



Santa Barbara County Education Office

4400 Cathedral Oaks Rd, PO Box 6307, Santa Barbara, CA 93160-6307
Telephone: (805) 964-4711 • FAX: (805) 964-4712 • sbceo.org

Susan C. Salcido, Superintendent of Schools

February 5, 2021

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The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Governor Newsom,

We are writing today to express our deep concern for our students, their mental health in the COVID-19 environment, and equity in learning opportunities. As elected leaders in Santa Barbara County, we share the responsibility for student success and wellbeing, and we want to partner with the state for a safe and positive return to classrooms.

Equity has so often guided your decisions and is a priority for the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO) and the Santa Barbara County Board of Education. On behalf of our county's 70,000 students, all school staff, and our communities, we implore you to provide an achievable path forward for vaccination of education and childcare staff and for in-person instruction.

Maintain vaccines for education and childcare employees as a top priority:

While we recognize the state does not control the vaccine supply and distribution, the state is responsible for a coordinated statewide approach. Keeping vaccination of education and childcare workers a top priority will accelerate in-person instruction for our students, a key to addressing inequities and learning gaps, and support the significant mental wellness needs that are best served in-person.

Local educational agencies (LEAs) in our county have all been working closely with the Santa Barbara County Public Health Department (SBCPHD) on school reopening plans by implementing multiple layers of protective measures such as physical distancing, cleaning and disinfecting, surveillance testing, minimizing mixing of groups, and use of personal protective equipment (PPE). However, vaccination remains a critical component to supporting our collective goal to serve and support all students in person as soon as possible.

The Santa Barbara County Education Office is ready to partner with the State of California and BlueShield and will continue to work alongside SBCPHD in the efforts to vaccinate education and childcare staff in this next tier, along with those age 65 and over.

Create equitable paths for in-person instruction:

Santa Barbara County's education and childcare leaders are committed to providing a safe and healthy in-person educational environment for all students. Ten of our county's 20 school districts and over half of the site-based charter schools are currently open for in-person instruction.

However, in some areas of Santa Barbara County, we have adjacent districts, where one district is open and the other is not. It is difficult to justify how students in neighboring districts are not afforded the benefit of in-person instruction. We realize opening schools for in-person instruction may take different paths; each of our districts and communities are unique in their needs and available resources. Providing LEAs practicable avenues that enable them to open for in-person instruction should be of the utmost priority.

Thank you for your support of public education and attention to these matters which are critical to reopening school campuses for all of California's students.

On behalf of the Santa Barbara County Education Office and the Santa Barbara County Board of Education,



Dr. Susan Salcido
Santa Barbara County
Superintendent of Schools



Mrs. Maggi Daane
Santa Barbara County
Board of Education President

c: State Senator Monique Limón
State Assemblymember Steve Bennett
State Assemblymember Jordan Cunningham
Dr. Van Do-Reynoso, Director, Santa Barbara County Public Health Department