



NEWS RELEASE: Joint Statement from San Diego Unified, Los Angeles Unified School Districts Regarding Online Start to School Year

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News Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:

Maureen Magee, (SDUSD), 619-381-7930
Shannon Haber, (LAUSD), 213-393-1289

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On March 13, four months ago today, we made the difficult decision to close our schools to prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Much has changed since that time: New research is available, additional information on school safety experiences from around the world, and updated health guidelines from state and county leaders.

Unfortunately, much of the research is incomplete and many of the guidelines are vague and contradictory. One fact is clear: those countries that have managed to safely reopen schools have done so with declining infection rates and on-demand testing available. California has neither. The skyrocketing infection rates of the past few weeks make it clear the pandemic is not under control.

Therefore, we are announcing that the new school year will start online only. Instruction will resume on Aug.18 in Los Angeles Unified and Aug. 31 in San Diego Unified, as previously scheduled. Both districts will continue planning for a return to in-person learning during the 2020-21 academic year, as soon as public health conditions allow.

This announcement represents a significant disappointment for the many thousands of teachers, administrators and support staff, who were looking forward to welcoming students back in August. It is obviously an even greater disappointment to the many parents who are anxious for their students to resume their education. Most of all, this decision will impact our students in ways that researchers will take years to understand.

Our leaders owe it to all of those impacted by the COVID-19 closures to increase the pace of their work. No one should use the delay in the reopening of classrooms as a reason to relax. The coronavirus has not taken a summer vacation, as many had hoped. Indeed, the virus has accelerated its attacks on our community.

The federal government must provide schools with the resources we need to reopen in a responsible manner.

In the past four months, we have provided more than 47 million meals to families, distributed more than 250,000 computers to students and trained more than 35,000 educators in online learning. In the weeks ahead, we plan to continue this breakneck pace.

- The school year will resume on schedule.
- Teachers will receive expanded training in online education to better meet the needs of students.
- Students will receive additional training at the start of the year to become better online learners.
- Online supports for parents will be increased to make it easier for them to participate in the education of their students.
- Principals will continue customized planning for the safest possible reopening this fall.
- Free meals will continue to be provided at the current distribution stations.

On Friday, the American Academy of Pediatrics reversed course and said it was no longer confident that opening schools in the middle of a public health crisis is the best option for children. That reversal symbolizes the speed with which schools continue to receive vague and conflicting information from the medical and scientific communities. It is clear our two systems will need to create our own source for reliable scientific information.

Los Angeles Unified plans to update the community in early August. San Diego Unified will provide a public assessment on Aug.10 of how soon (after the first week of school) a physical return to class would be possible. That assessment will be based on local measures of whether the virus is sufficiently under control, as well as progress on testing and federal action on funding. On Aug.10, San Diego Unified will also outline the physical measures planned for each school to guard against the pandemic and detail the online learning program for the 2020-21 academic year.

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