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Date: March 19, 2021
 To: Families of Santa Cruz County
 Re: **School Reopening, Distancing, Sports Guidance**

Dear Families of Santa Cruz County,

The schools of Santa Cruz County continue to move forward with efforts to bring our students back to the classroom safely. On March 10th, Santa Cruz County’s adjusted COVID-19 case rate [dropped to 5.3](#) which [promoted our county to the Red \(Substantial\) Tier](#) within the [Blueprint for A Safer Economy](#) allowing middle schools and high schools to provide in-person instruction in a hybrid schedule. The following chart details the start dates for hybrid in-person instruction by each school district and grade:

	TK	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Bonny Doon ESD	3/15	3/15	3/15	3/22	3/22	4/5	4/5	4/5						
Happy Valley ESD		3/15	3/15	4/5	4/5	4/5	4/5	4/5						
Live Oak SD	3/22	3/22	3/22	4/5	4/7	4/7	4/7	4/7	4/8	4/8				
Mountain ESD	3/8	3/8	3/8	3/22	3/22	3/23	3/23	3/23						
Pacific ESD	3/8	3/8	3/8	3/8	3/8	3/15	3/15	3/15						
Pajaro Valley USD	4/5	4/5	4/5	4/12	4/12	4/12	4/12	4/19	4/19	4/19	4/19	4/19	4/19	4/12
Santa Cruz City	3/15	3/15	3/22	3/22	3/22	3/22	3/22	4/5	4/5	4/5	4/5	4/5	4/5	4/5
San Lorenzo Valley	3/15	3/15	3/30	3/30	4/13	4/13	4/13	4/20	4/27	4/27	4/20	4/27	4/27	4/27
Soquel Union ESD	3/15	3/15	3/15	4/6	4/6	4/12	4/12	4/6	4/12	4/12				
Scotts Valley USD	3/3	3/3	3/10	3/17	3/17	3/23	3/23	3/22	3/29	3/29	3/30	3/30	3/30	3/23

Our schools have worked diligently over the past year to implement a variety of new prevention protocols, offering vaccination to all staff, safety training, contact tracing, and COVID-19 surveillance testing for all school personnel in anticipation of expanding in-person instruction. Schools have also made environmental modifications to sites in order to minimize the risks to our students, parents, and staff visiting school sites. With these systems functioning together, we are confident that schools have ample preventative measures in place to minimize the risk of COVID-19 to students, staff, and families as we proceed with our reopening plans.

CDC Guidance on Classroom Distancing

Today, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) updated its guidance for schools regarding physical distancing in classrooms. The agency announced it "now recommends that, with universal masking, students should maintain a distance of at least 3 feet in classroom settings." However, it is important for our community to know that our **schools are required by law to follow the procedures set forth by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH)**. [CDPH guidance](#) continues to require all California schools to "Distance student chairs at least 6 feet away from one another, except where 6 feet of distance is not possible after a good-faith effort has been made." Until CDPH guidance changes, we are required to adhere to 6 foot distancing requirements. We recognize CDPH changes to the distancing requirements represent a fundamental component of our ability to open our schools fully and offer all students in-person instruction five days a week. We are hopeful that CDPH will be reviewing CDC's new guidance and updating state guidance very soon.

High School Sports

We are eager to help our students return safely to participating actively in sports as our county continues to improve in a variety of COVID-19 metrics. [CDPH has issued sports guidance](#) and continues to update a [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) document](#) to clarify some of the requirements for safe athletic practice and competition. We know that while our Adjusted Case Rate is below 7, there are no COVID-19 testing requirements for outdoor high-contact sports such as football, soccer, and water polo. However, indoor high contact sports such as basketball and wrestling must follow National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) level testing guidelines which could include both PCR and/or ongoing antigen testing. These CDPH documents further define limitations for parent observers to one supervising adult at games, differences between high/medium/low contact and indoor/outdoor sports. These sports guidelines that schools are legally required to adhere to continue to change daily. We encourage parents and community members to review guidance often in order to remain up to date on current restrictions.

Throughout this pandemic, our students, families, and staff have experienced differing levels of hardship that will require increased support and equitable services in the months ahead. We are elated to see our students return to the classroom and we are committed to ensuring all students have the resources and services they need as we recover from this crisis together. For more information about COVID-19 updates for schools, please visit our webpage at santacruzcoe.org/coronavirus.

Yours in education and health,

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