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Date: June 12, 2020

To: Families of Santa Cruz County

Re: State Guidance on School Reopening, and the Budget Battle in Sacramento

Dear Families of Santa Cruz County,

Our local school communities have been waiting anxiously to receive guidance from state agencies for clear direction on the re-opening of schools. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the California Department of Education (CDE) have both released documents that have been developed using the recommendations of public health authorities and are subject to change as the health crisis evolves. While these state agencies have released these general guidelines to support all counties, districts and schools will need to follow the directives of their local public health authorities.

The CDPH guidance reflects ongoing safety concerns around COVID-19. The interim guidance is based on the “best available public health data, international best practices currently employed and the practical realities of managing school operations.” In addition, CDPH also released updated guidance for childcare programs and providers, including resources for parents and employers supporting employees with childcare needs.

These documents offer a handful of suggestions for how to reopen while maintaining social distancing, which could include keeping half the students home each day or providing in-person instruction primarily for the youngest students who are learning to read and write. However, the guide is mostly a checklist which includes nearly 80 questions districts need to answer that presents dozens, if not hundreds, of logistical issues schools will need to consider over the next two months.

To view the guidance documents referred to above, please visit the following links:

- CDE Reopening Schools Document: www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/strongertogether.asp
- CDPH Interim School Guidance: covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-schools.pdf
- CDPH updated guidance for childcare programs and providers: covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-childcare.pdf

Our next step is to review this guidance with our local public health officer, Dr. Gail Newel, to develop specific direction for the schools of Santa Cruz County. Our goal is to define school parameters that allow us to reopen schools while minimizing risks to students and staff. Our planning continuums include scenarios with students attending school a few days out of the week and other scenarios where students are in school every day. We recognize that configurations that require students to participate in distance learning from home will continue to impact families.

Key to the reopening of schools is ensuring we have the financial resources to open school safely. Leaders of both houses of the Legislature confirmed that they are not going to be able to reach an agreement with the Governor before the deadline for having a budget bill ready for voting on Monday. Our legislative representatives feel strongly about their approach to protecting school funding and are remaining firm on their stance, however, we are concerned that Governor Newsom will continue to insist on cuts to education funding which could become likely to pass the longer the budget proposal draws out. The two leaders said that they will pass their version of the budget on Monday in order to meet the Legislature's constitutional deadline but will continue meeting with the Governor to reach an agreement in time to enact a new budget by July 1st. Schools will need the help of our community to call on our state representatives to continue advocating for education. Please visit www.sccoe.link/legislative_Advocacy to find some helpful resources to participate in legislative advocacy for schools.

Additional Information

For the latest local updates on the coronavirus pandemic, visit the Santa Cruz County Public Health website at: <https://sccoe.link/SCPublicHealth>. In addition, you can also call 211 or text "coronavirus" to 211211. The Santa Cruz County Office of Education continues to update its web page and resources at www.sccoe.link/coronavirus.

Yours in education and equity,

Laurie Bruton, Superintendent, San Lorenzo Valley Unified School District
Lorie Chamberland, Superintendent, Live Oak School District
Eric Gross, Superintendent, Pacific Elementary School District
Mike Heffner, Superintendent, Bonny Doon Union Elementary School District
Tanya Krause, Superintendent, Scotts Valley Unified School District
Michelle McKinny, Superintendent, Happy Valley Elementary School District
Diane Morgenstern, Superintendent, Mountain Elementary School District
Kris Munro, Superintendent, Santa Cruz City Schools
Michelle Rodriguez, Superintendent, Pajaro Valley Unified School District
Faris Sabbah, County Superintendent of Schools
Scott Turnbull, Superintendent, Soquel Union Elementary School District