



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 30, 2020

Superintendent's Message: Reopening Planning Progress and Upcoming Survey

Dear Parents, Guardian, Staff and Community Members,

I want to provide an update regarding reopening plans. We concluded the second of two town hall Zoom webinar meetings on Monday. In the presentations, we described the two options for reopening we are inviting the school community to consider:

Hybrid Model (In-Class AND Online Learning):

The working assumption under the hybrid model is that schools can accommodate a maximum of 50% of students in-person at a time. Under the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) [protocols](#), students are required to maintain 6' of physical distance in the classrooms. Based on an analysis of classroom size and enrollment in every school, in most cases we can only support 50% of the students at one time. We will be adaptable based on population size by school, and classroom size, therefore this may differ from school to school. Our neighboring school districts are establishing similar hybrid models for their students.

With the required safety guidelines in mind, we must create a structure that allows each school's student population to be divided into two cohorts, "A" and "B," and students in each cohort would be scheduled to attend school alternating two (2) or three (3) days/week OR for (5) days/week every other week. With the hybrid model, we will provide an opportunity for parents and students to elect to not return to class for in-person instruction so there will also be a third cohort of students who will continue to receive instruction virtually without any in-person instruction. SMMUSD, like many districts, are currently exploring technological devices that would allow each class to be taught to an in-person cohort AND live streamed synchronously to the two cohorts of students not attending in person. In other words, the entire class would receive instruction at the same time, whether students were in class or attending remotely.

Distance Learning AND Approved School Activities

With this model all students participate in distance learning only as we are currently experiencing and staff will work to bring students on campus as much as possible and within the safety precautions established by LACDPH, as they evolve. Examples of activities include: arts, labs, sports teams, specific special education programs, English learner services, selective and approved activities and clubs. Parents have the option of not having students participate in activities, if that is preferred.



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Ultimately, safety protocols are guiding SMMUSD and many public school districts in the state and county toward viable options proposed for reopening. The majority are reopening with some form of hybrid model, similar to our proposed plan.

One of the two proposed models will begin once the LACDPH has given the go ahead for districts to reopen in LA County and based on the state's protocol for reopening of schools. We expect this to be Jan. 5, 2021 at the earliest. As described in our meetings, LA County is currently in the Purple Tier (widespread) and schools may not reopen for in-person instruction until the county has been in the Red Tier (substantial) for two weeks.

Our [COVID-19 comprehensive safety plan](#) is in place and we are transforming our classrooms and school sites to safely welcome students and staff when we are given the green light. We have been nimble and responsive to frequent changes by the LACDPH. We will be ready to reopen when allowed to do so, based on the model selected by parents, staff and students, and approved by our school board. The linked safety plan describes the process for students and staff entering campus and expectations.

We had originally announced our intent to survey the parents, secondary students, and staff this week in order to gauge your model preference. Based on the information we received from the town hall meetings, the numerous and various stakeholder meetings, questions and comments gathered from the district's "Let's Talk" portal, and emails received, we have decided to hold off on the survey until November 9th to allow for more conversations about the nuances of the models and particularly the hybrid model.

In the next two weeks, school principals will be engaging their respective staff and parents to discuss and unpack the nuances of reopening options we are currently considering for reopening. In particular, the hybrid option is the more complex option to process. It is our hope that engaging in a more intimate setting at the school site level will provide more clarity about what is being proposed.

We have received and heard your voices in our process. Even though our school board and district leaders are unable to directly respond to each of you, we are listening and have adjusted our models based on your feedback. We are working on a Frequently Asked Questions document that we will share soon.

The presentation and video recording of the two town hall meetings are available online:

Presentations: [English](#) [Spanish](#)

Town Hall recordings: www.smmusd.org/School2020-21.



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K-2 waivers

We have had questions about the K-2 waivers that LA County has offered to schools, primarily in districts with high enrollment of socio-economically disadvantaged families. We are analyzing all aspects of what it means to be granted a waiver and we are working on the applications.

We have begun to provide some services in person, as guided by LACDPH, including special education assessments and athletic conditioning. We are working to provide supports for English learners shortly.

Additionally, we are close to providing in-school work hubs and child development services. Next week I will provide an update on our continued expansion of in-person services.

We appreciate the ongoing hard work by our teachers, staff and administrators to make further progress for our families who want to come back to school, all while maintaining a robust and effective distance learning program for our students.

Please enjoy a safe and responsible Halloween.

Here are [LACDPH Halloween guidelines](#).

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent