



District Communication July 21

SIERRA SANDS Unified School District

Dear Parent/Guardian,

COVID-19 has impacted and will impact Sierra Sands operations for the foreseeable future. On March 16, 2020, we decided to close our schools as part of a nationwide effort to limit the spread of COVID-19. Since that time, we have analyzed and continue to analyze ways to serve our students and community and other efforts to minimize, to the greatest extent possible, the disruptive effect the school closures will have on our students' education while also ensuring the safety of all students and staff involved in the District's operations. Based on guidance from state and local health officials, including the significant guidelines that have been imposed on the District, Sierra Sands must implement distance learning at the start of the 2020-2021 school year until guidelines and conditions permit in-person learning.

I want you to know two things: (1) Even while we are teaching and supporting through distance learning, we are preparing for when we can return to on campus, in person learning. (2) We hear you - and we have learned a lot from our initial implementation of distance learning. We recognize that there are many improvements required to assure the highest quality learning opportunity possible for all students, while we are temporarily utilizing distance learning as our instructional delivery.

With board approval at this evening's special board meeting, Sierra Sands staff will focus on establishing a high quality distance learning program to begin the school year. Here is a partial list of our growth plan:

- Provide the technology and digital access needed so that every student is connected to and engaged with his/her teacher(s).
- Implement Canvas, a districtwide learning management platform to support efficient and effective distance learning for students, teachers, and parents. The use of Canvas will help teachers innovate and engage all Tk-12th grade students.
- Increased communication and training in Canvas for parents/guardians.
- Provide significant professional development for administrators, teachers, and staff so that we can build and support a digital learning environment that meets the unique challenges of today.
- Identify new and better ways of communicating and for serving our students with the greatest needs. We hope to build Student Support Hubs where students with special needs can receive specialized services.

There are many details to communicate with you as we prepare to launch a most unusual school year amid a historic pandemic. You will continue to receive communication from the district that will help you plan and prepare to ensure your student and family success.

Attached to this message is a copy of the resolution that was adopted at this evening's special board meeting.

Sincerely,
Dave Ostash
Superintendent

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF THE
SIERRA SANDS UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**RESOLUTION ON SCHOOL CLOSURES AND DISTANCE LEARNING
AT THE START OF THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR DUE TO
COVID-19 UNTIL GUIDELINES AND CONDITIONS
PERMIT IN-PERSON LEARNING**

DISTRICT RESOLUTION #2 2021

On a motion by member Kurt Rockwell, and seconded by member Tim Johnson, it is hereby resolved to adopt the following Resolution:

WHEREAS, on March 4, 2020, the Governor of California declared a State of Emergency due to the outbreak and spread of a novel coronavirus (COVID-19);

WHEREAS, on March 16, 2020, the Sierra Sands Unified School District announced the closure of its school facilities to prevent and contain the spread of COVID-19;

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2020, the Governor of California issued an executive order directing all individuals living in the State of California to stay home or at their place of residence, with limited exception, until further notice;

WHEREAS, on March 31, 2020, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction recommended that all schools in the state consider closing physical campuses to ensure the safety of students through the end of the 2019-2020 school year;

WHEREAS, on April 2, 2020, after consultation with the Kern County Department of Public Health and the Kern County Superintendent of Schools, the Sierra Sands Unified School District announced that it would complete the 2019-2020 school year utilizing alternative teaching methodologies, including online distance learning;

WHEREAS, on June 8, 2020, the California Department of Education (“CDE”) released a guidebook to assist local educational agencies related to the reopening of schools, which outlines several health and safety measures to be implemented for resuming in-person instruction;

WHEREAS, according to the CDE guidebook, school districts must ensure that the state and the county in which the school district is located have lifted or relaxed the stay-at-home or shelter-in-place order to allow schools to physically reopen;

WHEREAS, according to the CDE guidebook, school districts must consult with local public health officials to determine that there has been a sufficient duration of decline or stability of confirmed cases, hospitalizations, and deaths;

WHEREAS, according to the CDE guidebook, school districts must have sufficient protective equipment to comply with California Department of Public Health (“CDPH”) guidance for students and staff;

WHEREAS, according to the CDE guidebook, school districts should purchase a sufficient number of no-touch thermal scan thermometers for symptom screenings;

WHEREAS, according to the CDE guidebook, school districts must engage in symptom screening as students and staff enter campus, buses and other school facilities, consistent with public health guidance, which includes visual wellness checks and temperature checks with no-touch thermometers;

WHEREAS, according to the CDE guidebook, school districts must develop a plan to minimize access to campus and limit nonessential visitors;

WHEREAS, according to the CDE guidebook, school districts must develop a plan to protect and support students who are at higher risk for severe illness or who cannot safely distance from household contacts at higher risk;

WHEREAS, according to the CDE guidebook, school districts must develop a plan to address hygiene practices to ensure personal health and safety in school facilities and vehicles;

WHEREAS, according to the CDE guidebook, among many other things, school districts must plan to meet physical distancing standards in school facilities and vehicles;

WHEREAS, on July 17, 2020, the Governor of California announced a new pandemic plan for learning and safe schools and the CDPH issued updated guidance for schools and school-based programs which provides guidelines for in-person and distance learning;

WHEREAS, according to the updated guidance, all staff and students in 3rd grade and above will be required to wear a mask or face covering;

WHEREAS, according to the updated guidance, CDPH requires that all adults stay 6 feet from one another and 6 feet away from children, while students should maintain 6 feet of distance from one another;

WHEREAS, according to the updated guidance, schools should maximize space between students and between students and the driver on school buses to the greatest extent possible;

WHEREAS, according to the updated guidance, schools should minimize movement of students and teachers or staff as much as practicable and to maximize space between seating and desks;

WHEREAS, according to the updated guidance, activities where there is increased likelihood for transmission from contaminated exhaled droplets are not permitted;

WHEREAS, according to the updated guidance, any individuals who enter school facilities must undergo a health screening, and any student or staff exhibiting a fever or other symptoms will be immediately sent home;

WHEREAS, according to the updated guidance, schools should serve meals outdoors or in classrooms instead of cafeterias or group dining rooms;

WHEREAS, according to the updated guidance, schools located in counties that are on the state's County Monitoring List must not physically open for in-person instruction until their county has come off the County Monitoring List for 14 consecutive days;

WHEREAS, on July 18, 2020, Kern County was placed on the Governor of California's watch list due to an increase in COVID-19 cases;

WHEREAS, if Kern County remains on the Governor of California's watch list for more than three consecutive days, Kern County will be placed on the state's County Monitoring List;

WHEREAS, public schools, working together with local health departments, serve an important role in slowing the spread of COVID-19 and protecting vulnerable students and staff, and ensure students enjoy a safe and healthy learning environment;

WHEREAS, it is necessary to ensure the continuation of education and learning, to the greatest extent possible, while maintaining the health and safety of students and staff;

WHEREAS, the Board and administration have identified five guiding principles:

- Health and safety of students and staff
- Follow the law and take all reasonable steps to follow appropriate guidance
- Socialization and connection with students
- Provide nutritional services to our students
- Optimize our means of educating our students

WHEREAS, the whole child's needs are optimally served on campus;

WHEREAS, California Senate Bill 98, signed into law by the Governor of California on June 29, 2020, authorizes the Board to adopt a plan for distance learning for students;

WHEREAS, California Senate Bill 98, requires the District to implement in-person learning, "to the greatest extent possible;" and

WHEREAS, California Senate Bill 98 authorizes distance learning (1) as a result of an order or guidance from a state public health officer or a local public health officer, and (2) for students who are medically fragile and put at-risk by in-person instruction, and/or who are self-quarantining because of an exposure to COVID-19.

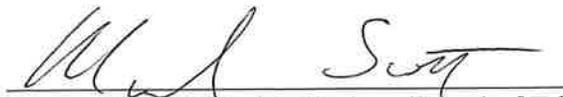
THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Board hereby finds that, based on the guidance from state and local health officials, including the guidance described above, the District cannot resume in-person instruction and must implement distance learning at the start of the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID-19 until guidelines and conditions permit in-person learning, as described in Senate Bill 98.
2. The Board hereby finds that it is in the best interest of the District, its students, its staff, and the community to provide instruction through distance learning at the start of the 2020-2021 school year due to COVID-19 until guidelines and conditions permit in-person learning;
3. The Board hereby determines that schools will remain closed until guidelines and conditions permit in-person learning and that all instruction will be provided through distance learning.
4. The Board understands that certain impacts and effects of this Resolution may be subject to the negotiations process and adopts this Resolution subject to the District's duty to bargain those impacts and effects. The Board understands that the District expects to enter memoranda of understanding with the unions and that those memoranda of understanding may affect certain terms of this Resolution. The Board will review those memoranda of understanding at the appropriate time and this Resolution, in no way, limits or inhibits the District's right and/or obligation to negotiate with the unions as described in the Educational Employment Relations Act.

Passed and adopted at a special meeting of the Board of Education of the Sierra Sands Unified School District on July 21, 2020.

Ayes Farris, Johnson, Rockwell, Scott
Noes 0
Absent 0

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a Resolution duly passed and adopted by said Board of Education at a special Board of Education meeting held on July 21, 2020.



Michael Scott, President of the Board of Education
Sierra Sands Unified School District