

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Update

A week ago Monday, we applied for a Safe School Review with the State of California to open in full student instruction, and we have been awaiting their response that was supposed to be sent to us yesterday.

If we get an affirmative response, we will schedule an emergency Board Meeting to establish a full time opening date and will immediately reach out to the Faculty Association and CSEA to work on detailed plans. If our plan is rejected, we will appeal and rework the details, as it is imperative we find a path to more fully open our schools.

With the County in the Red Tier and the Orange Tier in view, we feel the time is now to seek this approval. The vast majority of our staff have had both shot 1 and shot 2 of the vaccine. As of Thursday, only 2 students are positive for COVID-19 and no staff members. Hundreds of student athletes have tested over the past 2 weeks and none have tested positive for COVID-19.

Dr. Nancy Williams from El Dorado County Health has signed our Safe School application to petition to open schools in full cohort after reviewing our protocols and analyzing community epidemiological data. Our local El Dorado County Public Health Office supports our effort for bringing all students back to campus at this time and believes based on the evidence we can do so safely.

The CDC states clearly that at our level of cases per 100K and our positivity level, our high schools should be in full person instruction. That guidance is in the absence of the vaccine. With the vaccine, California should allow us locally to determine the date to open full time.

The challenge we are facing is the CDPH 4 foot rule between students. We can manage this with a waiver in several of our rooms for hybrid, but we cannot accommodate 35 high school students in a room. We're not going to be deceitful about our ability to meet this unworkable mandate, we're simply asking the State to waive it as practicable. You can't fit 35 high school students in many of our classrooms and keep 4 feet of distance. It simply doesn't work unless you're willing to sign on to a lie, and we're not willing to do that.

On another note, we are working tirelessly on getting our athletes prepared for competition. All of our schools have Friday night football games starting this week; however, El Dorado High School's Varsity game was cancelled by the opposing team due to required student athlete quarantines at their site. The State has also released guidance for indoor sports that we are still working through as the required testing cadence is greater than any other State and there are a great many details yet to be worked out. The new requirements set forth by the CDPH for testing of athletes in basketball, volleyball and wrestling are beyond cumbersome and unrealistic. The thought of subjecting our students to daily testing for the foreseeable future is not only unrealistic, but borders on unconscionable that we would do that to our students. We are working diligently with the State to voice our concerns over this unrealistic mandate. We remain steadfast in our commitment to return all athletes to play as soon as possible, but we must be provided a pathway to doing so that is both manageable and fair to our student athletes. We are in the process of exploring a once a week testing cadence for these athletes and will update the community as soon as we receive approval from CDPH. We are also pursuing greater flexibility for band, choir, drama and student activities. We believe that more flexible guidelines are coming that make sense and provide a path forward for our students.

In closing, the end of this week marks one full year of our students being out of a regular school year. Our staff in the same way has been adjusting to every challenge thrown at them over the past 12 months. The time to become normal while still taking safety precautions is here. We are doing everything we can to get approval to more fully open our schools. We just need Sacramento to get on board and approve our application. As soon as we hear any news, we will keep you informed.