

PIEDMONT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Board of Education
FROM: Randall Booker, Superintendent
DATE: June 30, 2020
RE: **RECOMMENDATION TO REOPEN PUSD SCHOOLS (2nd Reading) - FALL 2020**

I. SUPPORT INFORMATION

Over the past several weeks, Piedmont Unified has engaged in planning discussions with stakeholders from across the District and county to consider the return to a safe school environment and the reopening of schools in August 2020.

The Board of Education received the superintendent's recommendation for the reopening of schools as a 1st reading during the June 24, 2020 Board of Education Meeting.

As discussions and public comment have continued and guidance from health officials have shifted, this memo serves to provide structure and guidelines for the Board's decision-making process.

Since the last Board meeting, new information has appeared, both from the [Alameda County Public Health Department](#) (ACPHD) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) (AAP) concerning social distancing guidance.

ACPHD: "As practicable, desks should be placed 6 feet apart and arranged in a way that minimizes face-to-face contact. However, with cohorts in place, it is permissible to relax the 6-foot recommendation if it ensures all/more students receive in-class instruction (e.g. if reducing to 5 feet allows for more practicable cohort sizes). Face coverings and cohort stability are higher priorities if they allow for more practical utilization of physical spaces to provide in-person instruction."

AAP: "The AAP strongly advocates that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in

school,” according to the guidance. These coordinated interventions intend “to mitigate, not eliminate, risk” of SARS-CoV-2.” ...

“Evidence suggests that spacing as close as 3 feet may approach the benefits of 6 feet of space, particularly if students are wearing face coverings and are asymptomatic,” according to the guidance.” ...

“Elementary students should wear face coverings if the risk of touching their mouth or nose is not greater than the benefit of reducing the spread of COVID-19. When possible, spacing desks 3 to 6 feet apart and using cohort classes and outdoor space, is recommended.” ...

“Physical distancing may have a bigger impact on reducing the risk of COVID-19 among secondary school students. When feasible, use face coverings when closer than 6 feet apart, avoid close proximity (and go outdoors if possible and spread out) during activities like singing and exercising, and consider cohorting classes.” ...

Additionally, since the last Board Meeting, COVID-19 cases have increased exponentially across the United States and within California. Governor Newsom indicated that there were seven counties, including Los Angeles, that likely would need to “reinstitute community measures”. He went on to say that he would consider “augmenting the orders and advancing even more restrictive ones.”

It may be only a matter of time until we witness a similar result in northern California, Alameda County, or even Piedmont.

And while we are witnessing what may seem like a loosening of restrictions, we are also witnessing a surge of reported cases.

Superintendent Recommendation

The health and safety, including emotional health, of our educators, staff, and students is my highest priority. I recognize that we cannot eliminate the risk that COVID-19 presents, but we can strive to institute steps that mitigate this risk and provide an in-person learning environment for students and staff.

From a learning perspective, and echoing the language from [AB 77](#): 43504(b), I recommend, that we “offer in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible.” I need to emphasize “to the greatest extent possible.”

I acknowledge that there are families and staff members who welcome returning to school under a model that brings students and staff back onto campuses. I

have read many emails and communications to this point. I also recognize that there are many families and staff concerned about a return to in-person learning. From the perspective of our stakeholders, there is no one direction that serves all purposes. I've appreciated the civic engagement and the opportunities for respectful dialogue. This is an issue that we cannot allow to fracture who we are as a community. The complexity of the challenges we face together is daunting, as are the multiple factors that make planning a return to school a reality. We can work through these issues if we stay collaborative and mindful of each other's needs.

We are tasked with making decisions in moments of uncertainty and considerable instability. Any plan that we develop may need to be readdressed in a matter of days or weeks due evolving conditions.

Last week, the state legislature, through AB 77, provided strict mandates that remove 100% distance learning as a district-wide model/option and requires school districts to maximize in-person learning. This does not preclude families from choosing a 100% distance learning model for their individual child's needs.

Many regulations, including Education Code, Field Act (seismic safety standards), and OSHA, prevent school districts from utilizing certain outdoor spaces or buildings that would otherwise seem plausible as a means to spread students out across our city's various facilities. These have been explored (including tents, city facilities, etc.) and vetted numerous times over the years during construction projects and no allowances have been made by regulators under COVID-19. Additionally, it is extremely likely that the District will need to increase its partnership with Schoolmates and utilize additional District spaces for increased childcare.

The following are recommended parameters for the Board to consider:

All Students

- Students to attend school 4-5 days per week for in-person learning under a Blended Learning Model.
 - This Blended Learning Model will be supplemented with structured and scheduled daily distance learning that includes both synchronous and asynchronous instruction as performed by certificated teachers and support staff (Distance Learning Model discussed below).
- All students and staff must wear masks at all times during the instructional day and to/from school.

- It may be necessary for students who receive services under SPED/IEP or 504 plans to receive increased time of daily in-person instruction.
- Maintain 6' social distancing in classrooms and during breaks and passing periods.
- Establishing, to the greatest extent possible, stable student cohort groups.
- 180 minutes of daily instruction for transitional kindergarten and kindergarten students (as required by AB 77: 43501(a))
- 230 minutes of daily instruction for 1st - 3rd grade students (as required by AB 77: 43501(b))
- 240 minutes of daily instruction for 4th - 12th grade students (as required by AB 77: 43501(c))
- Daily attendance recorded for all in-person and distance learning sessions (as required by AB 77: 43504 (d) (1))
- School sites and educators return to a system of assessments and grading as was prescribed prior to the closing of schools in March of 2020. Board Policy [5121](#) supports academic letter grades and authorizes the calculation of median grade point averages using a letter grading system.
- Because AB 77: 43502(c) permits school districts to calculate the daily instructional minutes through a combination of in-person instruction and distance learning, the majority of these minutes, under a possible AM/PM model, will be addressed through daily in-person learning. The remainder will be addressed through daily distance learning that includes both synchronous and asynchronous instruction as performed by certificated teachers and support staff (Distance Learning Model discussed below).
- Establish an Early Re-Evaluation Process
 - Phase 1 (6 weeks):
 - Develop benchmarks to assist the Board of Education in determining a possible return to full-time in-person learning or remain with the current model after an initial 6-week trial period.

- Benchmarks may include (but are not limited to):
 - Number of COVID cases in Piedmont and/or Alameda County, updated public health orders from CA Dept. of Public Health and/or the Alameda County Dept. of Public Health, updated guidance from CDC, American Academy of Pediatrics, and/or the CA Dept. of Education, and the adherence and efficiency of cleaning protocols and adherence to wearing masks.
 - At this time, the Board would determine if a return to full-time in-person learning is warranted and prudent.
- Phase 2 (at the end of the 6 week period)
 - If prescribed by the Board of Education, schools may be able to return to full-time in-person instruction.
- [Families may opt for a 100% Distance Learning Model for their child](#). Under AB 77: 43503, the District must provide a structured learning schedule that incorporates both daily synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities.
 - This model, under the requirements of AB 77, requires school districts to provide Distance Learning in a much more structured and organized way than what was prescribed by the state during the spring of 2020.
 - Distance Learning Students will attend distance learning sessions 4-5 days per week under a specific schedule that incorporates both daily synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities.
 - Daily attendance recorded for distance learning sessions (as required by AB 77: 43504 (d) (1))
 - Under a distance learning model educators return to a system of assessments and grading as was prescribed prior to the closing of schools in March of 2020. Board Policy [5121](#) supports academic letter grades and authorizes the calculation of median grade point averages using a letter grading system.

- Special education and any other services required by a pupil's individualized education program must be provided in a distance learning environment.
- District staff will need to work with educators to develop daily "virtual" bell schedules and supplemental curriculum to support a Distance Learning Model.

This plan does not preclude a scenario where the public health director issues a new shelter-in place and returns students to a 100% Distance Learning Model (as prescribed by AB 77: 43503 (a) (2) (A)).

Decision-making and Bell Schedule Parameters Established by the Board of Education

I am recommending that the Board of Education take action to provide specific parameters (like the ones listed above) for a learning model that returns students and staff to schools. These parameters will ultimately guide district staff and educators in developing a daily bell schedule for elementary and secondary schools.

While I have provided my recommendations, it is the Board of Education that develops the parameters for our planning.

If the Board of Education adopts specific parameters for a learning model that returns students and staff to schools during the June 30th Board of Education Meeting, District staff will engage with administrators and teachers who serve on the Bell Schedule Committee to develop a daily bell schedule that adheres to the Board adopted parameters.

Bell Schedule Committee

Found in the collective bargaining agreement between the District and the Association of Piedmont Teachers, the Bell Schedule Committee (consisting of teacher and administrator representatives from individual school sites) has operated over the years to discuss and develop daily bell schedules that best support student learning and take into consideration a variety of site-based issues (prep time, staff collaboration, tutorial, etc.).

The Bell Schedule Committee will convene, develop, and recommend daily bell schedules in response to the COVID-19 learning landscape and ultimately, the Board's adopted parameters.

Timing for the Development of Daily Bell Schedules

The Bell Schedule Committee will convene during the week of July 6th-8th and provide the Board of Education with a daily bell schedule recommendation at a July 10th Special Meeting. The Board may choose to adopt the recommended daily bell schedule or require the Bell Schedule Committee to iterate and return with a revised schedule at a subsequent Board Meeting.

Screening

Each day, prior to arrival on campuses, all students and staff will be screened for COVID-19 symptoms utilizing an at-home online survey of questions (as recommended by the CDC). Questions may include, but are not at this time limited to:

By answering “yes” to any of the following questions, the respective staff member or student is not permitted on campuses.

1. *Since your last day of work, or last visit here, have you had any of these symptoms that is not attributable to another condition?*
 - *Cough*
 - *Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing*
 - *Or at least two of these symptoms*
 - *Fever (100.4° F/37.8° C or greater as measured by an oral thermometer)*
 - *Chills*
 - *Repeated shaking with chills*
 - *Congestion or runny nose*
 - *Diarrhea*
 - *Nausea or vomiting*
 - *Muscle pain*
 - *Headache*
 - *Sore throat*
 - *New loss of taste or smell*
2. *In the past 14 days, have you been in close proximity to anyone who was experiencing any of the above symptoms or has experienced any of the above symptoms since your contact?*
3. *In the past 14 days, have you been in close proximity to anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19?*
4. *Have you been tested for COVID-19 and are waiting to receive test results?*
5. *Have you tested positive for COVID-19, or are you presumptively positive for COVID-19 based on your health care provider’s assessment or your symptoms?*

6. *In the past 14 days, have you been on a commercial flight or traveled outside of the United States?*
7. *In the past 14 days, have you been in close proximity to anyone who has been on a commercial flight or traveled outside of the United States?*

I recommend that we remove items 6. And 7. from the initial recommended screening language. Over the past several days, I have heard from staff and families indicating that these screening questions were too restrictive. I have many staff and community members who have to travel (take older child to college) or have spouses that travel regularly for work. I recommend that we remove these questions from our screening tool. The removal of these questions better fit the guidance from the [Alameda Public Health Department](#).

Decision-making Timeline and Next Steps

June 24, 2020 Board of Education Meeting

- 1st Reading of Recommended Blended Learning Model: **No Action**

June 30, 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting

- 2nd Reading and Decision of the Recommended Blended Learning Model: **Action Requested**

July 7, 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting

- 1st Reading of Calendar Committee Recommendation for Revised 20-21 Instructional Calendar: **No Action**
- 1st Reading of Board Policy 0470 - Covid-19 Mitigation Plan: **No Action**

July 10, 2020 Special Board of Education Meeting

- 2nd Reading and Decision of Calendar Committee Recommendation for Revised 20-21 Instructional Calendar: **Action Requested**
- Bell Schedule Committee Recommendation for Elementary and Secondary Daily Bell Schedules: **Action Requested**
- 2nd Reading of Board Policy 0470 - Covid-19 Mitigation Plan: **Action Requested**

Resources:

[June 24, 2020 - Board Background on Reopening Schools](#)

[June 24, 2020 - Board Presentation on Reopening Schools](#)

[June 10, 2020 - Board Background on Reopening Schools Advisory Taskforce](#)

[May 12, 2020 - Board Presentation on COVID-19 Reopening Schools Planning Assumptions & Considerations](#)

II. **RECOMMENDATION: REVIEW AND ACTION**

Review and discuss the superintendent's recommendation to adopt a Blended Learning Model of instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. Adopt specific parameters for a learning model that returns students and staff to schools.