



SIERRA SANDS Unified School District

District Communication 3/24/21

Dear Parent/Guardian:

At the March 23 special meeting of the Sierra Sands Unified School District Board of Education, trustees unanimously approved a resolution (**see Resolution starting on page 2 of this document**) to bring TK-5th grade elementary students and high school seniors back to school on April 5, and 6th-11th grade secondary students by April 19.

Parents/Guardians of elementary school students: Student registrations have been completed for either In-person or Distance Learning (DL) schedules which will begin on Monday, April 5. If you have any questions, please contact your teacher or principal.

Parents/Guardians of seniors: You will be contacted by your school today about the registration process for In-person or Distance Learning (DL) scheduling. Seniors who choose In-person schedules will return to on campus instruction on Monday, April 5.

Parents/Guardians of 6th-11th grade students: The district is working on planning and schedule details. You will be contacted by your school soon to begin the registration process for In-person or Distance Learning (DL) scheduling. We do not yet have a firm start date, but a start date of no later than April 19 has been established. Updated information will be communicated with you in the coming days.

Hybrid In-Person Learning - what is it? Students who are registered for In-person learning will be in the classroom with their teacher for direct instruction for part of the day. **And, why?** From the beginning, we have promised parents that during this school year, there would be a choice between In-person and Distance Learning in our transition back to the classroom. To fulfill our promise, we must implement schedules that allow our teachers and staff to incorporate both types of instruction. It is a challenge to do this, but we know that every day counts. Returning back to the classroom is extremely important.

The In-person hybrid schedules in place for the remainder of this school year will allow for continuity of learning so that In-person or Distance Learning instruction will carry on with least disruption to our students.

Summary:

I want to thank everyone during this unexpected journey through the pandemic. Nothing about the journey for anyone has been perfect, but I am grateful for the teamwork we've come to rely upon among staff, students, and parents. Together, we maximized our efforts through Distance Learning. Now it's time to transition back into the classroom. It will be exciting to see how we integrate new learning methods into our new norm beyond this school year.

Sincerely,
Dave Ostash
Superintendent

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

**RESOLUTION ON IN-PERSON AND HYBRID LEARNING SCHEDULE FOR THE
2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR**

DISTRICT RESOLUTION #27 2021

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

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

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

WHEREAS, on August 28, 2020, Governor Newsom established the Blueprint for a Safer Economy, creating a tiered system for determining when and how community sectors can operate based on how prevalent COVID-19 is in each county;

WHEREAS, Kern County is presently in the Purple Tier in the Blueprint for a Safer Economy. The District anticipates that Kern County will move into the Red Tier no later than April 5, 2021;

WHEREAS, on June 29, 2020, Governor Newsom signed Senate Bill (SB) 98 into law, which requires, among other things, the District to offer and provide in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible;

WHEREAS, on March 5, 2021, Governor Newsom signed Assembly and Senate Bill 86, which also mandates that the District offer and provide in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible;

WHEREAS, SB 86 requires the District to “expand in-person instructional time and provide academic interventions and pupil supports to address barriers to learning and accelerate progress to close learning gaps.”

WHEREAS, SB 86 also strongly encourages the District to prioritize pupils who would benefit the most from in-person instruction and who have been identified as needing integrated supports or academic interventions, including, but not limited to, pupils with disabilities, youth in foster care, homeless youth, English language learners, pupils from low-income families, pupils without access to a computing device, software, and high-speed internet necessary to participate in online instruction, disengaged pupils, credit-deficient high school pupils, pupils at risk of dropping out, pupils with failing grades, and pupils identified as needing social and mental health supports. The Legislature identifies these students as “prioritized pupil groups;”

WHEREAS, under SB 86, when the District is in the Red Tier and eligible to provide in-person instruction for kindergarten and grades 1 to 12, the District must offer optional in-person instruction to: (1) all students who are individuals with exceptional needs, consistent with their IEPs; (2) all pupils in the prioritized pupil groups; (3) all students in elementary school; and (4) all pupils in at least one full grade level in middle school and high school;

WHEREAS, on January 14, 2021, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) released COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Instruction Framework & Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools in California, 2020-2021 School Year. The CDPH Guidance provides that schools may reopen at all grades if they are located in a county in the Red, Orange, or Yellow Tiers under the Blueprint for a Safer Economy. The CDPH Guidance also provides that schools serving grades K through 6 may reopen for in-person instruction in the Purple Tier, if they establish and post a COVID-19 Safety Plan (CSP) to their website, submit the plan to the local health officer and the State Safe Schools for All team for approval, and the county adjusted COVID-19 case rate is less than 25 per 100,000 population per day according to the Blueprint for a Safer Economy;

WHEREAS, pursuant to the CDPH Guidelines and to ensure the safety of all District staff members and students, the District has adopted safety and sanitation measures, including but not limited to enforcing the use of facial masks, providing PPE to students and staff, enforcing social distancing inside the classroom, on campus, and on District buses, utilizing comprehensive cleaning protocols, and improving air circulation/ventilation/filtration in District buildings;

WHEREAS, each District school site has adopted a COVID-19 Safety Plan, which addresses all safety precautionary measures taken to ensure the safety of students and staff, including, but not limited to, cleaning and disinfecting protocols, arrival and departure protocols, classroom protocols, food service, and transportation protocols. School site safety plans are available on the District's webpage at: http://www.ssusd.org/news/whats_new/c_o_v_i_d_-_19_preventative_actions_awareness;

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

- Health and safety of students and staff
- Follow the law and take 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, pursuant to the foregoing, including SB 98's mandate that the District offer in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible, the District will be prepared to implement instruction at all grade levels on or before April 19, 2021. Further, the District is committed to and has been negotiating the effects of the transition to a hybrid and in-person learning environment with the Desert Area Teachers Association, the Desert Area Guidance Association, and the California School Employees Association on mandatory subjects of bargaining and will continue to do so, as required by law.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

The Board hereby determines that the District shall implement the following schedule to transition to hybrid in-person learning:

1. On April 5, 2021, all students in grades Transitional Kindergarten (TK) through 5, and 12, shall have the opportunity to return to in-person, hybrid learning environment;
2. On April 5, 2021, all students who are individuals with exceptional needs, consistent with their IEPs, and all pupils in the prioritized pupil groups students shall have the opportunity to return to in-person, hybrid learning environment; and
3. On or before April 19, 2021, all students in grades 6 through 11 shall have the opportunity to return to in-person, hybrid learning environment.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT, 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 March 23, 2021.

Ayes: Farris, Houck, 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 March 23, 2021.



Bill Farris, President of the Board of Education
Sierra Sands Unified School District