Fall 2020: Update for July 24

Dear Madera Unified Community,

We understand that you all are eager to know our preliminary plans for Fall 2020. We want to do a better job to keep you regularly updated on our planning and preparation process.

As with any decision we make, our highest priority is the health and well-being of our students and staff. Our emerging plans and decisions are relying on the latest public health guidance from the Madera County Department of Public Health as we prepare for re-entry. It is important that our students, families, and employees understand that we will only reopen school buildings if public health experts say it is safe to do so.

Our county is currently on the states watchlist due to the recent spike in positive COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations. Therefore, we will not be able to safely open school buildings for our students to begin the school year. All teaching and learning for every student will take place remotely until it is safe to return to school in-person.

The online learning experience for students will be different than what was offered last spring, including access to additional instructional time and digital resources.

As we develop our reopening plans, our key considerations are how to best serve and support the academic learning and social emotional needs of every student, particularly students of color. We are also taking into account the differentiated needs of our students, including the specialized support required by our students with special needs. We will continue providing meals and other primary supports, like technology tools, to our students. We are also observing our Madera Unified Community Compact, paying particular attention to how we can prioritize our students who have been disproportionally impacted by the pandemic.

We are working diligently to safely commence the 2020-21 school year on Wednesday, August 19. What the first week of school, the first month, and the first semester will look like is dependent on circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Again, all of our plans will be based on up-to-date guidance from health authorities. Right now, our preliminary plan includes the following:

We are proposing a model in which the first two weeks of school, August 19th to September 2nd, would be dedicated to a number of important foundational social
emotional and academic components to ensure students, educators and families are ready for the learning ahead.

These activities would be conducted remotely when possible and include:

- Teachers will meet individually with students in the first two weeks, possibly in person with appropriate safety measures in place.
- Multiple opportunities and ways for families to become familiar with the learning technology that will be used by their children.
- Social emotional engagement in order to help ease the anxiety and stress of the past months.
- Distribution of technology, classroom supplies, and instructional materials to students
- Ensure technology is available so that every student has a working device and access to high speed internet.
- Health and wellness processes are practiced and in place prior to students entering the buildings.
- Implement proper supports for our most fragile students.

This time will allow us to make sure our online learning platforms are working well on a large, district-wide scale and that students and teachers are ready, connected to each other and comfortable with the learning technology they will be using.

Professional Development

Leading up to the start of the school year teachers will be provided with professional development opportunities as well as planning and preparation time to support them in the implementation of their instructional program. There will be a focus on teacher preparation, planning and professional development around the following areas: Digital Curriculum, Digital Instructional Platforms, Preparing High Quality and Engaging Online Lessons, and Methods for Assessing and Monitoring Student Progress. In every potential school model that we are considering, teachers will keep a focus on maintaining a continuity of learning for students, whether they are in classrooms or learning online.

We will continue to be adaptable, understanding that adaptability is something every one of us--students, educators and staff, parents--has had to rely on the last four months. No scenario for fall is perfect, but we are working hard to give everyone in our school community the best possible option for teaching and learning this fall.
Content Delivery Models in MUSD

Our goal is to ensure that student learning is taking place five days per week, regardless of the model. As we prioritize the health and safety expectations with our desire to maximize in-person instruction, our current guidance from Governor Newsom expects that students will learn from home in a distance learning model. As we prepare to open schools with a promise of continuity of learning in any circumstance or condition, we want to support our students, educators, and family members in their circumstances and changing health and safety conditions.

We will keep you updated as we work with public health experts, our families, labor partners and district stakeholders, which includes feedback we have already received from many Madera Unified families through our surveys.

We value your input and feedback as we refine this preliminary plan and we welcome your comments and questions. Next week we will share a way for you to ask ongoing questions related to our reopening.

Thank you