the bigger picture. Every story has value. The SMMUSD family is excited to educate, support and mentor our students toward greatness, both academically and social emotionally, and help them appreciate and honor their story to empower them.

Educators will entwine this approach in their day to day programs, and families will see this throughout the system in other departments including special education, visual and performing arts, athletics and other curricular and extracurricular programs.

This practice informs our SMMUSD goals well:

1. *All graduates are socially just and ready for college and careers*
2. *English Learners will become proficient in English while engaging in a rigorous, culturally and linguistically responsive standards-aligned core curriculum*
3. *All students and families engage in safe, well-maintained schools that are culturally responsive and conducive to 21st century learning*



Parents are part of this broad community effort and will learn about our plans and goals through back-to-school nights and PTA meetings. We strongly encourage parents, teachers and staff to join PTSA at your school site. We are fortunate to have an engaged and supportive parent network at every site, along with our SMMPTA Council. Find your PTSA / PTA webpage on your school website, or visit: www.smmpta.org

School safety

The health and safety of our students and staff are our top priorities. Let's all work together to create a safe and secure environment for everyone. If you see or hear something of concern, please say something. Students should report concerns to any adult on campus. In an emergency, call 911. Any threats of crime, vandalism, harm, threats, drugs, may be reported anonymously: 1-800-78-CRIME or online at www.wetip.com.

Facility readiness

Our facilities teams worked all summer preparing classrooms, offices, and other indoor and outdoor spaces for the return of students and staff. Our campuses look fantastic inside and out and I appreciate all the effort that went into cleaning and preparation.

Indoor Air Quality

Over the past five years, SMMUSD has installed new heating, air conditioning and ventilation (HVAC) systems in the majority of our indoor spaces that did not previously have air conditioning. The equipment ordered and purchased prior to the pandemic predominantly uses quality MERV 8-11 filters that are changed twice a year as recommended by the manufacturer. The ventilation system fan should be on when the spaces are occupied. Teachers have control of the thermostats in their classrooms to ensure comfortable temperatures regardless of the weather outside. For the heating and air conditioning to work most efficiently, windows and doors must be closed. Our room ventilation is excellent with hourly air exchange that exceeds the minimum standard. We are confident in the air quality in our indoor spaces. Going forward, new code requires the higher MERV 13 filters, which will work properly without taxing systems as was previously experienced, that we will install with any new or renovated classrooms where HVAC will be installed or replaced.

Hand washing / sanitizing

We continue to encourage frequent hand washing or sanitizing to help prevent the spread of illness. We have additional hand washing stations set up on every campus, in addition to sinks and supplies in restrooms.

Stay home if sick

The greatest deterrent to the spread of any illness is for students and staff to stay home when sick. Individuals should stay home if they have symptoms of illness and take a COVID test. Fever, vomiting, and diarrhea must be resolved for at least 24 hours before returning to school. While Covid-19 is less risky for most individuals than in the early stages of the pandemic, reducing transmission remains an essential strategy to minimize disruption at schools. There has been an uptick in Covid-19 cases in our area. We continue to offer free Covid-19 test kits at our schools / offices. Students or staff who test positive for Covid-19 are required to isolate for five days minimum. A person may return to school on day 6 through 10 if symptoms have resolved/improved and are fever free for at least 24 hours without fever reducing medication. It is strongly recommended that you get a negative test before returning. If you are still testing positive Day 6-10, you should continue to isolate until you test negative or through Day 10, whatever comes first. Our guiding agency, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health,

states that no masks are required upon return on days 6-10, if a person has two days of negative tests. Otherwise, masks are strongly recommended. Here is the guidance we are following from LACDPH: [English](#) / [Spanish](#). Our nursing team and administrators will be using this [chart for guidance](#). We can prevent the spread of many illnesses when everyone does their part and stays home when sick.

The best defense against Covid is to be up-to-date on Covid vaccines. For information about where to get vaccinated visit the LA County Public Health [How to Get Vaccinated](#) webpage.

Stay connected = stay informed

Visit the district [website](#) (www.smmusd.org) and school websites for important information and what's happening throughout the year. Stay opted in on Blackboard Connect messages from your school and district. This is a main communication connection to your school and what is happening. Please "like" us on [Facebook](#) and [Malibu Schools Pathway](#); "follow us" on [X \(Twitter\)](#) @smmusd and @MalibuPathway, and Instagram: smmusd_official, and download our mobile app from your app store listed as Santa Monica-Malibu USD. I also have a X (Twitter) you may follow: @Dr_AShelton.

Together, let's make 2023-24 a great school year!

Parents, guardians, staff, students, community members, I look forward to all of us working together to establish a sense of belonging for our entire SMMUSD family, instill a sense of curiosity and wonder in our children and empower each and every student to come to school as their best version of themselves, ready to learn, grow and develop the skills and knowledge they need to be successful now and in their futures.

Sincerely,

Dr. Antonio Shelton
Superintendent