

# PRESS RELEASE

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 22, 2020 | El Dorado County, CA

This message is intended to provide you with the latest information on opening school on Monday, August 10, 2020. This is unlike any moment for all of us as we try to plan and envision what this school year looks like. Emotions and worry are present in all members of our community, students, parents, families and staff alike.

Last Friday, Governor Newsom introduced criteria from the California Department of Public Health for opening schools. Specifically he noted that Counties not on the watchlist could reopen schools with conditions.

In speaking with representatives from El Dorado County Public Health, with our recent spike in numbers, there is a very high likelihood that we will be on the watchlist over the next three weeks which would require us to close for 14 days minimum. The timing of this could not be more difficult as we plan for the beginning of the school year.

In addition, State and local guidance, along with common sense, recommend levels of COVID-19 testing that are available for students and staff to address a reasonable outbreak on top of normal community needs. The issues include the numbers of tests as well as the turnaround time for results.

El Dorado County, in contrast to many areas, has had relatively manageable levels of COVID-19. As a result of lower numbers of cases, our County has not been supplied significant resources from the State similar to more heavily impacted Counties. Our County health leaders and officials have been excellent partners in managing our situation and are aggressively pursuing additional resources.

Since the California Department of Public Health guidance on opening school was released Friday, we have been working extremely close with Public Health on their testing capacity. Based on a phone call at 4 p.m. yesterday, with our current number of allocated and available tests due to the State not providing the County sufficient resources, it is deemed by Public Health that we are unable to safely open schools for our students and staff until we are better resourced.

Therefore, our recommendation to the Board is to focus our energy on distance learning to start the school year and pivot to in person learning as soon as it is safe and we are cleared by Public Health.

This is either a relief or bitterly disappointing news to all of us.

We absolutely realize our students need to return to school. We also recognize that Public Health has not been allocated the resources needed from the State and are not able to meet the basic

needs of testing for students and staff at this time. Thus, it is clearly unsafe to bring everyone back starting on Monday, August 10, 2020 but desire to bring everyone back sooner than later.

This is new information that will take us all some time to emotionally and logistically unpack. At the same time, school will eventually open and we need to be prepared to provide an engaging, high quality education for our students.

Please know that the distance learning you experienced this spring is not what it will look like this fall. This fall will be more engaging, with higher expectations and greater supports. You will see surveys coming out on technology and information coming from our schools. We are focused on emotional wellness, mental health and helping transition our freshman to school. We are planning on limited on-campus opportunities and support. Athletic physical conditioning will continue with fall sports delayed into mid-December and beyond. If you are a parent of a student with a disability, we will be reaching out with plans for ensuring that students receive their Free and Appropriate Public Education.

This will be a year different than any other. Most importantly, know that we want students back for in person learning as soon as it is safe and Sacramento gets the resources to our local Public Health Department.

Thank you for your patience in this challenging situation. Please watch for frequent communication from your school sites regarding the start of the school year.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ron Carruth  
Superintendent  
El Dorado Union High School District