



October 23, 2020

Dear Waverly Community,

As I'm sure you are aware, there is much discussion at the state, county, and city levels about how, when, and under what circumstances schools can reopen for in-person learning. This is also the primary topic of discussion in the head of school meetings I attend each week, one with Pasadena area schools and the other with CAIS schools throughout the state. These discussions change each week as circumstances and government policy change. Just as we were about to send this letter out yesterday, two key changes were announced in a Los Angeles County telebriefing! In this letter, I will share the current (as of today) public health department directives for school reopening, an update on our elementary building, and our plans for bringing students back to school safely when it is possible to do so. Before reading on, please know how much we all wish we could come back to our students and colleagues on campus. This plan isn't that, and we understand how challenging this may feel.

### Paths to Returning to Campus

There are three possible paths for in-person learning at schools in Pasadena. All require following the strict protocols described below and working closely with the Pasadena Public Health Department.

1. As of today, schools are now allowed to have up to 25% of their students on campus if the students have identified special needs, as defined by the school itself.
2. Schools can now apply for a waiver to bring kindergarten through second grade students to school for in-person learning (our preschool is already operating at the middle and high school campuses under a waiver specific to early childhood programs).
3. [Per the color-coded tiering system](#), when L.A. County drops into and stays in the red tier for two weeks, schools will be permitted to reopen for in-person learning.

## Required Protocols

1. Students must be in cohorts of no more than twelve children or youth with one to two teachers. Cohorts cannot interact, and teachers cannot work with more than two cohorts and one other teacher.
2. Schools must have a COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan overseen by a COVID-19 Compliance Task Force. The plan identifies the steps that the school will take immediately when notified that any member of the school community (student, visitor or employee) has tested positive for or has symptoms of COVID-19. Anyone who has had close contact with a person who has tested positive will be required to quarantine for 14 days. While close contact (defined by the CDC as being within 6 feet of an infected person for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period), Pasadena Public Health has let us know that they would assume that close contact had occurred with all members of a cohort in which a member had tested positive. When anyone in a cohort has symptoms of COVID-19, the students and teachers in that cohort will be required to quarantine until the person with symptoms has had a physician consult or a test that rules out COVID-19.
3. Schools must develop and implement a flu vaccination program (vaccine education, promotion, and documentation of completed current vaccination) with the goal of immunization for all students and employees unless contraindicated by documented medical exemption for the vaccine, before flu season begins (typically November 1). See attached.
4. Schools must conduct a health screening of all persons entering the campus before or upon arrival.
5. Schools must engineer and implement physical distancing (of at least six feet) in classrooms, workspaces, hallways, and outdoor spaces, and must seek to reduce or eliminate all forms of incidental contact, such as through shared supplies or drinking fountains.
6. Schools must require everyone over the age of two to wear face coverings over the mouth and nose except when eating or drinking.
7. Schools must limit contact between cohorts through strict scheduling, including staggered break, meal, arrival, and departure times.

8. Schools must teach and implement infection avoidance measures throughout the day, such as frequent and sufficient handwashing.
9. Schools must implement a plan for surveillance testing for all employees. While the CDC recommends that at minimum all staff be tested at staggered intervals every two months, health officials recognize that much more frequent testing is necessary to reduce outbreaks.
10. Schools must develop and implement a sanitization plan with products approved by the Environmental Protection Agency for use against COVID-19.
11. It is strongly recommended that a minimum of 50% of school activities take place outdoors.

### Community Factors that May Delay Campus Reopening

Los Angeles County is in the purple tier and unable to reopen schools due to a continuing high daily case rate. While the other two criteria, the test positivity rate and the health equity metric, place the county in a lower tier, all three criteria must be met to drop down into the red tier and enable school reopening. The Pasadena Public Department of Health has indicated that they are concerned about the possible impact of several factors (holiday travel, college students returning from colleges in states where case rates are soaring, the World Series, and frequent travel to Las Vegas) on the case rate in L.A. County. Even if schools are able to reopen in coming weeks, there has been much discussion about keeping schools in distance learning for two weeks following the Thanksgiving holiday and winter break in order to prevent outbreaks.

### The Elementary Facility

As we have shared previously, there was a flood at the elementary school on August 28 that caused extensive damage to walls, ceilings, and floors on both the first and second floors of the building. The demolition phase took far longer than expected but is now complete. We are awaiting bids from three contractors and plan to move quickly on the selection process. While we do not yet have a timeline for reconstruction, we can assume that the building will not be ready for students before winter break and perhaps, not until the end of January. When students do return, the building will have new floors, fresh paint, improved lighting and some remodeled, de-gendered bathrooms. Silver lining!

### The Cohort Challenge for Middle and High School

As stated above, Los Angeles County is currently mandating that students be in cohorts of no more than twelve and that teachers work with no more than two cohorts. This means that

middle and high school students cannot attend more than one class in person. L.A. County and Pasadena Public Health Departments recognize that this makes it close to impossible for middle and high schools to reopen for in-person learning. If numbers drop significantly in the county, it is possible that larger cohorts will eventually be allowed, permitting teachers to interact with more than one cohort but probably not all their students.

#### Possibilities and Plans for a Hybrid Model

Given the multiple challenges that all schools are facing and the added elementary facility issues at Waverly, we don't see a path to full-day in-person learning during the first semester. That said, we are actively exploring the first two paths to in-person learning discussed above and putting all required protocols in place so we are ready to safely bring students back part-time to support their social and emotional wellbeing. Most, if not all, academic learning will need to continue in remote for the foreseeable future, certainly at the middle and high schools due to the cohorting requirement.

As we work on our plans, we need to check in with each of you regarding your family's thoughts on returning in-person when it is possible to do so. We understand that some families will choose to remain on remote learning through the end of the 2020-2021 school year or until a safe vaccine is commonly available. Knowing how many families will make this choice is a critical piece of information we need to complete our planning. As such, we will be sending out a brief survey on November 4. Given the complexity of the information presented in this letter and the difficulties we know families may face as they try to decide what is best for their children, we are offering two town meetings for families who have questions about the paths, protocols, challenges, and plans for reopening for in-person learning at Waverly.

Meeting #1: Monday, November 2, 2020 at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting #2: Tuesday, November 3, 2020 at 8:30 a.m.

Watch for the Zoom links closer to the meeting dates.

I miss our students and families every day, and I am tremendously grateful for the creativity and hard work of our teachers, students, and families during this time of distance learning.

Looking forward,

Heidi Johnson  
Head of School