



# CABRILLO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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## SUPERINTENDENT

Sean McPhetridge, Ed.D.

## GOVERNING BOARD

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July 13, 2020

Dear CUSD Community and Staff:

First, I hope you and your families are staying safe and healthy during this time. We know that this is a time of great concern for all of us now, and I write today to answer some questions I have heard recently.

On Thursday, July 16, the Governing Board will convene to give feedback on recommendations about the return to school in the fall. There will also be an updated presentation on the district's budget now that we have had time to receive and analyze the recently revised California State budget. As always, this meeting is open to the public, and we encourage all who can join or watch [the video](#) afterwards. Until then, for those with advance questions about these topics, please see the FAQ provided below.

## CUSD Return to School Plans

### **How have we been planning so that CUSD students and staff can return to campus safely?**

*This past month, CUSD convened an Opening Schools Steering Committee, assembled smaller focus groups, and asked for stakeholder input in different surveys to help facilitate the representation of our staff and families. CUSD's Assistant Superintendent Dr. Leticia Bhatia and Chief Business Officer Jesus Contreras led this work to review guidelines from the San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) [Pandemic Recovery Framework](#). This document is based on guidelines from California Department of Education (CDE) and the California and San Mateo Departments of Public Health. Our task ahead as a district is balancing the health and safety risks while staying flexible to do our best for our students, employees, and community. [CDE requires](#) and most families desire a return to campus so students can benefit from in-person learning. We know families and staff have concerns about how we can accomplish that and follow health guidelines. Based on the evolving information provided by County and State agencies, we know we need to remain flexible and adapt to the changing situation to ensure we can promote student and employee safety and health while returning to campus.*

### **What can families and staff expect with regard to the district's next steps in this planning?**

*At the [July 16 Board meeting](#), CUSD staff will provide recommendations to allow our students and employees back on campus while using the "four pillars" guidelines required to do so. [The four pillars we use are 1\) health and hygiene, 2\) face coverings, 3\) physical distancing, and 4\) limited gatherings](#). We expect we will need to limit the number of students in classrooms to allow for physical distancing. We expect everyone will need to take health precautions like checking symptoms and temperatures as well as taking care of staff and students who show symptoms. Use of masks is something we all know will be another way for us to help limit transmission, and we must prepare everyone on campus to wear one to ensure safety of themselves and others. Finally, limited gatherings may mean adjusted lunchtimes and assemblies and also not allowing parents or members of the public on campuses. We expect we will need to assess and modify operations every few weeks or as required depending on campus need and/or County Health Officer guidance, and we will work at providing remote learning when students cannot be on campus. Our goal is to continue soliciting family and staff input in the month ahead before school is scheduled to start and ongoing as plans are implemented. Responding to this national crisis at hand – the COVID-19 pandemic itself as well as its impacts on mental health and the national economy – will require engagement, creativity, and collaboration of all. Schedules will definitely need to be modified, and our students certainly will need to be off campus a certain number of days each week to provide us the ability to adhere to guidelines. Please join our [Governing Board meeting on July 16](#) to learn more about recommendations for our return to school in August.*

## CUSD Budget Update

### **How has the district's budget been affected by COVID-19? Do we have reserves to help us?**

Per CUSD's June 18 [budget update](#), [financial overview update](#), and [upcoming July 16 updates](#), and as has been presented as further [financial information](#) on the district's website, public schools are struggling with increased costs due to COVID-19 response, flat funding due to economic recession, and a major decline in State revenues due to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the economy.

While one-time funding last year due to a change in CUSD's funding status from "State-Funded" to "Community-Funded" allowed us to avoid further cuts for the upcoming 2020-2021 school year, this reserve is expected to be depleted again in the next three years. As a result of this reserve depletion, ongoing deficit spending forecasts, and the impact of COVID-19 on district budgets, CUSD staff anticipate needing to propose additional budget cuts this fall to build a financially sustainable budget. The district's recently approved aspirational [financial reserve policy](#) is likely to take years to achieve even under favorable economic conditions. A healthy reserve really serves as an aspirational goal so we are able to meet CUSD's financial obligations at all times without requiring abrupt budget cuts (e.g., mid-year cuts to programs and services), thus minimizing the need for short-term loans, sustaining our strong credit ratings for our [bond](#), and safeguarding students, staff, and community.

### **What about the passage of the parcel tax (Measure I)? Wasn't that for teacher raises?**

Our district is very grateful for last November's renewal of a \$150 per year per parcel tax ([Measure I](#)) which is intended to preserve student programs, retain qualified teachers/staff, and maintain safety. The Board approved this measure in August 2019, understanding that [even with a renewal parcel tax and no further spending, major cuts would need to be implemented](#) in order to help maintain CUSD's fiscal solvency and avoid [County takeover](#). Meanwhile, negotiations to update our [teachers' contract](#) (through which all employment terms including the [salary schedule](#) are in effect until a replacement contract is negotiated and agreed upon) have been ongoing since February 2019 when [CUTA representatives declined a 2% salary increase offer tied to the passage of Measure I](#). When CUSD realized its economic conditions worsened and had to implement budget cuts described above, negotiations have been ongoing. Finally, please know **San Mateo County Office of Education cannot legally approve any negotiated salary increases without further actionable budget cuts**, per State Law (AB1200) and CDE guidelines requiring districts show how increases can be afforded.

### **What is the district's "COLA"? Why don't CUSD employees receive it as salary increases?**

COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) is the increase in funding provided to districts by the State. It's intended to cover increases in all district costs, including salary and benefits cost increases and increasing program improvements, some of which increase at higher than COLA rates. In February 2020, [FCMAT reported](#) how CUSD salary increases previously were higher than the COLAs we actually received. COLA varies each year; for 2020-21, it will be 0%. As a district we have historically spent more than our annual revenues, exceeding the annual COLAs, and that is partially what led to our near-insolvency last Fall. Now with COLA being zeroed out and with COVID-19's impact on the state budget, our funding is insufficient to cover our ongoing expenses: that has led to us now being unable to consider new costs now, including salary increases, as we prepare for possible cuts ahead.

As always, we look forward to ongoing opportunities ahead to answer any questions you might have, and we encourage your questions so that as a community we can all understand what we are doing now and going forward for financial sustainability, continuous improvement, and a focus on equity.

Sincerely,



Sean McPhetridge, Ed.D.  
Superintendent