



SPRING 2021
SPECIAL EDITION



THE DISTRICT BRIDGE
Reopening our Campuses.



OUR SCHOOLS

Bishop Elementary
Cherry Chase Elementary
Cumberland Elementary
Ellis Elementary
Fairwood Explorer
Lakewood Tech EQ
San Miguel Elementary
Vargas Elementary
Columbia Middle
Sunnyvale Middle

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

Jeffrey Arnett
Isabel Jubes-Flamerich
Michelle Maginot
Nancy Newkirk
Bridget Watson

Dear Friends,

We are back to in-person learning and we couldn't be happier!

When I visited our schools as students began returning to our campuses, I was so pleased to find that the necessary precautions — masking, physical distancing, screening — are no match for our students' enthusiasm. Masks can't hide eyes bright with excitement or muffle joyful shrieks as children reunite with friends and teachers.

We have learned so much about promoting social, emotional, and academic growth by working closely with students' families and community partners over the past year. We knew that creating equitable learning opportunities for children would prove more challenging — and be even more critical — amid pandemic conditions. We watched our team's inventiveness rise to new heights as teachers worked to create inclusive and supportive virtual communities for our children. And we delighted in seeing the children bring their own creativity and enthusiasm to virtual environments. It was a year like no other, and the resilience, creativity, and resolve we have demonstrated have given us confidence to tackle future challenges.

For now, we embrace this reopening effort with gratitude — so glad to be seeing children filling our classrooms and hallways once again, thankful to our families and community members who have supported our children during the past year, and grateful that we are emerging from this journey as a stronger Sunnyvale learning community.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Gallagher'.

Michael Gallagher, Ed.D.
Superintendent, Sunnyvale School District

What a year it was!

Safety, flexibility, high-quality teaching and learning, and equity are the principles that guided us during the past year and will continue to guide us as we joyfully welcome children back to classrooms.

Even with campuses closed, our SSD team and community partners never stopped working to ensure all students had what they needed. Our food service team packed meals, including frozen dinners, to be picked up safely at our schools. Sunnyvale Community Services, Assistance League of Los Altos, and Second Harvest of Silicon Valley all played a role in ensuring our families had nutritious food throughout the year.

Lockheed Martin and Google helped us provide additional electronic devices and hotspots so all of our 6000+ children could access lessons and engage in discussions with teachers and classmates. Teachers redesigned our standards-based lesson plans for online delivery, created an instructional video library for families, and safely distributed supplies to support hands-on learning.

And family members — themselves dealing with pandemic stress — met so many rising challenges, partnering with us every step of the way to help their children.





Safety first

While our students were adapting to their kitchen-table classrooms, our team was making changes that we hoped would allow for quick and safe return to face-to-face classroom learning.

Hand sanitation stations were added throughout each campus. Ventilation systems were inspected and improved. Many high-touch items were removed from classrooms to simplify increased daily disinfection.

Desks were spaced apart, and signs and floor markers were added to help remind children of social distancing and hygiene protocols.

Teachers and staff were trained in sanitation and disinfection techniques, and versed in how to retain a sense of community while maintaining required physical distancing and other safety measures.

Our administrative team also planned for hybrid learning models — a combination of in-class and virtual learning that would allow us to have fewer children on campus at any given time so we could gather safely.



Building for the future

School site changes were not limited to pandemic-related modifications. We have continued construction and construction planning at two of our schools.

Cherry Chase has exterior improvements scheduled for the summer of 2021! We will be painting the exterior of all the buildings on campus as well as the covered walkways. We will also be installing a new digital marquee in front of the school for timely communication to students and families.

Campus-wide modernization of Ellis Elementary School will also kick off in the summer of 2021. This project includes a new two-story classroom wing, a modernized kindergarten wing complete with a playground and shade structures for outdoor activities, a new multi-use building, new parking lots and drop-off areas, and site-wide hardscape and landscape improvements.

Thank you to our Sunnyvale community members who continue to support our construction efforts by passing bonds like Measure G and GG, which make projects like these possible.



Back to campus

While we were prepared to begin in-person instruction in January 2021, public health conditions in the County precluded us from doing so, with a few exceptions for highest-need children. As soon as conditions began to improve, we started preparing to bring more students back to campus in phases, beginning in March. Preschoolers, kindergartners, and first-grade students returned to campuses first.

Classes began with a hybrid model, with one group of students attending in the morning and the other group in the afternoon. This model allowed us to provide in-person instruction with small class sizes, so we could continue to physically distance. (Many families chose to continue virtual instruction instead of returning to campus.) In April, we welcomed back our second-through-eighth-graders under a similarly modified schedule.

We are looking forward to welcoming every child back for full, five-day, in-person instruction on August 18!



Eagles soar above and beyond

Ellis Elementary has received Santa Clara County School Boards Association's Hoffman Award AND the Kristi Porter Outstanding Program Award for its *Units of Study in Reading, Writing, and Phonics* program. Congratulations Ellis! Go Eagles!

Congratulations and ¡Felicitaciones!

The Santa Clara County Office of Education (SCCOE) recently recognized SSD for encouraging cultural proficiency and inclusivity, and for helping students become bilingual through our Spanish-English immersion program, *Juntos*. This year, we are graduating our first generation of *Juntos* fifth-graders, children who have been in the program since kindergarten! These students will continue their bilingual education next year at Columbia Middle School.

Bishop lights the way

Bishop Elementary has been certified as a *Leader in Me Lighthouse School* — the first in the Bay Area! All *Leader in Me* schools teach according to Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. Lighthouse Schools are standouts that have achieved outstanding results in school and student outcomes by employing these leadership practices. Lead on Bobcats!



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