



Monterey County Office of Education

Leadership, Support, and Service to Prepare All Students for Success

*Dr. Deneen Guss
County Superintendent of Schools*

March 31, 2020

Monterey County School Communities,

The Monterey County Office of Education, many of the districts and charter schools are providing the communities of Monterey County with an important update on school facility closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Today the State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond released information that stated, "Due to the current safety concerns and needs for ongoing social distancing it currently appears that our students will not be able to return to school campuses before the end of the school year. This is in no way to suggest that school is over for the year, but rather we should put all efforts into strengthening our delivery of education through distance learning." Superintendent Thurmond urged all school districts in California to move towards and/or continue to strengthen distance learning programs and opportunities for students at this time.

With this new information and an abundance of caution MCOE, school district superintendents, and the charter school directors are taking a safety first approach and immediate action to extend the school facility closures through the end of the school year. To be clear, the 2019-20 school year is not over, it has just transitioned from classroom instruction into distance learning. Distance learning is taking place in different ways throughout our county and we encourage you to contact your students' teachers and administrators for confirmation of specific plans. Distance learning can look differently for each school and each district, and a student's ability to learn in an independent study model has to be assessed. We ask for patience and understanding as we are all quickly transitioning into a new way of teaching and learning to meet the health and safety impacts of COVID-19. It's challenging to many educators and our families to learn and communicate in a very new world but working together we can and will meet this challenge.

We are also extremely concerned about the social and emotional well-being of all of our students and are working on ways to stay connected even at a distance. We also know that many students, especially our seniors, who we know were looking forward to celebrating promotion and graduation ceremonies are very concerned about missing out on these momentous celebrations. Please know that district leaders will be planning how they might offer these experiences in different formats and/or at a later date. In the coming days and weeks, districts will provide their families with information regarding how grades, graduation, transcripts, scholarships, summer school, and continued distance learning instruction will be handled.

While we recognize this extension of school facility closures poses challenges and hardship to many families in Monterey County, the most effective way to slow and disrupt the transmission of this pandemic is by continuing to implement social distancing practices. We are grateful to community members throughout Monterey County for their tremendous prevention efforts during this unique and difficult time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Deneen Guss, Monterey County Superintendent of Schools
Jim Koenig, Alisal Union School District
Jonathan Sison, Big Sur Unified School District
Ian Trejo, Bradley Union School District
Dr. Barbara Dill-Varga, Carmel Unified School District

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Roberto Rios, Chualar Union School District
Yvette Irving, Gonzales Unified School District
Rosemarie Grounds, Graves School District
Zandra Jo Galvan, Greenfield Union School District
Daniel Stonebloom, Lagunita School District
Dr. Jinane Annous, Mission Union School District
Dr. PK Diffenbaugh, Monterey Peninsula Unified School District
Kari Yeater, North Monterey County Unified School District
Dr. Ralph Gómez Porras, Pacific Grove Unified School District
Martha L. Martinez, Salinas City Elementary School District
Dan Burns, Salinas Union High School District
Josh Van Norman, San Antonio Union School District
Dr. Catherine Reimer, San Ardo Union School District
Tim Ryan, Santa Rita Union School District
Tim Vanoli, Soledad Unified School District
Dr. Brian Walker, South Monterey County Joint Union High School District
Eric Tarallo, Spreckels Union School District
Gina Uccelli, Washington Union School District
Karina Barger, Bay View Academy
Aimee Alling, Big Sur Charter School
Sean Madden, International School of Monterey
Kenneth Lawrence-Emanuel, Learning for Life Charter School
Cassandra Bridge, Monterey Bay Charter School
Justin McCollum, Monterey County Home County Charter School
Lucy Zepeda, Oasis Charter Public School