

August 7, 2020

Dear NUSD Family,

I hope this message finds you and yours healthy, well and rested. It was a brief summer for many of us as we worked around the clock to prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, which I hope will be a year unlike any other.

One of my strongest beliefs is that we can get through anything together. The COVID pandemic is putting this belief to the test. I continue to see evidence of our shared commitment to safety, supporting, teaching, and learning. We can do anything - together.

Today marks the first of my communications for the 2020-2021 school year. It is long with much to cover:

- Our commitment to safety and our preparations for a return to campus
- California's County Watch List and how the watch list impacts our return to school
- Some clarifications on our negotiations
- Devices for students in grades TK-12
- The Virtual Learning Academy
- Flexible In-Person Learning

Our Commitment to safety and our preparations for a return to campus

Our number one priority is now and has always been the safety of our students, staff, and community. We care about the health and safety of our NUSD Family. This has never been more important than it is today. We know no students will not be returning to school before September 8, and potentially much later. In spite of this, we will be prepared on August 20. Since March, we have worked tirelessly to accumulate significant amounts of personal protection equipment (PPE). This includes, but is not limited to:

- Cloth face masks
- Disposable face masks
- Clear plastic face shields
- Disposable gloves
- No touch thermometers
- Toilet seat liners
- Varying sizes of hand sanitizer dispensers and refills
- Soap and paper towel refills
- Plexiglass dividers for varying situations.

NUSD maintenance team members are working with each principal to map out one way paths around campuses and arranging drop off and pick up locations with clear signage. Principals are also working on unique safety plans for each of their campuses. When the time comes, our schools will be ready for a safe return.

California's County Watch List and how the watch list impacts our return to school

California's County Watch List will play a large role in determining when it is safe to consider a return to on-campus learning. The State of California has outlined clear criteria which counties must meet before it is safe to consider a return. These include the percentage of COVID positive test results, the number of positive cases per 100,000 people in the county, and other metrics around hospitalizations and ICU beds. These criteria are all tracked and dictate when we can begin to consider a safe return. Marin County is currently far outside of the targets to return when it comes to the number of positive cases per 100,000 residents of Marin County. Anyone can track this information [here](#), Considerations will also include other local conditions including discussions with our Labor Partners.

Some clarifications on our negotiations

We value and profoundly appreciate all that our teachers and staff have endured since March when we transitioned to remote learning. It was a herculean effort and I'm so proud of the work we accomplished in the spring. The uncertainty of returning to school, and what we can realistically do to return safely is foremost on my mind. Our relationship with all of our bargaining groups are critically important to me and to NUSD's success. There has been much discussion regarding negotiations and I feel the need to clarify some key topics.

We have held productive and collaborative check-ins or formal negotiation sessions with the Novato Federation of Teachers (NFT) on the following dates: April 1, April 23, April 30, June 15, June 25, July 1, July 20, July 23, July 28, August 4. More are scheduled. These dates do not include communications exchanged via email and phone that further the negotiations process.

We have held productive and collaborative check-ins or formal negotiation sessions with the California School Employees Association (CSEA) on the following dates: April 21, April 30, May 4, May 18, June 1, June 15, July 2, July 29. More are scheduled. Again, these dates do not include the numerous communications exchanged via email and phone that further the negotiations process.

I also want to correct a misconception regarding negotiations representatives and authority. NUSD's Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources is the Chief Negotiator for NUSD and has full authority from the Board of Trustees to reach agreement with our Unions and other groups. Other District representatives support the process as appropriate, directly or indirectly.

Our negotiations are held confidentially and communicating around the specifics of negotiations is challenging. All I can say is that these negotiations are critically important, that I am somewhat worried about how negotiations are going, and that I am optimistic we will come to agreement soon knowing this is best for our students, NUSD, NFT, CSEA, and our community. I believe in these relationships.

While we are committed to having a mutually beneficial MOU signed as soon as possible that outlines additional supports for a safer return to school. In the absence of a signed MOU, there are existing contracts between NUSD, NFT, and CSEA that will dictate the terms of safely returning to work and school.

Devices for students in grades TK-12

NUSD will be starting the school year remotely. Due to the generosity of our community in passing our Measure G facilities bond, NUSD provides Chromebooks to all students in grades 3-12. Additionally, thanks to very strong partnerships with Comcast, Marin Promise and the Marin County Public Library, we are able to ensure that all our students have internet access.

As we start the school year remotely, we are implementing a plan to provide all students TK-12 with a device during the period of remote learning. When the school year begins all of our second grade students will receive a Chromebook. We are currently finalizing plans to get iPads into the hands of all of our TK-1 students. Due to supply chain disruptions and heightened needs, we will not have a sufficient number of iPads by August 20. We are currently developing a priority based system for iPad distribution and will provide more details as soon as we can.

The Virtual Learning Academy

We currently have more than 1200 students signed up to participate in the Virtual Learning Academy (VLA) making this the largest school in our District. We are working closely with the VLA co-principals, Elizabeth Olinyk and Amanda Davis, to build out the academic program and with NFT to staff the program. This is not without its challenges as VLA is so large and will be serving students in grades K-12. Those families who have opted to enroll in the VLA will be hearing directly from Elizabeth and Amanda as they finalize their plans and schedules.

Flexible on Campus Learning

Those families who have opted for the Flexible In-Person Learning will be contacted by their schools as more information becomes available. As of today, we know that this program will be held all virtually until at least September 8.

As I close, I want to reiterate a couple of key points:

- Safety will be the driving force behind all of the decisions we make. We care deeply about the health and safety of our entire NUSD Family.
- We can do anything - together.

We are asking a lot of all of our NUSD family members. Staff, students, and parents are going to be placed in situations they didn't sign up for, were not trained for, and will all be doing their best. I implore each of us to be kind, thoughtful, supportive, generous with praise and patient.

Sincerely,

Kris



Kris Cosca, Superintendent

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