



ALUM ROCK UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

2930 Gay Avenue, San José, CA 95127 · Phone: 408-928-6800 · Fax: 408-928-6416 · www.arusd.org

March 12, 2020

Dear Alum Rock Union Elementary School District Families and Community:

This is an update regarding our response to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). The Alum Rock Union Elementary School District (ARUSD) continues to work in collaboration with the Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) and the Santa Clara County Public Health Department to mitigate the spread of this virus. We have formatted the update in a question/answer manner for your convenience and quick reference.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Why aren't schools being closed since COVID-19 appears to be spreading?

Broadly closing schools is a decision that is not taken lightly and is a last resort as it causes significant community disruption. The most important reason we are not recommending school closures is because children are not at high risk for COVID-19 – if they were, like they have been for most pandemic flus, we would have a much lower threshold for deciding to close schools. Santa Clara County Public Health Department is working closely with SCCOE to provide guidance to districts and schools.

Another very important reason we're not closing schools right now is because of how much it disrupts society. Not every family or parent has the time off or the financial security to stay home from work with their child. Many families also rely on schools and staff for basic needs for their children, including regular meals, health care and child care. If schools shut down, vulnerable families will experience the greatest burden and suffer negative impacts.

In addition, when schools close children have to go somewhere. For many families this either means parents or relatives, such as grandparents, need to take care of them. Potential workforce shortages due to closed schools may blunt our health care system's response to COVID-19. Additionally, there may be an increase in exposure for the most vulnerable people in our community – older individuals as they may be caring for children at home.

We recognize that some children have underlying health conditions, such as weakened immune systems, that put them at higher risk. Caregivers of children with underlying health conditions should consult with healthcare providers about whether their children should stay home from school.

Currently, if a staff member or student in a specific school is confirmed to have COVID-19, the Public Health Department will work with individual schools, school districts and the County Office of Education, based on the specific facts and circumstances of that case, whether closure of that school is warranted.

Hilaria Bauer, Ph.D., Superintendent

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What should I do if my child is sick?

Please remember that the only entity that can determine if an individual has contracted COVID-19 is the Public Health Department. For all other illnesses, please consult with your health care provider. We recommend that if anyone is sick, please stay home. If the student has had fever, please stay home at least three days without fever before returning to school. This is only a recommendation, and you should follow medical directions.

How will student attendance be monitored?

Be assured that we are closely monitoring and following the direction of the Santa Clara County Health Department and the Santa Clara County Office of Education. As of this moment both agencies continue the guidance that school sites remain open and that students who are well continue to attend school. As such, we will continue to code any student who chooses to not attend school based on the concern of contracting the COVID-19 virus as "Unexcused." That being said, we also understand that families can still make a choice to keep their child(ren) at home during this time and for the next few weeks. We will not be taking any truancy action or disenrolling students accruing "Unexcused Absences". However, please be informed that we do not have the capacity to provide instructional support for well students who stay at home. If a student has extenuating health circumstances, please contact your site administrator to identify appropriate next steps.

Please know that we share your concerns and that student and staff safety is a top priority. As such, we are instituting enhanced cleaning of our school sites and reinforcing hand washing best practices, as recommended by the Santa Clara County Public Health Department. In addition, we are working with the Public Health Department and SCCOE to monitor student and staff absences.

What about travel and field trips?

At the present time, the Public Health recommends that non-essential travel of both students and staff be suspended due to the potential to increase the risk of transmission of COVID-19 into other communities this includes all field trips.

District-sponsored out of state travel (festivals, competitions, conferences) will be cancelled or postponed pending further updates.

All out-of-county district-sponsored events involving travel will be cancelled or postponed.

What do we do about school events?

We want to continue to hold school business as normal as possible given current circumstances. The most recent guidance from Public Health is that there are 4 considerations in evaluating events and we will use these to determine whether an event should be cancelled:

- 1) the size of the gathering
- 2) the mix of individuals from various areas and age brackets
- 3) the ability of individuals at events to remain at arms-length distance from each other, and
- 4) the duration of the event

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How is the district handling cleaning and sanitation?

We have enhanced cleaning activities throughout the district. Common areas such as doorknobs and water fountains are sanitized every day. Soap dispensers in every classroom are refilled every day. As you know, hand sanitizer is unavailable now; however, we do have a green-friendly sanitizer that we use all the time. We are making sure this is available to all sites. Please note that this sanitizer doesn't contain the required amount of alcohol, but we rather have something available. Deep cleaning of a classroom will be conducted when there are two or more flu cases.

How should I talk to my children about Coronavirus?

For now, keeping calm and reducing fear is essential. Stay open to their questions and explain that COVID-19 is similar to a flu virus. Reinforce to them the CDC recommended steps to stop the spread of germs:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Cover a cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw it in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

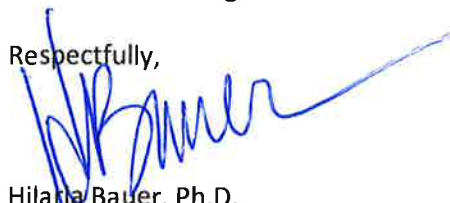
[Click here to view hand washing video for K-6 students](#)

[Click here to view hand washing video for 7-12 grade students](#)

[Click here for Preventing COVID-19 Spread in Communities](#)

All recommendations are effective from today until April 10th or earlier if an update is needed. We will continue to communicate information to all stakeholders as information becomes available. Our goal is to keep everyone healthy and to stop the spread of this virus. In the meantime, let's be positive and cautious to continue educating all our students to the best level possible.

Respectfully,



Hilaria Bauer, Ph.D.
Superintendent

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