



BOARD OF EDUCATION

February 24, 2021

Dear Oakland Unified Community,

We reach out today to discuss something that is on everyone's mind, the opening of our schools to in-person learning this spring.

We don't have to tell you that the pandemic has been terribly difficult on everyone in our school communities. Many have lost family or friends to the disease, and many others are struggling with the isolation and mental health impacts of sheltering in place for so long. But after almost a year, we are at last starting to see infection rates drop and vaccination rates slowly increase.

While this period has been challenging, our district has also had many successes. Our teachers and staff have worked incredibly hard to put distance learning into daily practice, to distribute food and technology to our families, and to plan for a safe return to school sites. All of this would have been unimaginable just one year ago.

After being in distance learning since last March, the **OUSD Board of Education now believes it is critical for the social emotional and academic well-being of our students that Oakland Unified safely open our school sites for in-person learning by mid to late March**, in alignment with the proposed deadlines currently being discussed in Sacramento. Of course, any opening of schools this spring would include the option of continuing in distance learning for those families that prefer to do so.

As described in [OUSD's Plan](#), this will focus on classroom learning for students in preschool and at the elementary level (TK-5), as well as for high-need students in higher grade levels (students with special needs, unhoused students, and students who are having difficulty accessing distance learning). Of course, due to the need for small cohorts and social distancing, this will not be the normal school day but a modified schedule. In grades 6-12, our current thinking is instruction may remain primarily in distance learning until the end of the school year, but all students should have the option of in-person socio-emotional and academic support, and extracurricular activities.

Before we bring back our students, you should know that the safety measures we have in place will allow us to open safely. The District has invested heavily in ventilation, cleaning technology, and personal protective equipment (PPE), measured classrooms to make sure there will be sufficient social distancing, and worked with school principals to develop plans for in-person learning at each site.

More details will come as families with students in TK through 5th grade use this ["intent to return"](#) form to confirm plans to have students come to campus this spring or continue in distance learning, so that we know how many students to expect. We urge every family to complete the form for each student by March 2.



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This has been a stressful time with countless challenges, but we have seen many school systems across the country successfully open with sufficient precautions in place to educate students safely. It seems that everyone has come to appreciate like never before how much students benefit from being together in a classroom. After a long year away, it will be a tremendous relief to see our students return to campus this spring. We call on all of us as a community to make it happen.

Respectfully,

OUSD Board of Education