

July 29, 2020

Dear La Jolla Cluster Family,

On July 16, 2020, the La Jolla Cluster held a Webinar session in which our Board Member Dr. Michael McQuary, our Area Superintendent Mitzi Merino, and the Cluster principals provided an update regarding the reopening of schools and a timeline for when families will receive information about the 2020-2021 school year. Please visit the [La Jolla Cluster website \(lajollacluster.com\)](http://LajollaCluster.com), where we have posted the slides from the principals' Webinar presentation along with links to videos (*Teachers Talk: Reopening with Remote Learning* and *Strategies for Successful Online Schooling During a Pandemic*), in which local teachers share their experiences around distance learning.

During the Webinar we received nearly 150 questions and comments, which the principals reviewed after the meeting. We appreciate that you took the time to share your important perspectives and concerns. As we expressed during the meeting, we do not yet have answers to many of the important questions you asked, including specific information about the new online learning program, the amount of time teachers will provide live instruction, the platforms that will be used, and so on. We were able to address some of your questions/comments, and we have provided responses to them here.

#### *Responses from July 16 Cluster Meeting Q & A*

*The District will provide an update on August 10, 2020, which will include details about the online learning program. Therefore, at this time, we don't have specific information in response to your questions about teacher training and accountability, schedules (including the amount of time teachers will be teaching via Zoom and the amount of time students will spend online), teacher planning, and platforms/learning management systems (LMS).*

*In response to how it will be different from distance learning from the Spring, per Area Superintendent Mitzi Merino's update, online learning is one of our growth areas, and we are committed to developing a stronger, more robust online learning experience for students. It will include daily student attendance, and a guaranteed viable curriculum will be in place with standards-based curriculum and assessments. grading will resume. More specific information will be provided during the District's update on August 10, 2020.*

Once we have insight into the District's plans, we'll be able to provide specific information about what it means for each of our school sites.

Here are some additional pieces of information:

- Muirlands Middle School
  - Seminar/GATE - Please go to our GATE information page on the Muirlands website:  
<https://www.sandiegounified.org/schools/muirlands/gate-program>  
For additional information please reach out to Principal Luna.
  - Math Placement for Incoming 6th Grade Students - Please go to our Math Placement Process page on the Muirlands website:  
<https://www.sandiegounified.org/schools/muirlands/math-placement-process> Due to the school closure, we were not able to administer the Math Readiness Assessment to our incoming 6th grade students. We are awaiting updated district guidelines, which we will use to place students in math classes.
- Grading/Assessment - Per Area Superintendent Mitzi Merino's update, grading will resume with online learning.
- Working Parents/Resources for Families/Child Care Needs - We realize the strain distance learning puts on families and are eager for all students to return to campus when it is safe to do so. The District will provide more information on the August 10 update.
- Survey Data - We administered informal surveys to students, staff, and parents. We value stakeholder feedback and have provided multiple opportunities for respondents to participate. The Cluster has no research staff devoted to data collection at this time.
- Funding for PPE - Our District leaders are working with state and federal agencies to advocate for increased funding.
- Construction/Air Conditioning - Maintenance of our facilities and construction projects, including HVAC (heating and air conditioning), continued during the closure. Here are the projected or final completion dates for the HVAC projects at our various schools: La Jolla High: end of September for all but 700 building (late November); Muirlands Middle School: late-September; Bird Rock Elementary: late-August; La Jolla Elementary: mid-August; Torrey Pines Elementary: mid-September.

- *Availability of School Office Personnel - At this time, we recommend emailing office staff and your school principal with questions. No staff are on campus to answer calls during the summer months.*
- *Enrollment - Each spring, school sites communicate with parents to obtain updated information regarding plans for next year. This summer, the school sent an initial survey to gather parent preferences for instruction, and we will be providing an additional survey in August for parents to provide updated preferences. This information will be used to determine staffing and student assignments for the fall.*
- *Kindergarten - School sites will be working with kindergarten teachers to plan for successful welcoming strategies. Sites will follow guidelines provided from our District Office during these conversations with teachers, as we prepare safe and intentional activities to address students' needs for connection. Additional details will be provided to families as soon as they become available. For questions regarding Choice enrollment, please contact the Neighborhood Schools and Enrollment Options office:  
<https://www.sandiegounified.org/neighborhood-schools-and-enrollment-options>.*

Please know that we hear you and we understand your concerns. On August 10, the District will be providing an updated assessment to families regarding when it will be safe to return to campus. Following the District's update on August 10, Cluster principals will be able to address your questions and concerns; principals will convey more site-specific information about what the 2020-2021 school year will look like for your children and families.

We also want you to know that we share the same goal as you: to have students return to school as soon as it is safe to do so. We share your frustration that a physical return to school is not realistic at this time. It's important to note that countries that have managed to reopen schools have had declining rates of coronavirus infections and widespread access to testing; unfortunately, California has neither. As we all know, with the unwieldy virus and infection rates at record levels, the District decided it would be in the best interests of students, staff and our community to start the new school year online.

As we move forward, here are our commitments to you:

1. We are preparing our campuses so that we can welcome our students back to school as safely as possible. From the moment we had to physically close our schools in the spring, our staff have been preparing and working to reopen them. The District has purchased Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and

implemented new cleaning protocols. We continue to develop and refine safety plans and procedures, and we are thinking of creative ways to use all of the spaces on our campuses.

2. When we launch online learning in the fall, it will be vastly improved for students and parents. The District has held Zoom sessions with thousands of parents, students and teachers. All stakeholders have shared their ideas about how to upgrade the experience, and we are incorporating these recommendations into our planning. The changes you can expect to see include more opportunities for students to interact with their teachers and peers, more information for families, and fewer software programs for parents to learn. In short, online learning will be better because it is being rebuilt to meet parents' and students' needs.
3. The District continues to monitor the public health conditions in San Diego County. Our decision to physically reopen schools will be based on science and medical research, and we are ensuring that we have the best information available. The University of California at San Diego (UCSD) has generously donated the time and expertise of some of their world-class medical researchers to help with this process. They are providing the guidelines we will use in deciding both when it is safe to reopen schools and what protections should be in place for students, families, and staff.
4. We recognize that there is no substitute for in-person instruction, so district staff and a variety of stakeholders continue to work diligently on a plan for a safe return to school. Accommodations could include desk shields or other means to help with social distancing. Masks will be required, and other protections will be in place.

We know that La Jolla families yearn for a return to normalcy. We share in that hope and look forward to the day when we can safely welcome our students back to our campuses.

We appreciate those of you who have taken the time to connect and share your perspectives with us and look forward to providing updated information as we are able. In the meantime, please let us know if there's anything we can do to assist your family during this difficult period. We wish you and your family continued health as we all prepare for the 2020-21 academic year.

Sincerely,

Mitzi Merino, Area 5 Superintendent

Chuck Podhorsky, La Jolla High School Principal

Jeff Luna, Muirlands Middle School Principal

Andi Frost, Bird Rock Elementary Principal

Stephanie Hasselbrink, La Jolla Elementary Principal

Nona Richard, Torrey Pines Elementary School Principal