

April 23, 2020

Dear Team PUSD,

I hope you and your families are safe and healthy. We miss seeing our students during this time of physical distancing. I know that this has been difficult for many of us. I appreciate your patience and understanding of the tremendous effort it took to roll out our distance learning initiative to over 36,500 students. Many have asked or inquired whether the participation in distance learning is optional. Just as attending school is not optional, distance learning is not optional. Distance learning has moved school out of the classroom and onto an online platform. To minimize the disruption in our students' education, we expect our students to continue learning and building upon the knowledge and skills they've acquired throughout the school year. We need your help to ensure your child is ready to progress to the next grade level in the Fall.

Governor Gavin Newsom recently unveiled California's [Roadmap to Modify the Stay-at-Home Order](#), which describes six indicators that must be met before he will consider lifting the order. Based on the Governor's Roadmap, the San Diego County Office of Education has created a long-term planning document for local K-12 districts. You can review the detailed document [here](#). I realize some of the information is quite sobering and may be difficult to process, but I wanted to provide you with the information that district leaders across our county are using as a guide and reference as we make decisions that impact our schools and students.

According to the Governor and the CDC, schools will not return to **normal** (prepandemic) operations unless all of the following conditions have been met:

- a. If the California stay-at-home order has been lifted
- b. If the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in San Diego County has remained constant or declined for 28 consecutive days
- c. If the directive to physically distance has been removed
- d. If limits on group gatherings have been lifted

Based on the SDCOE's planning document, if and when schools are permitted to re-open, the following **modified** operations will be required:

- a. Proactive screening of students and staff for symptoms
- b. Social distancing and face coverings in all settings
- c. Limits on group gathering size (Loosening of restrictions is likely to be stepped down in phases - such as limiting the number of students on campus and in classrooms at one

time)

While we have seen some promising signs of “flattening the curve,” the number of COVID-19 cases and deaths in San Diego County continue to rise. Our County’s [stay at home order](#) remains in effect. At this point, meeting the conditions for reopening our schools may not be likely prior to the end of the 2019-20 school year. The above guidelines are based on the current public health situation and current knowledge of the virus. Some of you have asked, why the District just doesn’t make the decision now to close schools through the end of the school year. As you have seen, circumstances during this pandemic change rapidly, and so there is no way to predict what will happen in the upcoming weeks or months. Like many of you, we are all trying to remain hopeful because our students, staff, and parents have expressed the strong desire to celebrate milestones and achievements together, if possible. I am tremendously impacted when I receive emails and messages from our graduating seniors, pleading for the opportunity to graduate with their classmates and not miss out on one of the most memorable moments in their lives. My job is to balance our students’ best interests with the health and safety of our community. That is why we have not yet made the final decision to close all schools through the end of the 2019-20 school year.

That said, superintendents across the county and the state have been advised to plan for alternatives to traditional graduation ceremonies and promotion assemblies. Thousands of parents, students, and staff participated in our recent survey regarding year-end ceremonies, and respondents overwhelmingly indicated a desire to postpone graduations and promotions until July or August, when it might be safe to gather in person. While this remains our priority and desire, it is also prudent to start considering alternative types of ceremonies in the event that it is still not safe to gather in July or August. We are forming committees of students, staff, and parents to develop viable options for us to consider as we plan for the 2019-20 graduation and promotion ceremonies.

Health experts have shared that a second wave of COVID-19 infections is expected, possibly coinciding with flu season in October or November. They anticipate this wave will not be as significant as the first but could result in site, district, regional, or countywide school closures for up to four weeks. This would require us to continue distance learning in the Fall. I assure you: PUSD remains committed to creating the highest quality educational experience possible for our students. PUSD will be prepared, should this be necessary.

Online learning and innovation has been accelerated for school districts across the country. We have turned the education model on a dime, and I know there are still ways we can improve. We have heard many success stories as well as challenges. Based on feedback from our students, parents, and staff, we are committed to continually refining and working hard to improve teaching and learning throughout PUSD. Our Technology and Innovation department continues to provide devices, internet access, professional development, and support for staff and students. Our administrators and teachers continue to refine their distance learning skills and capacity, to create robust and meaningful instruction for all students. You can view our distance learning plan [here](#). [This is the resource that guides our work.](#)

Again, I realize all of this information can be overwhelming and presents huge challenges for staff as well as the families whom we serve. Please know that Team PUSD is committed to ensuring that we are prepared for whatever the future may hold for our District and students.

In partnership,
Marian Kim Phelps, Ed.D.
Superintendent