

MUROC

JOINT UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Kevin D Cordes
District Superintendent

25 March, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

In consultation with The Kern County Superintendent of Schools, Kern County Public Health, and in light of Governor Newsom's Executive Order N-33-20, which directs "all individuals living in the State of California to stay home or at their place of residence except as needed to maintain continuity of operations of the federal critical infrastructure sectors", Muroc Joint Unified School District **has extended its school closures through at least May 1, 2020**, to limit the community spread of COVID-19.

We understand how challenging these decisions are for our families and we appreciate your support and patience. We are very grateful for all that our students, parents and staff are doing to support safety, continuity of education and feeding our children. We will continue to provide updates as this situation evolves.

This is an unprecedented time in modern history. Similar to us, school districts throughout the state of California, and across our nation, are making choices based on their individual circumstances. Last week as school districts were closing throughout the State, with rapidly changing information and direction from state and federal officials, we made the very intentional decision to move our Spring break, and added eight additional days, knowing that it could potentially push our school calendar out by eight days. *This was done for the safety of your child, your family, and school personnel.* Teachers, support staff, and administration were ready to begin the transition into remote instructional practices immediately. After much discussion, and given the extraordinary circumstances we found ourselves in, especially considering the unknown consequences related to COVID-19, we decided that out of an abundance of safety for everyone, it was the best decision for us.

I have lived in our community since 1999, when my wife, Allison, and I moved here after accepting a teaching position at Bailey Elementary School at Edwards Air Force Base. She grew up here, a graduate of Boron High School. I grew up a military dependent, the son of a test pilot, and instantly loved this desert and the people who lived here. I started working for the district as a custodian, and in 2003 started teaching for the district after finishing college. In 2006 I was asked to join the administrative team and subsequently served as the Principal at each school in the district before moving to the district office in 2015. Each of our four children, Andrew, Kevin, Anne, and Madison have attended three of our district's four schools. Each school day, our family wakes up and we all go to Muroc.

I share this to say that when I make a decision for the district, I do so understanding the unique circumstances of our various communities, that I do not make them lightly, and that I do my best to minimize any negative impacts to your family. I know that by adjusting our calendar we may have disrupted plans that families have had in place for some time. Please know that we will be

applying with the State to have those additional 8 days that we added to our Spring Break waived so that we can still end our school year on the previously planned date. Extending our school closure until May 1, 2020 will not add any more days to our calendar. Ultimately, it means that beginning April 6, until at least May 1, 2020 we will utilize distant learning opportunities to provide educational services to all students.

How that will look will depend on your child's teacher and grade level, and more detailed information will be coming to you from your child's Principal and teacher(s). During this break, along with keeping everyone safe with their families, teachers are preparing for remote teaching when we resume working with students on April 6th. We all have questions about what the rest of this school year will look like, and although some of the following questions may not apply to you, these are the ones that I am asked the most....

Frequently Asked Questions:

Question: Isn't this all a little overboard?

Answer: The decisions that we are making are similar or identical to those in our county and State. Also, and quite frankly....in the course of my career, I have attended too many funerals of students (after the first one, I had already attended too many); with the unknown health risks related to COVID-19, and the unprecedented times that we find ourselves, we would rather be accused of overacting in the effort to safeguard students and families.

Question: What about field trips, sports and academic competitions, proms, graduations, etc. How will these be impacted?

Answer: We do not know yet know the *ultimate* impact. Some of these decisions are beyond our control as we receive guidance and instruction from our government officials. Activities such as prom are impossible in a traditional sense under current guidelines, although individuals all over the world are getting creative holding "virtual" activities too. In other cases, the venues are unavailable or sport/academic events cancelled by those who organize them across the county or state.

Question: What about graduation?

Answer: We hope to be able to meet in large enough groups by then, in fact, if we are not granted a waiver for the eight days that we added to Spring Break, it may help us by giving additional time to see guidelines relaxed. Ultimately, we will get creative and use technology if we have to. We will always follow the guidelines given us by government officials though. At this time there are many who are impacted by COVID-19 in major life events such as weddings, funerals, graduations, births, etc.

Question: What will school look like starting April 6th?

Answer: It may be paper packets with instructions, or videos created or organized by the teacher, or Google classroom activities, or other on-line services, all of which will come with access to your child's teacher(s) in some form as needed, and during traditional school hours. Traditional comprehensive schools across the nation are making adjustments to provide

learning opportunities under conditions that we neither anticipated or plan for on such a large scale. Like most other entities, our district has a plan in the event of fires, floods, power outages, active shooter scenarios, etc., but a world-wide pandemic tab has never been added to the district's disaster plan (we, like many others, are now adding that tab....) We will do our best. We care about children. We have devoted our professional lives to helping children learn. Our teachers are amazing, and are hard at work to provide the best possible opportunities for students in the time that we have, and the conditions we all find ourselves in. Additionally, if your family should lack the technology needed to access academic materials, we will work with you to fill the needs that you may have.

Question: Who will contact me about my child's education?

Answer: Your child's Principal and/or teacher(s) will reach out to you directly on or before April 6th.

Question: Is the district providing child care?

Answer: The Governor has given schools an Executive Order during the stay-at-home-order to arrange for, **to the extent practicable**, supervision for students during ordinary school hours. We, like the vast majority of school districts, do not feel that under the current guidelines given us, that it is *practical* to provide childcare. In order to be eligible for child care, students would have to be clear of any symptoms for the previous 2-14 days (even though that does not guarantee that they are COVID-19 free), must remain at least 6 feet from any other person, with no more than 10 individuals in any space. We cannot guarantee the health and safety of students and families under these conditions.

Question: What about lunches for students?

Answer: Lunches will be provided for students as needed. More information regarding lunches, and how they will be distributed, will be provided next week.

Question: How do I contact my child's school or teacher?

Starting April 6th, the school offices will be open and you can call as needed. Offices will be open in the event that you need to come into the office for any reason; we will follow state guidelines on grouping and social distancing. Your child's teacher(s) have email and may share additional methods of contact if applicable.

Question: When will students get to go back to school?

Answer: At this point and time, we plan for students to return to school on May 4th. Any adjustments or updates to this will be done in concert with other Kern County School Districts and will be communicated out to you.

Extended School Closure Timeline

Muroc Joint Unified School District and all of its schools will remain closed through May 1, 2020, in response to the COVID-19 emergency. At this time, we plan for the first day back at school for students to be Monday, May 4, 2020.

Prevention

During school closures, it is important that students and families follow the Governor's orders to stay home and minimize social contact to the extent possible.

Furthermore, Kern County Public Health recommends the following everyday personal prevention actions:

- If you are sick or mildly sick for any reason, stay home! Call your doctor if you are concerned and/or if your symptoms worsen.
- Symptoms to watch for include a fever over 100 degrees; respiratory illness such as cough or difficulty breathing.
- Wash hands frequently for at least 20 seconds.
- Stay 6 feet or more away from strangers and those who are ill.
- Stop shaking hands with others to reduce the spread of germs.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Sneeze and cough into a tissue or your sleeve; safely throw away used tissues.

This is a dynamic situation where information and circumstances can evolve quickly. We are grateful to you, community members and our community leaders throughout our county for their tremendous care, collaboration, and understanding during these challenging times.

Most Sincerely,

Kevin D Cordes

Superintendent