

**Monday November 16, 2020**

**Athletics Update:**

Our athletic department and its coaching staff have been working tirelessly since the end of May to construct the safest path forward to providing in-person instruction for our student-athletes. During this time, our coaches have developed plans that adhere to the current health guidelines and edited them as those guidelines and restrictions have changed over time. This month, in coordination with the district through a series of prior planning meetings, Santa Monica High School began voluntary in-person athletic conditioning workouts on Monday November 2<sup>nd</sup> with the boys' and girls' water polo programs. Our cautious athletics re-opening continued with the start of in-person workouts for our football program on Thursday November 12<sup>th</sup>. Future sports re-openings will be based on what current county guidelines allow combined with up-to-date COVID-19 data and trends within our county and local area. All student-athletes must complete the athletic clearance process and be approved by our training staff in order to participate in the voluntary workouts.

It is important to note two distinctions of what these in-person workouts are in relationship to what a normal practice ordinarily entails. First, it cannot be stressed enough, that participation with these in-person workouts is **completely voluntary**. These athletic conditioning workouts are not attached to credit or a grade in a student-athlete's 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> period PE/Athletics class. Furthermore, returning/current student-athletes do not forfeit their spot within a program if they or their families decide not to participate in these voluntary workouts. Second, the scope of what can be conducted within the voluntary workouts is very limited and restricted based on current guidelines. This means that allowable activities are conditioning and skill-building drills that maintain social-distancing requirements at all times. In addition, use of personal equipment is encouraged and the sharing of equipment should be avoided whenever possible. Intra-squads, scrimmages and full-contact practices are prohibited at this time. As a result, we cannot conduct in-person tryouts now or in the foreseeable future unless guidelines are modified and/or our county advances to a less restrictive health tier.

At this point, based on our county's current health status, some might be wondering why we are offering these workouts in the first place? This is a legitimate concern that involves a fluid set of difficult decisions. We are now engaged in a battle on multiple fronts. What started out as primarily a physical health and safety issue has evolved into also dealing with other issues such as mental health and wellness. The decision to re-open athletics is in part to address the social-emotional well-being of our students. Another consideration is to prepare for the upcoming sport seasons as laid out this past July by our governing body, the California Interscholastic Federation (CIF). At that time, to address the ongoing pandemic, CIF decided to split sports into two seasons, fall and spring. For a full breakdown of the sports seasons and important dates, please visit the following link:

<https://www.smmusd.org/cms/lib/CA50000164/Centricity/Domain/2940/SouthernSectionSportsCalendars.pdf>

The 2020-2021 sports calendar that the CIF adopted this past summer marked Monday December 14<sup>th</sup> as the start of the fall season which include boys' and girls' cross-country, football, boys' and girls' volleyball and boys' and girls' water polo. In its last memo released in early October, the CIF Southern Section declared there were no plans to change the sports calendar so we continued with our plans to prepare for the fall despite Los Angeles County continuing to be in the most restrictive

health tier. On Tuesday November 10<sup>th</sup>, the California Department of Public Health conducted its weekly briefing. Of note was the fact that it has been working with CIF as well as the governor's office to release a youth sports update soon that's expected to bring more clarity on how to proceed in preparation for athletics in the 2020-2021 school year. As with every other school up and down our state, we are desperately seeking this guidance and hope to receive this information prior to the Thanksgiving holiday so we can make more informed decisions on how or if we proceed with our athletics reopening. In the meantime, we will continue our water polo and football workouts with extreme caution and prioritize the remaining fall sports to start workouts by the start of December if we decide it makes the most sense to do so given the information available to us.

**ISPE Update:**

We are now accepting applications for the 2021 spring semester. The deadline is **Friday December 11, 2020**. If students were previously approved to start the 2020-2021 school year they do not have to reapply for the spring semester. Given the ongoing uncertainty of the CIF high school sports season, we will give special considerations for approval for the 2021 spring semester only that in past practice we would deny (e.g. club sports that are CIF sports offerings (criteria #2)). For more information including the 2020-2021 ISPE application and activity logs, please visit the following link:

<https://www.smmusd.org/Page/1115>

If you have any further questions about ISPE and the application and approval process please email Evan Fujinaga: [efujinaga@smmusd.org](mailto:efujinaga@smmusd.org)

Our department appreciates our school community's understanding, patience and resolve during this extremely long, disruptive and difficult time. It is our hope that we will post another update by the end of November and ideally sooner. In the meantime, know that we will continue to monitor the situation and work with our coaches and administrative team to make the best decisions we can for our student-athletes and their families.

Go Vikings!

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