



Turlock Unified School District

Superintendent's Update

February 9, 2021

Dear Secondary 7-12 Community:

I hope this communication finds you well and balanced. The following information is the most recent we have as we move to return our 7-12 secondary students to school as early as next month based on Stanislaus County Health Services Agency (SCHSA) projections for a continued decline in COVID-19 cases. By far, it is a communication that I've looked forward to writing for way too long.

On January 14, the Governor's Office released the [CA COVID-19 and Reopening In-Person Instruction Framework & Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#). Similar to earlier State guidance, schools may not reopen for grades 7-12 if their County is in the Purple Tier. However, once the County has been in the Red Tier for five consecutive days, they may now reopen. TUSD continues to adhere to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and Stanislaus County Health Services Agency (SCHSA) guidance as we plan to return students in grades 7-12 to classrooms who are prepared to do so. Although we began implementing secondary small learning cohorts, of approximately 300 students in grades 7-12, back in October to accommodate students with disabilities, Wi-Fi issues, and credit deficiencies, these cohorts did not meet State criteria for reopening which would have allowed additional students to return to campus while in the Purple Tier.

Moving forward, we are preparing to offer synchronous learning, in-person or remotely, without impacting students' schedules/teachers--something that wasn't possible in the small window of time we were in the Red Tier last fall. This dual-learning platform option will prevent a yo-yo effect on students and families and allow selection of a format that works best for their circumstances. With the case rate going down daily, we are optimistic of returning students to campus tentatively in March as long as the case rates continue to decline; I assure you we are ready to accommodate secondary students on campuses as soon as allowable.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of our initial school shutdown, we are more cognizant than ever of what has been lost in our community, across the U.S., and world. We are thankful that many of our 65 and over employees, and health-care staff, received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine last month; we are working closely with SCHSA to host a TUSD Closed Vaccine POD for those staff interested in receiving the COVID-19 vaccine when made available. Many of my TUSD colleagues have expressed interest in being vaccinated, understanding that with or without, they will return to in-person instruction. As required by new guidance, TUSD reported our current reopening status to the State on January 25, and our revised *COVID Safety Plan* was submitted to

SCHSA on February 3 for approval. We are confident that all necessary steps for returning secondary students have been completed, including the following which has been largely dependent on supply and demand during a global pandemic:

- Began ongoing Staff COVID-19 Trainings for In-Person/Distance Learning in October.
- Upgraded all HVAC systems with MERV-13 filters; performed maintenance checks on all units.
- Installed wall-mounted hand-sanitizer dispensers in all classrooms/offices; distributed PPE materials and equipment to secondary sites.
- Began replacement of Chromebooks for grades 7-8 on February 18.
- Secured necessary technology for secondary synchronous teaching/learning (in-Person/Distance Learning) between December 10 and February 5.

Additionally, we continue to monitor CIF and CCAL guidelines and information, with athletic conditioning reinstated on January 14. Season 1 sport practices began February 1 for sports identified in Season 1 of three seasons, with each sport to be completed within an 8-week period. More importantly, all social promotions and commencement ceremonies have been scheduled and calendared with plans to conduct them in a more traditional format than was allowable last spring.

All of us want nothing more than to see students in grades 7-12 back on campuses to learn, socialize, and engage in once-in-a-lifetime experiences that I value as both a parent and former high school principal. Teacher representatives from our secondary sites have helped us create schedules to mitigate learning loss and motivate students to engage and thrive while meeting SCHSA requirements for small, stable cohorts. As a result, our Secondary Reopening Plan includes daily/weekly schedules that allow for teachers to engage with their students on a daily basis—something they have been adamant about in our initial and ongoing planning. Once the Board of Trustees reviews our Secondary Reopening Plan information at our next regularly scheduled Board meeting on February 16, the following timeline of events will ensue:

- Feb 17—Staff Forum/Q & A
- Feb 18—Parent Forum/Q & A
- Feb 19—Secondary School Communication & Commitment Survey
- Feb 22-26— COVID-19 Staff Training
- March 1-5— Parent/Student COVID-19 Training & Submission of a Health-Safety Agreement

Our parent notification system will provide access information the day before and the day of the event. We recognize that our secondary students' return will take a community-wide effort with all stakeholders adhering to public health guidelines that remain as critical today as they were in March 2020—masking, social distancing, foregoing gatherings, practicing hand hygiene, etc. Our students are worth every effort to hold ourselves accountable because they need and deserve to end their current school year with promise and preparation for future goals and aspirations, within and outside of TUSD.

Sincerely,

Dana Salles Trevethan
Superintendent
@tUSdSupDana