March 7, 2020

Dear SSD Community,

We are writing to provide you with an update as there has been new guidance issued from the County Department of Public Health since our last update on Tuesday, March 3.

The following guidelines were developed in a joint effort with all Santa Clara County school districts in collaboration with the Santa Clara County Office of Education and the County Department of Public Health. The following guidance is for March 7-April 3 and will be re-evaluated and updated as additional information becomes available.

The Public Health Department is now recommending the postponement or cancellation of some mass gatherings and large community events, depending on a number of specific factors, which we were briefed on during a call with Dr. Sarah Cody Friday. The guidance from Public Health is that we should review each of the events we have planned, consider each of the factors outlined by Dr. Cody and make decisions regarding cancellation on a case-by-case basis.

I. SCHOOL CLOSURES

The Public Health Department currently is not recommending closing schools. Among other reasons, individuals under 18 years of age have been identified as a low-risk group relative to the virus. If a staff member or student in a specific school is confirmed to have COVID-19, the Public Health Department will consider, based on the specific facts and circumstances of that case, whether closure of that school is warranted. Public Health’s guidance is that the disruption caused by school closure currently outweighs the potential benefits of using school closure to slow disease transmission. Closing schools is a last resort and will be done with great care, transparency, and in partnership with Public Health. These recommendations may be updated upon further evaluation and public health need.

No school closures will occur without the authorization of Public Health in consultation with the district and the County Superintendent of Schools. Closure events may be of short duration to allow deep cleaning to occur, or of longer duration, depending on the circumstances of the situation, and will be decided on a case by case basis.

II. EVENT CANCELLATIONS

The most recent guidance from Public Health is that there are 4 considerations in evaluating events; 1) the size of the gathering, 2) the mix of individuals from various areas and age brackets, 3) the ability of individuals at events to remain at arms-length distance from each other, and 4) the duration of the event.
1) Events should be cancelled if they are in spaces that do not permit participants to remain at arms-length distance from one another.

2) All indoor middle school sporting events will continue to occur but spectators present should stay at arms-length distance from each other. Spectators in high risk groups are discouraged from attending.

3) All non-instructional meetings, gatherings, and events where large numbers of individuals are within arm’s length distance of one another should be cancelled or postponed. The number of individuals that trigger cancellation relates to the size of the meeting or event venue and the nature of the event.

4) School-sponsored festivals and competitions, including music festivals, concerts, trips to Disneyland or Great America, for example, which involve large numbers of individuals in close proximity should be cancelled or postponed.

III. TRAVEL

At the present time, Public Health recommends that non-essential travel of both students and staff be suspended due to the potential to increase the risk of transmission of novel coronavirus into other communities.

District sponsored out of state travel (DC, festivals, competitions, international travel) should be cancelled pending further updates.

IV. SCCOE OUTDOOR SCHOOL SCCOE

The Outdoor School Program at Walden West will remain open. SCCOE will employ enhanced cleaning and safety protocols. Students and staff will maintain arms-length proximity during meals, sleeping, and other activities. Individuals who are not well should not attend and all attendees should adhere to public health guidelines for those with existing medical conditions.

We thank you again for your understanding as we work together to protect students, families and staff. We will continue to work with school site administrators to update and refine our guidelines as needed.

Respectfully,
Benjamin H. Picard, Ed. D.
Superintendent of Schools