

January 22, 2021

Dear Families,

This has been a week of momentous and historic changes on the national front. I hope that you and your students have had time to watch some of the inauguration ceremonies, reflect on the speeches and your reactions to them, and discuss the norms, traditions, and import of our constitutionally enshrined “peaceful transfer of power.”

As I promised in my [last community message](#), this week I am providing you with an additional update on our continued pursuit of a partial in-person reopening of our elementary schools on our March 8 target date. This remains a fluid situation, as both public health conditions and county/state guidance about those conditions are continually changing. However, we are diligently working to meet all timelines and comply with the shifting guidance and benchmarks in order to meet our goal for our families.

### Case Rate

- The current state threshold for opening schools is less than 7 cases per 100,000 residents. (This is part of the “[Blueprint for a Safer Economy](#)” plan.)
- The new proposed state threshold for opening schools is less than 25 cases per 100,000 residents. (This is included in the new “[Safe Schools for All](#)” plan.)
- As of today, the case rate for Alameda County is 37.7 cases/100,000 residents.

### Re-Opening Targets

As I wrote last week, our current goals are to:

- Begin offering small group support to vulnerable students - including those receiving special education services and those needing academic intervention - in February
- Open TK-5 on March 8 (if public health conditions allow)

Our principals and administrators are preparing to return to their school sites on February 1 in order to prepare for our small groups to return. District senior leadership will return to District Office on February 1 as well, although the building will remain closed to the general public.

Over the last several weeks, a number of families have asked if AUSD can apply for a waiver so as to open earlier. Unfortunately, Alameda County remains in the purple (most restrictive) tier of COVID-19 risks, and under the current state guidance, a waiver process is no longer an option.

In order to open on March 8, we are moving quickly to resolve several outstanding issues, including:

#### State approval

The "[Safe Schools for All](#)" proposal promises funding to support districts that re-open their schools this spring, but also impose some fairly significant requirements. One new requirement is that we submit a new COVID-19 Safety Plan to the California Department of Public Health before re-open. That plan is comprised of:

- A new 5-page checklist of information that needs to be included in our reopening plan
- A report for CalOSHA on how we will keep employees safe

Much of the information on the checklist is already included in the [November 12 Reopening Plan](#) that the Alameda County Public Health Department approved in mid-November. We are currently adding what is missing, as well as completing the CalOSHA report. We are aiming for a February 1 submission of these materials in order to qualify for the funds.

Please note: This new "Safe Schools for All" remains a proposal and will not go officially into effect until the state legislature approves it. At this time, however, we are aligning our preparations with that proposal.

#### Testing of All Students and Staff

According to revised guidance about the plan that we were sent on January 14, the proposed funding is accompanied by a substantial increase in the expectations around who gets tested and how often in a reopening scenario.

Specifically, to qualify state funds to support re-opening, AUSD needs to provide:

- Weekly testing to all staff and students if the case rate is greater than 14 cases/100,000 residents
- Biweekly testing to all staff and students if the case rate is less than 14 cases/100,000 residents

We have been in talks with testing providers for several weeks now and will be bringing potential contracts to discuss with the Board of Education at our meeting this [Tuesday, January 26](#). AUSD, like most school districts, does not have existing infrastructure or experience to execute what many see as a large-scale public health protocol. Despite this burden, however, we are aggressively working to secure contracts and dedicating significant time and attention to have this process in place ahead of March 8.

#### Agreements with Labor Partners

We are continuing to meet with the Alameda Education Association and the California School Employee Association to craft agreements that meet the needs and concerns of our community and our staff for both Learning Hubs and a return to in-person instruction. Our hope is to reach mutually acceptable agreements in the very near future.

#### Vaccinations

In California, educators are in the 1B phase for vaccination. Alameda County is still in the 1A phase. We have been told that the county will start releasing vaccinations for educators in the next several weeks. We will be working with the Alameda County Public Health Department and the Alameda County Office of Education to determine the most effective and efficient way to help our employees get vaccinated.

#### On Campus, In-Person Learning Hubs for Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities

This past Wednesday, letters were sent to families with students who have moderate to severe disabilities. That letter included a link to a survey to see how many of our families in this group were interested in participating in on-campus learning support groups, which we are working to open as early as possible in February.

If you are a family of a student with moderate to severe needs and have not received the letter or survey, please contact your student's case manager.

Please note that our goal is to progressively open as many additional small group learning opportunities for students with mild to moderate disabilities and our broader student community as soon as we can.

#### Summer and Fall Plans

We have begun discussing what programs we might be able to offer to support our most vulnerable students this summer, as well as address the challenges the pandemic has placed on many students' learning. We are also beginning to discuss what our schedules

and campuses might look like next fall. Obviously our hope is that improving health conditions, along with expanded vaccinations and testing systems, will allow for a fall reopening that looks more like the full day full cohort model of schooling we are all eager to revisit.

I realize this is quite a bit of detail to provide. I am providing it because I want our families and staff to know that we are working diligently and aggressively to re-open our schools as quickly as we can. As part of this work, on January 26 we will also be asking the Board to approve: a) schedules for schools when they partially re-open in March; and b) our applying for state funds tied to our meeting the requirements and February 1 deadline of the "Safe Schools for All" plan.

Respectfully,

Pasquale Scuderi  
Superintendent