



DIRECTLY SPEAKING

SUPERINTENDENT DUBOST'S COMMUNITY UPDATE

Volume 1

Issue 2

March 26, 2021

Curt Dubost Superintendent

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UPCOMING SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS SHOWN IN RED

April 2021						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3
4	SPRING BREAK					10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	
May 2021						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

COVID Update

As many know, we were thrown a curveball last week when the State directed that attendance at athletic competitions (having just been approved to resume) would be far more limited than we had first been advised. Initially we had been told cheerleaders, band, dance, and all other performance groups would be able to attend the games. Next, we were advised none could perform. That changed last Friday to allow cheerleaders to attend, but not the other groups. We also were told only one parent/observer/spectator per participant could attend.

The rain Friday night literally dampened attendance so it was not the issue it might have been, but we are pleased to confirm that those restrictions have again been relaxed and all performance groups may perform at football. Also, we may permit three spectators per participant as originally planned. This would total about 800 attendees which is within the permitted 20% of the approximately 4,000-seat capacity of War Memorial Stadium. The long and short of it is, at our next home game vs. Arroyo Grande on April 9, we plan to permit all performance groups to attend and to have three passes per participant for parents/friends/fans to enjoy the game.

Return to School

You also have likely read or heard that both CDC federally and CHD in Sacramento approved a decrease in required social distancing within a classroom from six feet to three feet for students only; it appears to remain at six feet for the teacher and for other areas on campus. We are closely following these evolving guidelines and working with our employee unions to be ready for next steps. There will be a lot of variables to consider as we decide what to recommend for the Board's decision. I am very confident though, barring a new spike caused by a variant strain, that Summer School and the next school year starting in August will be back to in-person full-day instruction for all students who so choose.

Resolution Condemning Racism

At Tuesday's Board Meeting a **resolution was passed to affirm the district is committed to combatting racial bigotry, bullying, and hate speech** in all its insidious forms in our schools. Any person who has been subjected to or witnessed such acts should immediately contact a school administrator or call District Student Services Director **Nate Maas** at (805) 781-1000 ext. 30424). Anyone may also call the **Whistleblower Hotline** at (800 952-5225) to report anonymously on any violations or to express concerns about these or other matters.

Ethnic Studies Curriculum

The State of California recently adopted its framework for Ethnic Studies in our high schools as a recommended curriculum, not a mandate. Our course, which had been taught at Paso High until about seven years ago, will be an elective in addition to (not instead of) the required US History and Civics courses. Considerable debate was heard with lots of public input, the majority of it in support of the elective course. Concerns were fully aired regarding the proposed course with questions about what it would and would not include and the reading list of basic and supplemental texts. The course was approved for next school year contingent upon the instructor, Geoff Land, and the committee who developed it adding some titles to the reading list to ensure greater balance in the course curriculum and to represent multiple philosophical and political perspectives. Care will also be taken that unfortunate events of our nation's history are viewed with an eye to the context in which they occurred, not just from today's lens. The revisions will be published in the April 13th Board agenda packet for the Board's final approval.

Alternative Ed Highlights

Principal Dan Sharon presented slides to highlight our district's alternative ed programs including K-8 Home School (PRISC), Liberty Continuation High School, and Independence High School, our grade 9-12 independent study/credit recovery school. Also featured was our Independent Skills Program for 18-22-year-old students enrolled in specialized Independent Living and other classes. Dan may be reached at (805) 835-1499. The programs feature not just the basics but



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wonderful opportunities for students to excel through various enrichment programs including field trips and multiple options for socialization and acceleration.

Donations

Tuesday night the Board accepted with appreciation the following generous donations: Frank Johnson donated \$300 for future theatre performances, and the PRHS FFA Boosters donated a tractor from C&N valued at almost \$32,000! The community's generous support of our schools is immensely important both as to the financial assistance as well as the moral support.

Purchases

Folks may have noticed we are spending huge amounts of our various COVID relief funds. First and foremost, we are making absolutely certain we fund fully all required and recommended safety procedures to ensure all staff and students are safe. We are striving, however, not to spend more than is required on items not absolutely needed that will have no utility after the pandemic (none of us wants truckloads of protective gear or other items left over and unused in the future). Secondly, we have spent huge amounts of money on tech purchases and upgrades in order to make our virtual instructional models accessible to all students. This has also included massive purchases of both individual devices and upgrades of our tech infrastructure. These purchases will have long-term utility well after COVID. Similarly, we are replacing all outdated HVAC units, food service equipment, vans, and other equipment definitely needed to comply with safety mitigation but also needed long term. I hope everyone sees the wisdom of this approach which the Board has fully endorsed.

Summer School & Learning Loss Mitigation

Much of the emergency funding must by law be spent on Learning Loss Mitigation and Social Emotional Support for our students. We know all students have lost needed direct instruction this past year. They've also lost social interaction with their peers, physical education, emotional support, and in general have lost engagement or connectedness to school. We are planning to implement a comprehensive, robust plan to address these critical losses starting with vastly extended and expanded summer school for all. We believe by then we will be allowed to conduct it 100% in person. In order to make sure we have adequate staffing, we used COVID money to increase staff pay and are happy to report staffing is going well. Please follow announcements from your school site or call in to enroll your children in Summer School.

Literacy Coaches

Before the pandemic my primary goal for this district, as it has been in other districts I have led, is to have all children reading at grade level by Grade 3. All the research as well as common sense tells us that kids who can read for content by 3rd grade as they transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" will almost certainly graduate from high school on time and be academically successful. Unfortunately, it is harder to catch up thereafter.

We are therefore using a large amount of our one-time monies to fund temporary Literacy Coaches as one component of a comprehensive plan to promote early literacy. We are calling this **Paso Reads** and will be recruiting both paid and volunteer help in this most important of initiatives. An unintended, but welcomed consequence of the pandemic is that we will have adequate funding to really show this can be effective given the right support. Normally we would never allocate one-time funds for ongoing staff; these will be two-year temporary positions.

District Reserves

Thanks to the Herculean efforts of Assistant Superintendent Brad Pawlowski and the rest of the staff, our reserves crawled back above the mandated 3% for this year and next.

Unfortunately, overall district enrollment is projected to continue declining. Until recently our projections showed a precipitous fall back below the mandated minimum reserves in the third year out. The infusion of millions in COVID funds has obviously changed that scenario, and our reserves have swollen dramatically. As mentioned, however, these are one-time monies on which we cannot depend to cover added permanent staffing nor staff pay raises beyond the increases in ongoing general funds. Thus, the news is very good, but we must be extraordinarily careful not to squander this windfall.

Facilities Master Plan Update

Following a recent Saturday Study Session, the research and planning into the future facility needs of the district continues. We will be studying transportation routes, grade configuration, attendance boundaries, specialized program development and location, and all other issues related to these critical decisions. The District will be forming two committees for staff and parent/guardian participation in the areas of 1) grade-span configuration and 2) boundary considerations. It is our priority and intent to have representation from each of the elementary and middle school sites. Information regarding dates and how to get involved will be shared next week. Any recommendations to the Board will be made by next December in anticipation of implementation in August of 2022, not this coming school year.

Bus Drivers

We continue to recruit for critically needed bus and van drivers. We anticipate a significant bump in pay for immediate implementation through August 1 as well as significantly increased permanent pay. Please contact **Kelly Stainbrook** at (805) 781-1160. We also have unfilled vacancies for Special Education paraeducators. Contact HR at (805) 549-781-1000 or info@pasoschools.org.

CLICK ME

We're Hiring!