

Questions and Answers about HELUS Reopening School Plan Public Forum July 23, 2020

Q: I understand that Governor Newsom announced there would be no cuts to K - 12th schools for next school year. I would like to understand how this impacts our school as far as not being able to hire at least one teacher for the 2 that retired this year.

A: Correct, there were no cuts to K-12 schools for next year, thankfully; however, funding will be deferred. Basically that means that schools must have enough money to operate now through February. Schools that do not have enough funding will need to get a loan and borrow money. As far as hiring teachers, there is a ratio of students to teachers. With the projection of students enrolled for 2020-2021 at 168 we would need 7 teachers so we will only hire what we need which is one teacher.

Q: It is my understanding that if there are for example, ten 6th graders, ten 7th graders and ten 8th graders, there will be one teacher for all three grades together? Is this correct?

A: Our class configuration for the upper grades includes a 7th and 8th grade combination class with one teacher (or one teacher plus a 1 / 5 part time single subject teacher) and a 5th and 6th grade combination class with one teacher.

Q: Please ask the Board *specifically* what threshold will allow us to tell our kids they will be able to go to Kindergarten and 5th grade.

A: The criteria for the Board to consider reinstating oncampus student learning includes:

- 1. Clearance from the Governor of CA to reopen schools.*
- 2. Clearance from the LA County Department of Public Health allowing students to safely return to school.*
- 3. Adherence to the list of safety protocols (health screening, social distancing, masks, etc.) and supply of safety material recommended by LA County Department of Public Health.*

Q: It concerns me that decisions are being made without having a comprehensive end game in place.

A: We understand your concerns about having a game plan in place. A comprehensive game plan is difficult to put in place because the game is continuously changing. The overall end game plan is to get students back in school on campus as soon as it is safe to do so.

Q: Please tell the Board that kids need to be around other kids and teachers to fully learn social skills, be emotionally and psychologically healthy, and more. There is no online substitute.

A: We respect your opinion. We agree that kids need to be around other kids as well as teachers to fully learn social skills, be emotionally and psychologically healthy. The priority right now is to keep students alive and protected from COVID-19 so they can return to school and fully learn. We are adding social and emotional learning to our virtual classrooms at the onset of the school year. The current guidelines we must abide by from LA Public Health "Requires all residents to stay at home as much as practicable and to limit their contact with people who aren't part of their household"

Q: My biggest concern in regards to distance learning is the mental health and social/emotional wellness of my child. We have experienced significant regressions in these areas since March. I would like to know how teachers plan to incorporate mental health and emotional wellness into their curriculum plans. I would also like to know how the school, as a whole, will be providing services and resources in these

areas to children who need it. It is really hard to hold rigorous academic expectations for a child, when they are in the midst of a social emotional regression.

A: The pandemic and imposed shutdown of public places along with the Safer-at-Home orders are testing the mental health and emotional wellness of many including adults. The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Office is aware and they have provided an ACCESS Hotline: 1-800-854-7771. The hotline is available 24 / 7 and includes deployment of crisis evaluation teams, information and referrals, gatekeeping of acute inpatient psychiatric beds, and patient transport. This is a resource to the entire school community. Another school resource is Pathways Community Services. The school offers referrals to Pathways when needed. The school does not have the expertise to provide mental health services. The school makes referral to mental health experts.

The developmental social emotional learning will be addressed in our virtual classrooms by daily live interactions. Students will see and hear their teacher and classmates daily and engage in age appropriate lessons, discussions and sharing.

Q: What technology platforms will be utilized for online learning and interaction? Will the school have access to Chromebooks for students to check out?

A: The base technology platform for online learning and interaction will be Google Classroom. If a student is in need of equipment the School has technology devices that may be checked out providing the parent/guardian signs and accepts liability of the device.

Q: If we are expected to pick up packets from school as we did in the spring, please ask teachers to keep in mind their expectations for learning on the day of packet pickup/drop off. It was quite challenging before to get packets late in the day on Monday, and still have a full day's worth of work to complete.

A: We will not be using packets so there will not be a packet pick up.

Q: Will there be a system for parents and teachers to provide feedback on how distance learning is working? Will there be opportunities to reassess and make changes, especially if distance learning continues for a long period of time?

A: Yes, we will monitor our new approach to distance learning and elicit input from parents. However, parents' input is always welcome. Parents are encouraged to share ongoing feedback with their child's teacher, administration and the school board. To provide additional feedback the superintendent/Principal can be contacted at slaven@heluesd.org and information on Board meetings where public comment can be given can be found at <https://helus.org/board-agenda-%2F-minutes>.

Q: How will the school provide services for children in need of special education and speech services?

A: Special education services will be provided by the special education teacher and instructional assistant during virtual class sessions or through separate support sessions. The model for providing speech services has not been fully determined. If allowed, speech services will be the same as before the pandemic.

Q: It would be helpful if parents could receive a brief outline of the curriculum to be covered, so that we can refresh our memories on subjects we may have forgotten, prepare ourselves with supplemental resources and materials, and plan out our weekly responsibilities around school expectations.

A: Great idea! The California Common Core Standards will show what is covered for each grade level. Please also ask your child's teacher for the scope and sequence of the curriculum. You can also ask your child's teacher for resources.

Q: I hope that the distance learning model will be flexible. Families may be juggling jobs, children of various ages, needs, and abilities, family and home responsibilities, and any number of additional challenges during this time. I understand Newsom's call for "rigorous distance learning" and "class assignments that are challenging and equivalent to in-person instruction." We must also understand that what works in-person may not work in a distance learning model, especially when parents are juggling other responsibilities, and children are struggling with mental health and social emotional wellness needs. Flexibility should be key in the implementation of the distance learning model.

A: The distance learning model will have some flexibility with the asynchronous instruction. The synchronous instruction will be on a consistent daily class schedule and routine.

Q: With so much time to prepare for this school year, I do hope that our teacher's are able to have all of our assignments and our videos ready ahead of time. I want to keep my 3 on schedule and not a chance to fall behind.

A: Teachers usually prepare lesson plans on a weekly basis. Please talk with your children's teachers if you need assignments or curriculum other than what is provided.

Q: I was very sad that their 4th quarter report cards had no grades. We all worked very hard and to not show that on a report card was very disheartening to us all.

A: With our new distance learning program, student expectations and grades will be reinstated to the extent possible.

Q: I hope that we have options for time slots for zoom meetings with our teachers.

A: Teachers will post their daily schedules which will include whole class time as well as open time when students/parents can meet individually or in virtual small groups.

Q: Because most parents do work and have multiple children, I really hope that we are not piled on and expected to do as much as required in March. A homeschool program is much less. Most parents will lose interest in our school if the academics are overbearing. I hope that is taken into consideration. A lot of parents are looking into charter and home schools.

A: We understand each student has an individual learning pace and attention threshold and that it may be difficult to keep up with the assignments. Please work with your child's teacher and let the teacher know what you are experiencing. Senate Bill 98 requires we provide a minimum of 240 minutes of distance learning instruction through a combination of live interaction and time equivalent assignments. We also understand and support parents in doing what they believe is best for their child. We share the same goal and we want what is best for your child too. We want to keep all our HELUS students and families; however if you feel a charter school or home school is best for your child then you have our support.

Q: I will not be able to send my students to school in a mask. If they do return and that is a guideline they will have to continue with the distant learning. I do hope that an option is given. It is not out of disrespect. It is not out of political stance. I do not feel it is the safest option.

A: When we are allowed to bring students back on campus, we will need to follow the requirements from the authorities (CDC, Governor, LA County Health Dept., and our local Board). Masks may or may not be a requirement.

Q: Our school is fortunate to be its own district. Our low enrollment numbers allow us to safely distance ourselves. I believe that Helus should open to our student's, that want to return. Our governor has stated

that school's can submit a waiver to safely return to school. Our school has this opportunity and we are so lucky for the chance. Will Helus submit a waiver to get our student's back to school?

A: The HELUS governing Board approved applying for a waiver for Special Education students with special needs. As of 7/31/2020, the Governor has not opened the waiver application process.

Q: LA county school's are also looking into outdoor school using parks. Is Helus looking into using the oaks?

A: HELUS has not discussed outdoor school. The Board and Health Department do not support large gatherings or groups being together at this current time.

Q: I do not believe that it is safe to have our student's return wearing a mask. LA county is saying masks are mandatory for grades 3rd and up. This is not law. What does Helus say regarding masks? My student's will not return in a mask. I do not believe that it is safe mentally or emotionally to make them wear a mask.

A: HELUS will follow the guidelines and mandates from the local Board, Health Department, and Governor. If masks are included in the guidelines or mandates, then HELUS will comply.

Q: Our governor also stated that students will be tested. What does Helus say about this? My pediatrician is the only person authorized to give my student's tests. They will not be given covid tests. Will this be a requirement to attend school?

A: We are not aware of a requirement of testing or COVID-19 testing for students at this time. If the authorities do mandate testing, let's hope they offer a waiver to accommodate parents that refuse testing.

Q: IF Helus remains closed. I feel that still making parent's show up every Monday, is preventing the purpose of safer at home. I request that we get our student's paperwork for the majority of the school year in one lump. Maybe it won't be in the month of August. I do not think putting the additional strain on working parent's is fair to have to come in once a week.

A: HELUS has a new distance learning model for the fall of 2020. There will not be a weekly work packet pick up.

Q: It was very upsetting to not be given a grade for the amount of work we were required to do to keep students on track. Charter school's give much less paper trail. Will Helus readjust the requirements put on families to stay on target?

A: With the distance learning model HELUS is using in the fall, grades can be issued. The requirements will be based on the grade level Common Core State Standards, curriculum, and required instructional minutes. The instructional minutes in March - June were 315 minutes. The instructional minutes starting in August 2020 will be 240 through distance learning.

Q: Will Helus teacher's have to also follow what LA county is requiring from teacher's? To be online with student's face to face, daily. Will we be required to log into something each day for attendance credit by a specific start time?

A: Yes. Teachers will share their daily class schedule which will include the attendance time and online face to face time.

Q: How will attendance be taken?

A: Taking attendance will remain the same as regular school. Teachers will take attendance every morning, through our student information system, AERIES.

Q: Will "live" teaching be recorded for replay for parents and students who may not be available during the scheduled meeting time?

A: Teachers have the capability to record their live teaching. The Board and administration support recording of live teaching. If your child will miss a lesson, please check with the classroom teacher as to if the lesson will be recorded and available for later use. Please know that parents and students may not record a teacher without permission. Education code 51512, prohibits unauthorized recording in a classroom and requires a teacher's and principal's consent for the use of any listening or recording device.

Q: Will there be physical drop off and pick up of items or packets like the end of last year or will it be 100% online?

A: We will not do a weekly physical drop off and pick up of items or packets. Our distance learning model will be online. There may be situations or project assignments which require a rare visit to the school campus.

Q: Will direct instruction be given daily?

A: Yes

Q: Will there be opportunities given to students to freely talk to their grade level peers to facilitate social skills?

A: Yes

Q: Will the school calendar stay the same in regards to breaks and minimum days?

A: Yes

Q: Will teachers be required to hold office hours?

A: Teachers will share their class daily schedule which will include the windows of time they are available for parents and students.

Q: Will there be resources available to address mental health for our students, especially for those students who are struggling? If so, how will parents access those resources?

A: HELUS mental health supports remain in place. HELUS partners with Pathways Community Services and can assist parents with children in need of access to mental health experts.

Q: What materials and resources will be available for parents to check out from the school (computers, desks, books, etc.)?

A: Parents can work with their classroom teacher on materials and resources specific to the child's needs. All students will have access to their grade level curriculum materials. If additional books or resources are needed it will be on an individual basis.

Q: How and when will decisions be made in regards to returning to school on campus? Will you be reevaluating each quarter/semester?

A: We will continuously monitor the pandemic and will consider returning to campus as soon as it is safe to do so. Our guiding factors on returning to school include: Clearance to reopen or approval from the Governor, Approval from LA County Dept. of Health, authorization by the local school Board, having adequate PPE equipment, and having our reopening protocols in place.

Q: My husband and I work full-time jobs, and we cannot be here to homeschool our children. We do not have family in this area to help with childcare either. I know that there are many HELUS families that are in the same situation. Has anyone considered this?

A: Yes, we have considered families where both parents work during the school day. We are concerned and we'd like to help find solutions. We have reached out to the Oaks to see if they would open a childcare center and we have talked with a few parents on the PTA about the need for childcare. Here are some suggestions: Mathison Family Preschool (<http://www.mathisonfamilypreschool.org/>) is running a preschool and day care this year, or try the Child care referrals and resources for parents and providers at laoe.edu/childcare or by calling toll-free (888) 92-CHILD [1-888-922-4453].