



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

March 31, 2021

## Superintendent's Message: Full Reopening Plan FAQ

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I am following up on my prior message regarding our full reopening timeline as well as the district request for our families to fill out a commitment form so we may continue finalizing details for return to full capacity as outlined previously. Approximately 65% of our families have responded. **We have extended the form deadline to Saturday, April at 5 p.m. so that we can capture the remaining decisions.** If you have already submitted your form, thank you very much. Please do by the deadline if you have not submitted one [form](#) per student.

We've compiled a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ) and answers as an update on our reopening plan.

**Question: Does a family need to commit to distance learning or on-campus now, or is there flexibility to change?**

**Answer:** *Initially, yes, we need you to commit to one method.*

*For elementary students, after a limited time, we are planning for families to have the opportunity to transition one time from distance learning to in-person or from in-person to distance learning. The magnitude by which we are able to allow this movement will be predicated on established student teacher ratios at the beginning of the full return.*

*For secondary students we will provide more information upon our return from spring break. We anticipate both on ramps into in-person instruction and off ramps into distance learning. As secondary students will already have streaming options in their classes, we should be able to accommodate this movement, but principals at sites must have input on what this will look like and how to coordinate the details. The three-foot distancing requirement will also be a factor.*

**Question: How will the district ensure that the distance option and in-person learning option offer equivalent learning opportunities for elementary students?**

**Answer:** *We have determined that the best way to ensure that the academic needs of distance learners in elementary schools are met with an appropriate education is to assign a teacher dedicated to providing instruction solely for distance learners. In-person teachers will be focused class activities that is a full day of teaching for teachers and learning for students. Distance learners will require unique activities to maintain engagement and provide screen time breaks that will allow for better learning. I hope it is clear to parents how mixing the two formats would diminish learning for both distance learners and in-person learners. We will try our best to match the student / teacher arrangement at the school-site level, but the numbers would have to align perfectly for this to occur. Most likely, we will establish a cohort of district-wide credentialed classroom teachers to teach distance learning students across the district. This is a part of the*

### SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

1651 Sixteenth Street • Santa Monica • California 90404-3891 • (310) 450-8338 • [www.smmusd.org](http://www.smmusd.org)

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

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

**Superintendent:** Dr. Ben Drati

reason why we need all families to fill out the form so that we can staff adequately. We will seek to keep students in the same class currently together with their peers in the newly created distance learning classes.

**Question: What measures will the schools have for testing and contact tracing?**

**Answer:** We have arranged for surveillance testing prior to the decision to return full-time. The information regarding testing is linked here: [COVID-19 Surveillance Testing for Staff and Students](#). We are currently exploring the idea of pool testing as a viable approach for expanding the district's testing regimen. More information will be provided regarding this method. I also urge each of you to watch the [Video, SMMUSD Health Symposium, 3/25/21](#) (Password: ktR7a%cu) that the district organized with local health experts regarding COVID-19. Testing was discussed extensively.

**Question: What will be the criteria for notification of a potential exposure?**

**Answer:** The district has established and shared information in written form as well as in meetings throughout the year that describes safety protocols including managing exposure. [Linked](#) is information about all health-related measures, including the [Case Response Guide](#) that addresses this question. The link also contains access to the district COVID-19 [dashboard](#) including live updates of COVID-19 cases in the district and by school site. Each school has a specific safety plan that is posted on the home page of each school website.

**Question: Can you explain how lunchtime will be handled?**

**Answer:** Unlike the three (3) foot distancing within the classroom, six (6) foot distancing outside of the classroom and while students are on lunch break and during passing periods for secondary is still the expectation, per the protocol by the Centers for Disease Control, state and county health departments. During lunch, students will be served through a grab-and-go system will be expected to be six feet apart while they are outside. Staff will educate and monitor students throughout lunch. Principals will share their plans prior to the start of full in-person return following spring break. It is our expectation that some schools will have multiple lunch periods to aid in proper distancing.

In conclusion, we realize that the news of the district moving to full reopening is a joyous occasion for some and difficult and concerning for others. We believe that our chosen direction is one that meets the needs of parents and students. Please fill out the [commitment form](#) if you haven't done so already as the information will allow for district staff to finalize the staffing arrangements needed at all school sites.

Thank you for your patience and I hope you are all able to enjoy some family time with your loved ones over spring break.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent