



Reopening of Schools 2020-2021 Midsummer Update

July 10, 2020

Dear SUSD Families,

Following the July 9 meeting of the Saratoga Union School District Board of Trustees, we would like to provide important updates regarding the reopening of schools for the 2020-2021 academic school year.

District office staff and leadership teams have been working through the summer to analyze a significant amount of information coming from federal, state, county health and education officials. As you can imagine, information changes daily as more is learned about COVID-19. SUSD has taken a purposefully cautious and measured approach while waiting for requirements from the Santa Clara County Public Health Department (SCCPHD) and Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) to be firmly established.

Based on the current information to date, SUSD is now able to present possible options for reopening school in the fall.

It is important to note that SUSD is in sound fiscal shape with “rainy day” reserve funds. While the state requires districts to carry 3% of their annual budget as reserve, SUSD has over 17% in reserve due to sound fiscal management by our board and Chief Business Officials over the past years. These extra funds give SUSD some flexibility in learning offerings for the coming year.

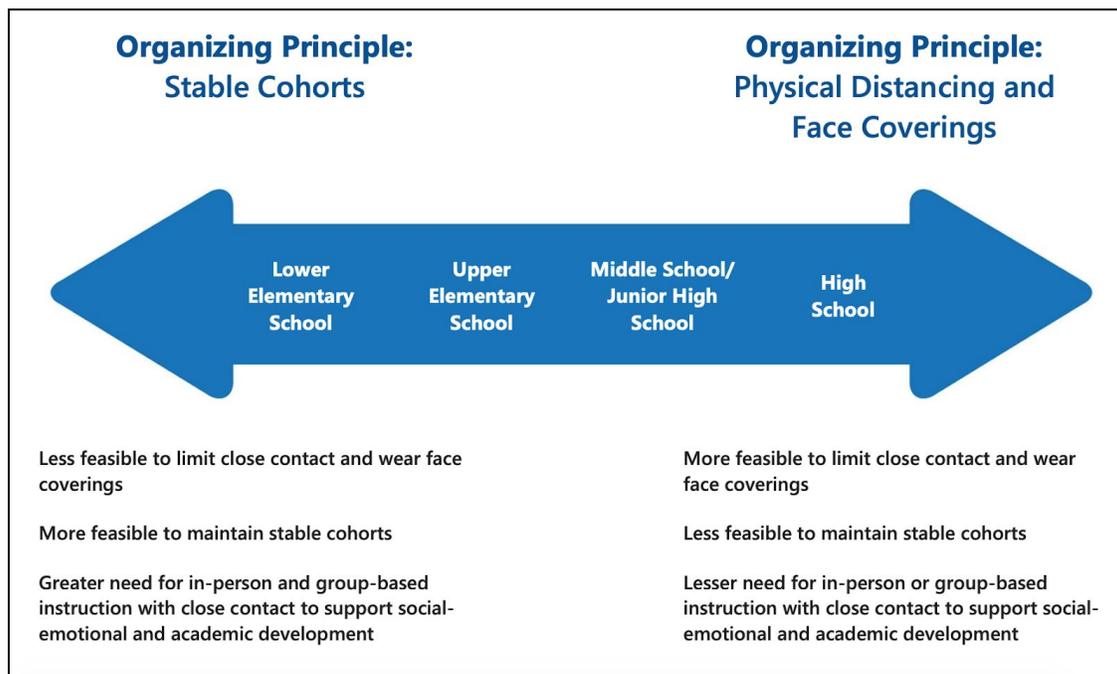
BACKGROUND

Since shelter-in-place began on March 17, SUSD deployed distance-learning to students. Students “attended” class online with their teachers for part of the day. Time attended depended on the age of the student - older students had a longer day, little ones a shorter day. Chromebooks and wireless hot-spots were deployed to students who needed them. Daily meal assistance was provided so no child would go hungry. An online resource page with assistance links, enrichment, and news was developed. Distance-learning summer school is in session for students who need the most support.

In early June, parents were surveyed to gauge their comfort level of returning to school as well as feedback about different learning models, distance learning, and safety.

Increased attendance and viewership of board office hours and board meetings have allowed for enriching conversation of parent concerns and questions.

On June 30, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department released the [COVID-19 Prepared: Reopening of Santa Clara County Schools](#) guide that outlines specific requirements for reopening schools to ensure the health safety of staff and students.



Source: Santa Clara County Public Health Department

In early July, teachers and staff were surveyed to determine their comfort level for teaching in person versus distance learning.

Throughout the summer, superintendents met with county public health and education officials twice per week to discuss and share. Frequent meetings were also held with state officials.

Superintendent Geisick was able to announce some good news at last night's meeting (July 9). The County Department of Education's interpretation of the new law around a distance-only option for students this next year has changed. As a result, we now believe that **we will likely be able to offer all SUSD families a choice between daily at-school learning or full-time distance learning.**

Additionally, last night the Board expressed its preference that students who choose at-school learning for this year attend school five days a week, tightly grouped into stable cohorts in order to limit any outbreak of COVID-19 and make contact tracing easier.

To support both the at-school learning and full-time distance learning options, it will cost a significant amount of additional money. The Board indicated a willingness to fund up to \$1 million towards that need with the hope that additional funds can be found from other sources, potentially including SEF.

District and school leadership teams will be working out the viability of this plan based on union negotiations, budgeting, and overall resources in the coming week. **The board expects to vote to officially adopt the choice of these two options at its July 16 regular meeting.**

Please review the presentations online at www.saratogausd.org/covid19. Important information about the various learning models, advantages and disadvantages, budget requirements, and county health requirements which inform all decisions are described in the presentation slides.

Additional meetings with parent leadership (PTA, SEF, and SSC presidents), Saratoga Teachers Association, and Saratoga Classified Association are taking place in the next couple of weeks.

Guidance and Direction

<p style="text-align: center;">From Public Health (County and State)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Requirements and recommendations to reduce risk of transmission of COVID-19 based on:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">evidence, scientific research, current available epidemiologic data, and practices</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Protect the health and safety of students, staff, and broader community</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">From SUSD Board of Trustees</p> <p style="text-align: center;">General direction and Guiding Pillars based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requirements and recommendations from Santa Clara County Public Health Department• Fiscal stewardship aligned to student and staff needs• Collaborative discussion with stakeholders (DLT, STA, SCA, SAC parent advisory)	<p style="text-align: center;">From SUSD Leadership Staff</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Classroom structure, class scheduling, logistics, day to day operations, implementation based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requirements and recommendations from Santa Clara County Public Health Department• Guiding pillars from Board• Best use of district resources• Enrollment numbers, staffing, classroom space
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Behind the scenes, staff are working on logistics and protocols: hand sanitizing stations and easy one touch sink faucets are being installed, deep cleaning is taking place, meetings with staff and parent leadership groups are occurring to get their input and suggestions, immunization records are being reviewed for new-to-district students.

Learning and Safety Protocols



Health and Wellness

- Follow county public health order
- Screening protocols in place
- Wear face during at least part of the day per county public health order
- Students and staff who do not feel well should STAY HOME
- Promote healthy hygiene practices
- Frequent hand washing scheduled throughout the day
- Hand sanitizer in classrooms and around campus
- Notification, quarantine, and return-to-school protocols in case of positive COVID-19 student, staff, or household member
- Social and emotional support for students and staff
- Adherence to state immunization requirements



Teaching and Learning

- Flexibility as the instructional model may vary through the year based on public health order: in person, hybrid, or distance learning
- Stable "cohorts" of students as much as possible
- Limit sharing of materials
- Special Education student support
- Remote/limited Redwood electives due to cohort scheduling or health factors
- Distance learning option for students who need it
- Limited or no assemblies and groups
- Preparation for possible school closures and 100% distance learning
- Leadership team to review and enhance distance learning



School and District Operations

- Safe and equitable learning and physical environments
- Physical distancing in classrooms, hallways, and meeting areas
- Signage
- Utilization of outdoor space and unused classrooms
- Intensified cleaning and ventilation
- Staff training on protocols/regulations
- Plan for staff who are at risk
- Drop off and pick up procedures, possible staggered start times
- Non-essential persons cannot be on campus including volunteers
- Tree House enrollment limited to ensure safe distancing and stable cohorts
- Continuation of school meals
- Fiscal stewardship
- Communicate, communicate!

Response to Outbreak:

Saratoga Union School District schools and programs will need to remain flexible throughout the 2020-2021 academic school year to meet evolving health conditions. Although the primary plan is to offer in-person learning and/or hybrid learning, distance learning may be required due to outbreaks.

COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS TO MAINTAIN STABLE COHORTS OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL

Also at the July 9 meeting, the board discussed [expectations](#) that the community will need to consider in order to make the cohort model effective for student/staff safety. As Board President Cynthia Miller stated regarding allocating up to \$1 million to maintain stable cohorts at school, "all of this will be for naught...if people aren't following the guidelines... All of this will be wasted money."

Right now, families can help by familiarizing yourself with the 3 R's to ensure a successful start of school:

- Get your child **Ready** to learn!
 - Practice wearing a mask. Per county requirements, masks will be required for teachers and middle school students. Younger students are required to wear masks when arriving/departing campus or outside the classroom. We strongly encourage that younger students wear their mask as much as possible.

- Read all communication from SUSD and your school. There will be a lot in the coming weeks.
- Model a positive attitude around your children. They take their cues from you.
- **Respect** for the health of your fellow teachers and classmates:
 - Practice good hygiene always.
 - Maintain safe physical distance.
 - Wear a mask to protect yourself and others.
 - Monitor your health symptoms.
 - Call or email school staff instead of coming into the office or campus. All offices are very limited in the number of people allowed inside.
- **Responsibility** to prevent the spread of COVID-19:
 - Complete daily health screen before coming to campus.
 - Adhere to school pick up and drop off procedures (details coming in August).
 - Keep your child home when they are sick or exhibit symptoms!
 - Adhere to notification, quarantine, and return-to-school protocols if your child or someone in your household tests may have COVID-19 (details to be posted).
 - Lastly, although school staff cannot enforce what families do outside of school hours, we ask that ALL students' and their household members:
 - Follow county health orders 24/7
 - Ensure any off campus activities adhere to health order (i.e. family gatherings, playdates, tutoring, sports, camps, events)
 - Limit travel of all household members
 - Consider starting a “quarantine” two weeks before the start of school to ensure that your child is healthy to enter school

Classroom cohorts are effective ONLY if everyone follows the county health guidelines both in and out of school.

TIMELINE

In the coming weeks, a detailed parent guide regarding the reopening of school will be published.

Following the board vote on July 16, parents will receive a survey the next day to select their choice of on-campus learning in the classroom or distance learning for the fall semester.

Stay tuned for more information as August 13 approaches.

