

Sierra Sands Unified School District communication 3/2/21

March 2, 2021

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Right up front, let me assure you that Sierra Sands continues to move as rapidly as we possibly can toward reopening in-person learning. Getting students safely back into the classroom is the district's most important focus.

It seems like change that used to take place over years and decades is now taking place in weeks or days. Over the last few months we have been navigating a very difficult time with pandemic. In January we found ourselves operating in "deep purple," and then more recently in "purple." The safety protocols imposed on school districts while operating in those restrictive color bands have kept the vast majority of our students learning in a Distance Learning format.

Here we are in March, almost one entire year since school districts across the state closed in-person learning. Based on considerably improved infection rates we can anticipate our county moving into the "red" tier in the near future. Yesterday, Governor Newsom announced a deal (AB/SB 86) with the Legislature had been reached, bringing an end to months of negotiations between the Governor and lawmakers. Should this deal be approved by the Legislature this Thursday, we will finally have a legal and funding roadmap to safely get our students back into the classroom.

District leadership is currently negotiating with our employee associations to reach a deal that will get students back into the classroom.

Notably, we finally received a limited vaccine supply in the valley dedicated for educators. This afternoon, 50 Sierra Sands employees received vaccines at our local hospital. It is anticipated we could possibly have as many as 100 additional vaccines available for our staff by the end of the week, with more on the way the following week. While it has been long awaited, we now have growing confidence that all employees who want to be vaccinated will have the opportunity to do so this month!!

Consistent with AB 86, upon its approval on Thursday, the district intends to communicate, soon, a plan to you that will provide opportunity for in-person learning for our TK-5th grade students by the end of the month. Simultaneous to a reopening opportunity for in-person learning for our elementary students, we are also working very hard in hopes of offering an opportunity for in-person learning for secondary students before the end of this school year.

I know for many of you this whole ordeal has presented serious challenges for your student and your family. For many of us, it feels like an endless "hurry up and wait" set of disappointments. Going back to the earlier stages of the pandemic in 2020, we have constantly referenced the Board-adopted *Guiding Principles*:

- Health and safety of students and staff
- Follow the law and take all reasonable steps to follow appropriate guidance
- Socialization and connection with students
- Provide nutritional services to our students
- Optimize our means of educating our students

For those who are anxiously awaiting the return to in-person instruction, we are finally seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. For those who remain anxious about returning to in-person instruction, I can assure you that every reasonable measure is taken to ensure everyone's safety.

Sincerely,
Dave Ostash
Superintendent