

Executive Summary

Board Action Item

July 21, 2020

On July 17, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom stated that safe in-person school opening is based on local COVID-19 data. Counties must be off the state “watch list” for 14 consecutive days before schools can physically open. Locally, Santa Barbara County has been on the watch list for an extended period of time:

- A county must keep its number of new cases below 100 per 100,000 residents.
 - Past two weeks Santa Barbara County = 310 per 100,000
- A county must have a test positivity rate of < 8%.
 - The current test positivity rate is 9.7%

Santa Barbara County's current positivity rate is 9.7%. As a result, Santa Barbara Unified School District will open the 2020-21 school year using a Distance Learning Model. As the school board is aware, district leadership has been preparing for the return to learning under three scenarios-- 100% Distance Learning, Hybrid Learning, and 100% Physical In-School. It is our intention to shift to Hybrid Models as soon as we are cleared to do so by the state. We encourage all members of the Santa Barbara Unified Community to work together to stop the spread by wearing masks, physically distance, practice regular hand washing, and minimize mixing with those outside your household.

In the Spring of 2020 we experienced a sudden and unprecedented school closure event, which in turn ushered in an emergency version of remote learning. While we are proud of the adaptive and, in many cases, exemplary response of our students, families and staff, we also learned many lessons that will equip us to enter into a new chapter of distance learning. As a district we will deliver a high quality distance learning model for all students, especially those students who are furthest from educational justice. For elementary schools, students will experience several hours of distance learning with their teacher and classmates daily in all subjects. Students will receive small-group instruction daily as well as enrichment and social-emotional learning opportunities. For secondary schools, students will experience extended periods of distance learning with teachers and classmates for 2-3 periods daily, and would be expected to engage in independent learning outside of established class meeting times. Beyond receiving rigorous distance learning, our students can also expect to learn in a safe, culturally-affirming, and caring virtual classroom community. They will also experience enhanced opportunities to engage in revised co-curricular activities. Parents can expect to receive timely information from principals and the school district; in-home learning materials and supplies; bilingual training and support on how to support their children in distance learning; communication from teachers and other staff if concerns about student progress arise; the ability to access information via one platform: NEO.

Teachers and other staff can expect to receive clear procedures for daily and weekly operational routines; technology, language access, and social-emotional support; anti-racist and anti-bias resources; clear and consistent communication of expectations; regular opportunities for professional collaboration; and professional learning in a number of areas including distance learning.

SB Unified is committed to the goal of having 100% of our students connected on WiFi with a device in hand prior to the start of school on August 18, 2020. We are also committed to continuing to provide meals to our students. As such we are working to identify additional meal pick-up spots so that families do not have to travel long distances

District leadership has been planning for the reopening of school since late April, positioning ourselves to open under any of the three possible scenarios. As such we have budgeted for all three, and made purchases to prepare for various outcomes. The cost of opening in a 100% Distance Learning scenario will cost the district in excess of \$2.5 million. Costs incurred thus far include increased internet access for families, professional learning around distance learning, and instructional materials. Anticipated costs include support for family learning around distance learning and development of curriculum. Because of the need to expedite the purchase of supplies and services, any delay would be a significant detriment to the district's ability to deliver a rigorous distance learning model on August 18, 2020. As such, we request that the board allow funding expenditures related to COVID-19 and distance learning without board approval, as is allowed under Board Policy 3312 and Education Code 17604.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Santa Barbara Unified School District begin the 2020-21 school year on a 100% Remote Model, understanding that we will need to remain agile and continue to develop our other models for possible implementation as circumstances with the COVID-19 virus change to allow for a safe return to a physical school setting.