



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 9, 2020

Superintendent's Message: Reopening Planning
Seeking Parent / Staff / Student Input
Virtual Town Hall Meetings Planned for Oct. 21 & 26

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, and Community Members,

Please join us for two virtual town hall meetings to discuss our reopening planning, October 21 at 6 p.m. for secondary school focus and October 26 at 6 p.m. for elementary school focus. Zoom links coming soon. Both sessions will be recorded for future viewing.

Thank you to our parents, teachers and secondary students for taking the recent distance learning district survey, so that we can continue to improve the learning and teaching experience for our students and staff. We had a great response. We will use the information gathered to address areas where we can improve, while continuing to deliver what is working. We will share survey results at our October 15 [school board meeting](#), and post the results on our website www.smmusd.org/School2020-21

Simultaneously, we continue to work toward developing a safe and effective way of bringing students and staff back to campuses, once we are given the authorization by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) and Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) to reopen and once our district's protocols are aligned to the county's protocols for a safe return.

As discussed in previous meetings, LA County and our school district are adhering to California's [reopening protocols](#) for schools. Within the state's reopening criteria, each county is assigned to a tier based on its test positivity and adjusted case rate. At a minimum, counties must remain in a tier for at least three weeks before moving forward. Data is reviewed weekly and tiers are updated on Tuesdays. To move forward into a less restrictive tier, a county must meet that next tier's criteria for two consecutive weeks. If a county's metrics worsen for two consecutive weeks, it will be reassigned to a more restrictive tier. Public health officials are constantly monitoring data and can step in, if necessary. Based on the current data projections, LA County would be eligible to move into a less restrictive tier as early as November, if the county's COVID-19 case rate and test positivity rate continues to improve.

In order for us to reopen our schools, we will need to adhere to strict LACDPH safety [protocols](#) for our students, staff, and visitors. We continue to work toward establishing the required protocols for a safe and effective return to school. We are in the process of providing for the return of small cohorts of special education and English learner students for services, as our first step, as authorized by LACDPH. I will be recommending that the school board approve January 5, 2021, as the earliest date for the safe return of all of our students and staff, based on our current status in regards to finalizing the implementation and installation of our safety protocols and the transition from distance learning to a form of in-person instruction.

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1651 Sixteenth Street • Santa Monica • California 90404-3891 • (310) 450-8338 • www.smmusd.org

Board of Education: Oscar de la Torre • Craig Foster • Jon Kean • Maria Leon-Vazquez

Laurie Lieberman • Ralph Mechur • Dr. Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein

Superintendent: Dr. Ben Drati



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While work is in progress, there is much that still needs to be done between now and January. We recognize that this needs to be a transparent and inclusive process, while steadily working toward an outcome in which students, staff, and parents/guardians feel confident and safe.

After months of analyzing the state's expectations, the LACDPH safety protocols, our staffing and fiscal situation, what neighboring districts are doing, and talking to parents and teachers, staff has drafted two options for reopening that address the safety protocols and support the social-emotional needs of our students. [Linked](#) is a description of the two models and safety protocols for reopening that we will be discussing with the community in various meetings throughout the month of October and seeking input before the school board makes a final decision at a special board meeting on November 12.

[Linked](#) is a list of the various school community engagement opportunities and platforms that will be used to gather input and address questions and concerns, including the two virtual town hall meetings. In the different forums, we will describe what is required of our district in terms of safety protocols and how our district staff plans to address the expectations in our planning. The plans we will discuss are preliminary. We hope to have the community learn about and understand the safety protocols and weigh in on various aspects of the preliminary plan, as we work toward establishing a final plan for reopening to in-person learning as soon as it is safe to do so. Further, parents and staff may submit comments through our [Let's Talk](#) portal, clicking on the *school reopening input* button. We will have a school reopening survey for parents, teachers, staff and secondary students following the two town hall meetings to gather your feedback.

We understand that some parents are interested in returning to partial or regular school as quickly as possible. We would prefer to have all students on campus similar to prior to the pandemic, but unfortunately, that is not our current reality. LA County continues to prohibit in-person school, except for small cohorts of special education and English learners, as described above.

Thank you to our parents and staff for your continued support of our students during this challenging time.

For updates on reopening and prior communications visit: www.smmusd.org/School2020-21. For COVID-19 information, testing sites, health FAQs and Halloween celebration guidelines visit: www.smmusd.org/Coronavirus.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent

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