

May 14, 2020

Dear PUSD,

I hope this email finds you safe and healthy. As we are fast-approaching the final weeks of our regularly scheduled school year, I am sad to share that we have made the difficult decision that **our school campuses will not physically reopen before June 11th**. Even though the Governor and San Diego County officials are slowly reopening some public areas and low-risk businesses, the current COVID-19 situation does not meet the state or county requirements that will allow us to safely reopen schools before the summer. Our schools are in the process of notifying families and students how they can retrieve belongings from campus in the coming weeks.

Please read this email in its entirety. I have included a lot of information that will help provide some clarity and details around how you can provide **feedback on distance learning**, our **graduation and promotion plans**, and lastly, **summer learning and childcare** opportunities.

### **Distance Learning Survey**

Distance learning will continue through this school year, ending on June 11, 2020. Instruction from current teachers will not continue into the summer. PUSD will need the time over the summer to prepare for the new 2020-21 school year. However, families can choose to continue with a variety of learning and enrichment options we will be offering over the summer as noted below. I applaud all of the efforts by students, staff, and families to adjust to this new reality and way of educating our children. I am proud to report a 99% overall connection rate in distance learning for students across all grade levels, but it is inconsistent day to day. I know that it has not been easy on our families, our teachers and staff, or our students. I have been inspired by the creativity and resilience our students and staff have shown, but I am well aware of the frustration and struggles they have been experiencing as well.

Our goal is to continually refine and improve our distance learning experience. We know that distance learning will be in effect for summer school and likely play some role in our Fall back-to-school plans. Please participate in [this Thoughtexchange survey](#) by Sunday, May 24. We are asking: “Based on your distance learning experience so far, what are some successes or challenges that we need to consider if distance learning continues for the summer and fall?”

Just a reminder: Thoughtexchange is not the appropriate place to express your discontent about specific individuals. If you have a concern about any employees, I ask that you please address it directly with that employee or their immediate supervisor. Your constructive feedback on this survey will help guide our professional development over the summer and assist us in planning for the new school year.

### **Graduation and Promotion Ceremonies**

Graduation and promotion committees consisting of students, staff, principals, parents, and District leadership have been meeting for the past several weeks on how to best honor our students in a safe way. The committee thoughtfully considered survey feedback, strict guidelines

from the county which do not allow any gatherings, ideas from other school districts, as well as the wishes of our students affected personally by this pandemic. While the committees realize these alternatives are not ideal, their recommendations represent the best compromise given our current situation.

### **Senior Class Commencement**

- In our last survey, thousands of PUSD parents, staff, and students overwhelmingly expressed a desire to postpone graduation ceremonies with the hope of gathering in person later this summer. As a result, based on the committee's recommendation, senior class commencement ceremonies have been postponed to July 30, 2020. We understand that there is no substitute for the "real thing."
- Some of our students are mourning the loss of their senior year. Many feel frustrated and upset and question why this is happening. Some are just eager to move on and begin the next chapter of their lives. Please read this [letter I wrote](#) to the Class of 2020, and share it with a senior you know.
- In the meantime, we still want to celebrate our grads. Caps and gowns will be distributed the week of June 1, 2020. Each high school will hold a drive through graduation parade during the week of June 8, 2020. (These dates do not apply to Abraxas High, due to the school's alternative calendar.) This event will include students dressed in their caps and gowns, driving onto their decorated school campus with their family, past cheering staff, to receive their diploma. This will allow for some closure and celebration at the end of the school year. Plans are being finalized which include two options depending on county health regulations - the graduate remaining in the car with their family or the graduate getting out of the car to receive their diploma and take photos like [this example](#). You will receive detailed information from your school site later this month.

### **5th and 8th Grade Promotions**

- The committee has recommended that 5th grade and 8th grade promotions also consist of a family drive through promotion parade in June. Dates and plans are being finalized which include two options depending on county health regulations - the student remaining in the car with their family or the student getting out of the car to receive their certificate and take photos. You will receive detailed information from your school site later this month. There are no plans to postpone these ceremonies to a later date.

These events will require careful coordination and a commitment from everyone to be safe and abide by the established rules. We will work closely with law enforcement to ensure a positive experience for all. We want everyone to have fun, but we need our students and families to do their very best to participate in a respectful manner. You will receive detailed plans from each of your schools in the coming weeks.

### **Summer Learning Opportunities**

We have been working hard to find options and opportunities for our students to engage in enrichment and academic programs to extend their learning during the summer months. We

know that many of our families are anxious about making plans. All of the details have not been finalized yet, but we will be sure to share them with you in the upcoming weeks. Some of the academic and enrichment opportunities we are exploring include:

- PUSD's summer Youth Enrichment Program (YEP), fee-based summer camps including coding and keyboarding, storytelling, robotics, and foreign languages
- We are contacting outside vendors to provide in-person, fee-based summer programs on our school campuses, in subjects such as math, science, technology, engineering, and the arts
- Partnerships with local community colleges for our high school students to access online courses for high school and college credit
- Our Technology & Innovation Department has continued to update the [Optional Learning Resources page](#) on the PUSD website. You can always find additional schedules, activities, ideas, and digital resources to engage your child at home
- Summer school classes for high school and extended school year options for specified students will be conducted from June 17 - July 31 via distance learning.

### **ESS (Extended Student Services) Summer Camps and 12-month Preschool Classes**

As parents start returning to work and make plans for the summer, we realize the need for summer childcare is a concern for many of our families. Under the Governor's Stage 2 reopening plan, which includes childcare, our fee-based 12-month preschool program and summer ESS (Extended Student Services) programs are planning for a June 17 opening at our elementary schools and a June 15 opening for Black Mountain and Oak Valley Middle Schools. Summer ESS will provide fun and exciting enrichment options such as STEM activities and experiments, educational assemblies, academic time, and games and sports.

The opening of 12-month preschool and summer ESS, of course, is pending approval from county officials, and will incorporate enhanced safety and social distancing measures. Please look for a separate survey later this week, being sent to all families who enrolled in 12-month preschool and ESS.

I am confident as we move forward, we can navigate this "new normal" together as a community. This has been an extremely challenging time for all of us, but we will emerge as Team PUSD stronger than before.

"We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope." -Martin Luther King, Jr.

**Your Superintendent,**

**Marian Kim Phelps, Ed.D.**