

January 7, 2021

Re: Update on Distance Learning / Unable to Return to Hybrid Learning at This Time

Dear LTUSD Community,

We hope the return to school this week was filled with a new sense of optimism for the second half of the school year; we have overcome so many obstacles. As we move through the second half of this year, there are positive things on the horizon that will get us through spring. The amazing resiliency of our staff and students, the ability to overcome the challenges of the educational changes, and the growth we have seen to teach and learn during this time is incredible. Please know that our staff in LTUSD believes all students need to be back on campus and back in the classrooms. Students are the heart of this district and we miss them immensely. We know that with the resiliency and ability to learn in this new educational world there are also incredible challenges; our kids are struggling in so many ways after almost a year of being out of school and away from their peers and teachers. We too are struggling, knowing the hardships that our children have been dealing with for far too long. We continue to hold on to hope and optimism that we can get our students back on campus very soon, but regrettably, January 11 is, at this time, premature, due to several factors affecting our ability to resume the hybrid schedules.

The District has been diligently monitoring local COVID data including our positivity rate; case rate per 100,000; and testing/tracing capacity. These, however, are not the only factors we must consider as we endeavor to return to campus. More important are the staffing resources available to operate the schools. This includes not only teachers, but bus drivers, maintenance, custodial, and cafeteria staff, instructional aides, etc. Just as the local case rate is a reflection of our community, so is it a reflection of the district's workforce. When the community positivity rate is high, so is the LTUSD workforce positivity rate. With the number of staff members currently out on sick leave and/or quarantining due to being positive with COVID-19 or presumed positive, we are simply unable to fully open the schools at this time. Simply stated, our schools cannot remain open when we do not have enough well staff to operate fully, safely, and with meaningful consistency.

It is heartbreaking to continually have to set our target return date back, but until we have a healthy and robust workforce to run the campuses for a consistent and extended period of time, we are reticent to set another target date. Our intention is simply to get our TK-8 students back on campus *as soon as possible*. We will continue to monitor both our local and district-wide COVID case data and keep you informed along the way.

As for opening the high school to hybrid, it remains the order of the State at this time that El Dorado County must be in the Red Tier designation for at least two weeks. We are still in the Purple Tier (widespread) and under a regional stay-at-home order as part of the Greater Sacramento area.

We recognize that schools being open for in-person learning is not the contributing factor to increases in transmission of the virus; it is the activity and behavior of the community that continues to keep the number of cases in high range. WE are the community; through our individual actions and behaviors we can hopefully soon go back to hybrid learning in TK-8 safely and with manageable staffing resources. Please continue to do your part in masking, washing hands, distancing, avoiding gatherings, and staying home when possible.

Lastly, there have been a lot of questions around vaccinations. We have been informed that educators are designated in the "1.B" category for essential workers and the county is currently working on a plan for administering the vaccines. We are hoping to receive more information in the very near future and will let you know as soon as we hear.

Thank you for your continued patience during this extremely difficult time.

Sincerely,
Todd Cutler, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Annamarie Cohen, Ph.D.
Director Student and Special Services