



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

May 1, 2020

## **Superintendent's Video Message #1**

### ***SMMUSD Superintendent video message #1 - transcript***

#### **GAIL PINSKER**

Welcome parents, staff and community members.

I'm Gail Pinsker, the public relations officer for SMMUSD, and I'm here with Superintendent Dr. Ben Drati.

The district and school sites have been sending out messages via email, text and voice and we thought it would be a great addition to include a video message to you that will include questions you have been asking lately.

Dr. Drati, thank you very much for joining us as we continue with distance learning under safer at home orders for the remainder of the school year.

#### **DR. BEN DRATI**

**Thank you, Gail. I appreciate the opportunity to share a little bit about how the district is addressing the stay at home order by the state of California and how impressed I am with how everyone is dealing with what is certainly an unprecedented state of affairs in our human history.**

**As we all know, our campuses are closed, but school is still in session.**

**Teachers are continuing to teach students and our administrators and staff continue to support students and families.**

**We are closely following direction and advice from:**

- **LA County Office of Education,**
- **LA County Department of Public Health,**
- **The California Department of Education**
- **and Governor Gavin Newsom**

**We continue to work with Santa Monica and Malibu city leadership in our role as an essential business serving our communities as not only educators, but as providers of comprehensive support and resources to our families, as well.**

#### **GAIL PINSKER**

Dr. Drati: I know you are in touch nearly daily with other superintendents, as well as civic leaders from Santa Monica and Malibu.

#### **DR. BEN DRATI**

**Yes, the level of cooperation that has and continues to take place within our communities has been impressive and we should all be proud of that. We continue to collaborate with our City leaders and appreciate their ongoing support.**



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**GAIL PINSKER**

Tell us about our distance learning model.

**DR. BEN DRATI**

Before I begin to answer some of these questions, Gail, I think it's important for our families to know that the Family Resources portal on the district web site contains all the information I will be speaking to and more. So please access the portal at your convenience.

In regards to your question about distance learning I want to say that I am very proud of the work that we've been able to accomplish with our amazing teachers, administrators, and staff.

The first order of business was to ensure that our students have access to a digital device and Wifi. We've deployed 1300 chromebooks to date and 175 hot spots to students who did not have access to a digital device, hot spot or both. We will continue to provide as we learn of needs. We are also providing hotspots to teachers who did not have wifi at home.

Our teachers and education services division quickly got up to speed on developing and adjusting curriculum so that it can be delivered in a systematic way throughout the district.

At this time, your school sites have provided you with their daily and weekly routines for instruction and student engagement.

Each school website has a Distance Learning button below the slideshow that includes instructional resources. Our schools have posted their respective distance learning schedules, information, guides along with links to district resources and support.

We realize that this is a learning process for students, parents, and staff and we are working diligently to improve our delivery on a weekly basis. I am especially captivated by the fact that we were able to pull together this new approach of delivering curriculum in such a short time-- and more importantly, I am more than proud of how all staff has come together to work as a team and to lean on each other for support.

We are still developing and enhancing our programming and responding to questions along the way. Discussions are ongoing and some decisions and answers to questions are forthcoming.

For example, the question of grading and student evaluation in this environment is one everyone is wrestling with. Now that the California Department Education, the UC and CSU systems have weighed in on the discussion, many school districts and boards of education are revising their grading policies to address student grades during the stay at home orders.

After careful and meaningful discussions with teachers and site administrators, district staff will be proposing a grading criteria for school board discussion and approval on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2020. Please note that the grading policy we are recommending recognizes the difficulty some of our students and families may be facing in their respective homes,



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including the different learning environments our students may be facing. This has been a challenge for many and we recognize that.

**GAIL PINSKER**

Are there plans to have graduation, senior nights, award events, proms, promotion for 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades?

**DR. BEN DRATI**

This is an important question that's on everyone's mind right now and in one of my recent letters to the community I shared with you that we feel the pain associated with our seniors and year end traditions.

These are the annual culminating events that we all love and it's heartbreaking to know that some of these special events will not be able to take place this school year in a traditional sense.

I'm working closely with our high school principals who are evaluating some very creative ideas for their students for events and graduation, and we will be discussing elementary and middle school promotional ideas in the coming weeks. Our principals are determined to make graduation a positive and memorable experience for our graduating seniors under these challenging circumstances.

I have a son graduating high school this year, too, so I feel the pain that families are feeling over this situation. We especially want our seniors to know that your principals and I have been discussing options regularly and our minds are on celebrating your success and achievements in the coming months.

**GAIL PINSKER**

Tell us what we are doing now to provide breakfast and lunch to our students?

**DR. BEN DRATI**

Our food services team went into immediate action to support our students with grab-and-go meal service for all students under the age of 18, on day one of our facility closures. They continue to provide breakfast and lunch from 8-10 am, weekdays, at Rogers, McKinley, Samohi in Santa Monica and Webster in Malibu. A parent or student may visit any of these schools for a healthy meal.

**GAIL PINSKER**

What about other resources for families for food, necessities and mental health?

**DR. BEN DRATI**

Parents can click on the Family Resources icon in the homepage Spotlight section of their school's website to find many community resources that are updated regularly. The link is [www.smmusd.org/familyresources](http://www.smmusd.org/familyresources)

**GAIL PINSKER**



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What can parents expect regarding summer school?

**DR. BEN DRATI**

**We will hold summer school this year for students who are credit deficient in an online fashion similar to what we are doing through distance learning. For those who are seeking original credit for summer school, we are partnering with SMC to provide the instruction. More information will be coming out as we finalize the details.**

**GAIL PINSKER**

Dr. Drati, I appreciate you taking some time to talk with us. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we wrap up this video message?

**DR. BEN DRATI**

**I would just like to say that I'm grateful for the community's patience and willingness to work with us during this transition. We realize this is a difficult time for everyone (students, staff, and parents) and are working with that in mind. We miss our students and can't wait for the day to see them in person.**

**GAIL PINSKER**

Thank you very much, Dr. Drati for speaking with us today. We appreciate it. We plan to share video messages with the community on a regular basis.

If you have a question that you would like to ask the Superintendent Dr. Drati or make a comment, please submit through our Let's Talk portal, on the [smmusd.org](http://smmusd.org) home page. Please keep in touch with your school site regarding specific questions about school programming.

**DR. BEN DRATI**

Thank you, Gail.

Please be well and continue to take care of each other.