



Katherine Kolker, Superintendent
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July 22, 2020

Dear Bishop Families,

We are getting closer to the much anticipated first day of school and as you can imagine have been working tirelessly and creatively to get our students and staff back to school ready to learn. The COVID-19 situation has put us all in an environment that is unprecedented, challenging, and constantly evolving. The information we receive one day may shift dramatically from the guidance provided just days later. The students, families, and staff members at BUSD form the heart of our community and it is essential that we keep our health and safety at the forefront of our decision making. We are committed to the well being of our students and staff - not just academically but also physically and emotionally. Here are some details about our progress and commitment to supporting students this upcoming school year:

- **Campus safety precautions are in place.** We welcomed back a limited number of students this past Monday for on-campus summer school at BES, HSMS, and BUHS. It has been great seeing students and staff on campus together again! This effort has not been simple or easy, but well worth it. A wide variety of safety measures have been put into place including: regular hand washing and the use of hand sanitizer stations around campuses, students and staff maintaining social distancing, daily cleaning protocols to disinfect and sanitize, small student:teacher ratios, regular time outdoors, ventilated classrooms, plexiglass barriers and limited visitors in front offices, and C19-related signage throughout campuses, just to name a few!
- **It is now required for everyone at school to wear masks.** In alignment with the [government order issued on 7/17/20](#), all adults and students will wear masks at all times while at school/on BUSD campuses. We are implementing regular “mask breaks” or “brain breaks” for students and staff at all sites to socially distance themselves outside and take a break from wearing their face coverings. Masks are the #1 way we can support our community members to stay healthy and not transmit the virus.
- **We’ve been working closely with public health and carefully monitoring our local data.** Currently, Inyo county is not on the [state’s monitoring list](#) for elevated COVID-19 positivity rates. (Our rate as of 7/16/20 was 0.9%, well below the state’s 8% positivity rate threshold.) According to the 7/17/20 government mandate, BUSD would be directed to close and offer 100% distance learning if Inyo County ends up on the monitoring list. In this scenario, we’d need to be OFF of the monitoring list, meaning our COVID-19 positivity rates would need to decline to under the minimum of 8%, for at least 14 days to be eligible to reopen again.
- **Full-time distance learning will be an enrollment option for all TK-12 families.** [Distance Learning standards](#) for 2020-2021 are far more explicit than last Spring - we’ll be spending more time on preparing for this level of rigor and engagement during our teacher inservice days in August. All teachers are preparing for providing both in-seat instruction and distance learning to some degree throughout the school year. It is predicted that our district may need to move into distance learning for all at some point(s) during the school year based on the [state’s reopening criteria](#) and our own flexible scheduling guide.

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- **We are looking into creative ways to adapt daily bell schedules to minimize cohort mixing**, as is often cited as an important and basic safety measure schools should take in addition to wearing face masks and regular hand washing. This may look like block scheduling for grades 6-12, minimizing the number of classes students attend each day, while still providing the variety of courses they need for a balanced education. We continue to use this [Flexible Scheduling Guide](#) as a framework to determine how to reopen in the Fall. We understand that we have community members on all ends of the spectrum in terms of their readiness to return to school campuses. We will continue to follow the science to keep the safety of our students and staff at the forefront of our decision making.
- **Google Classroom will be our common platform** for all 2nd-12th grade classes. We learned last Spring that streamlining what we offer and how we offer it to students in a distance learning environment is important. We also know that we need to offer equitable and quality content to students virtually, just as we do for students in-seat. Google Classroom allows us to do this efficiently and effectively. Grades TK-1st will be using SeeSaw as their common online platform. We have invested in Google Chrome Tablets for TK-1 students which we expect to arrive in the next month. This will make BUSD a 1:1 tech district.
- **Transportation** - 80% of BUSD families surveyed in June stated that they could provide their own transportation to/from school to help alleviate the number of students on school buses. We are working with the Bishop Police Department, and our new School Resource Officer to establish several “pick-up/drop-off zones” a few blocks away from our main campuses to help ease traffic congestion. We hope this will also encourage students who can walk or ride their bikes to school safely to do so.
- **We have developed communication protocols for school-based COVID-19 exposure scenarios.** If your student was in close contact with someone at school who we know has tested positive for COVID-19, you will be notified immediately. Public Health is responsible for contact tracing and quarantine orders as well as working with healthcare providers re: COVID-19 testing directives. Public Health will be in close contact with the school for any necessary communication needs.
- **Attendance** will be based on in-seat learning time on campus and/or “time value” of work assigned via distance learning. We encourage any student or staff member to stay home if they are not well, or otherwise experiencing any [COVID-19 symptoms](#). Students can stay caught up on their assignments at home as needed using Google Classroom (grades 2-12) or SeeSaw (grades TK-1).

We appreciate your patience and ongoing partnership in making our schools a safe and welcoming place for students to learn. I hope this information is helpful in your preparation for the coming year and want to assure you that we, as a unified district, are indeed in good hands. We have ONE more favor to ask of you. The number of families planning to return to school in a full-time distance learning model greatly impacts our scheduling. **[Please take 1-2 minutes to complete this survey and let us know if you are planning to attend BUSD schools in-seat/hybrid or as a full-time distance learning program.](#)** Our next school board meeting is scheduled for July 30, 2020 at 9:00am. This information will be shared out at that time and will be helpful in our decision making process. THANK YOU.

Gratefully,

Katie Kolker
 BUSD Superintendent



Photo: Elementary summer school class in action