

July 8, 2020

San Marino USD

Leaning Forward... Together



The Year of the Unexpected

By Dr. Jeff Wilson

As the one-year anniversary of becoming Superintendent of the San Marino Unified School District rapidly approaches, I wanted to thank you all for the opportunity to serve the wonderful community of San Marino, reflect back over the school year's activities and accomplishments, and briefly touch on aspirations for moving forward. It was a busy school year!

As you read through the rest of the Newsletter, you will see so many fantastic events that provided educational, athletic, and artistic opportunities for our students. From the activities at each school site, to the opening of the Barth Athletics Complex, to the curriculum enhancements of Career Technical Education (CTE), Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and progress toward dual enrollment with Pasadena City College, to addressing students' social and emotional needs, there is a lot to celebrate! The 2019-20 school year was also filled with many challenges.

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A majority of those challenges were financial in nature, as I was tasked with eliminating a growing structural budget deficit and addressing aging facilities. Though it was a difficult and painful process, through reorganizations, early retirements, reductions in force, and other cost-cutting measures totaling over \$4.5 million, we were able to achieve a balanced budget.



Thanks to the San Marino Schools Foundation and close to 1,500 donors who participated in the *We Are San Marino* campaign, we were able to restore 14 teaching positions for the coming school year. While the facilities bond did not pass, the informational town halls and facilities tours informed the community about the District's significant facilities needs that will need to be addressed in the near future.

"Thanks to the San Marino Schools Foundation,... we were able to restore 14 teaching positions for the coming school year."

Of course, the greatest and most unexpected challenge was the interruption of school and our lives by COVID-19. The pandemic affected so many in terrible ways, and our hearts go out to all of those impacted. We should be proud of the Class of 2020, which has demonstrated such resilience despite being robbed of many great San Marino traditions during the final months at San Marino High School.

I am also proud of our District employees who were able to pivot quickly from their normal routines and do their best under ever-changing and difficult circumstances to provide a quality virtual education. We all learned a lot about what we are good at and what can be improved, but there is no question in my mind that our employees were dedicated, resilient, innovative and caring.

And did I mention hard working? Most District employees will not enjoy the same kind of summer break enjoyed in the past, as we are working hard to prepare for a whole new world of school reopening. With the help of the 70-member School Reopening Task Force, which includes students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators, we are busy preparing for the future without the benefit of a crystal ball or reopening roadmap. I will continue to communicate decisions regarding reopening when possible, and I appreciate your patience as we ensure that we are maintaining high standards for student health and safety, as well as high standards for educational excellence.

Despite the substantial health and safety, financial and logistic challenges that COVID-19 brings, a silver lining is the opportunity to gain new perspectives on the delivery of innovative and meaningful education in this decade. I am excited to engage our stakeholders as we reimagine the delivery of instruction, teaching methods, student health and wellness, nutrition, facilities, attendance and grading. As we move forward, we will continue to adapt to a student-centered and inclusive approach to teaching and learning and will utilize Universal Design for Learning that allows for multiple means of access, activity and assessment.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to lead this amazing school district through these difficult times. San Marino is full of caring and committed people who only want the best for their kids, and our community is blessed to have parents and residents who are willing to donate their time and resources to provide enriching experiences that students might not otherwise receive due to limited resources. Your continued support of our SMUSD students, employees, and families is very much appreciated.



"San Marino is full of caring and committed people who only want the best for their kids..."

From Our Board President

By C. Joseph Chang



On behalf of the San Marino Unified School District and the Board of Education, we congratulate the Class of 2020. We also extend our congratulations to our families from Carver and Valentine Elementary School, Huntington Middle School and San Marino High School. We are so proud of you and your accomplishments. As the COVID-19 outbreak continues, we deeply apologize that we could not provide an in-person ceremony for your graduation. While there is no substitute for tradition, our principals, teachers and staff celebrated your achievement with you through an unforgettable drive-through graduation for our Carver and Valentine Elementary Schools and Huntington Middle School graduates. We wish our recent Titan graduates may safely celebrate their success for over 13 years of amazing learning at SMUSD.

To face the disruption due to COVID-19, SMUSD continues to strive towards providing a world class learning experience for our students. We appreciate the adaptability of our teachers as they rapidly transitioned to online learning with students. Conversely, we applaud the ingenuity of our students and their families to continue learning during this trying time. We appreciate the patience and understanding of our students and their parents. The District celebrates the incredible results of our students while facing the challenges of the pandemic.

The San Marino Unified School District Board of Education's policy demands that "all programs and activities shall be free from discrimination, including religion, gender, color, race, ancestry, national origin, and physical or mental disability, age, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation." Under the School Board's direction, the District created an open meeting series to listen and learn how to improve for the future. We acknowledge the importance of developing a curriculum and a system that supports diversity. We will continue to improve the education of our students and professional development of our teachers and staff. We look forward to continue engaging in important, meaningful discussions with our students, families, and community and remain committed to creating positive change over the long term.

We wish to say thank you to the San Marino Schools Foundation for their successful "We are San Marino" campaign. With these efforts, the District was finally able to restore 14 teaching positions for the upcoming school year. We are thrilled with all San Marino School Foundation's wonderful volunteers, donors, and fundraisers for their incredible support and hard work. The notability of their volunteering cannot be understated during this challenging time.

As our superintendent's first-year anniversary approaches, the Board of Education commends Dr. Jeff Wilson for his time and energy. During uniquely difficult times, Dr. Wilson has ensured that the San Marino Unified School District is successful in 2019-2020. He has a long history in providing for the instructional needs of the students. Again, it is with great appreciation that we congratulate Dr. Wilson.

Finally, with the help of the School Reopening Task Force (SRTF), the District prepares to reopen all four schools for the 2020-2021 school year. The 70-member SRTF includes the perspectives and opinions of students, parents, teachers, staff and administrators. The SRTF was developed to prepare for the safe and realistic reopening of our District. We acknowledge this is a highly complex situation and thank the members of SRTF for their tireless support and time. When our schools reopen, we will need strong measures that allow for social distancing and regular disinfection for a safe learning environment.

Please wear personal protective equipment and maintain social distancing as you enjoy the upcoming months. Have a safe and healthy summer!





A Word from 2019-20 PTA Council President Dr. Michiko Lee

It is hard to believe we are halfway through the summer. We had a very unique year and the upcoming school year looks to be another one-of-a-kind year. I have the honor to serve on the School Re-opening Task Force (SRTF). I work alongside School Board members, District and school site administration, teachers, and parents. The SRTF serves as an advisory group to the School Board and met throughout the past weeks, planning for the start of school on August 12th.

The Instruction Team, led by Lettie Aranda and Diana Hang, are diligently planning what instruction will look like in the Fall, both in and out of the classroom. The Health and Safety Team, led by Dr. Danielle Dabbs and Zeina Daoud, are working to ensure that students, staff and families are prepared with health and safety protocols. Lisette Moggio leads the Operations team. They are working on a grant to fund financial needs related to implementing health and safety protocols. The Operations Team is getting our schools ready for students to safely return. The Social and Emotional Support Systems Team, led by Abigail Cabrera and Don Duranso, are looking at programs and training to support staff and students during this challenging time. The Family and Community Engagement Team, led by Nicolette Fuerst and myself, are working to engage families and the community in the re-opening planning process.

A survey was sent to families in mid-June. The results showed that 76% of families want their child back on campus in some form of school in the Fall; while 24% of families want their children to continue with distance-only learning. The SRTF is working diligently to address parent concerns expressed in the survey, such as social distancing, face coverings, grading, and attendance to name a few. Please keep an eye out for a second survey to come out mid-July.

Together we will navigate through these challenging times and come out stronger.

Important Dates to Remember

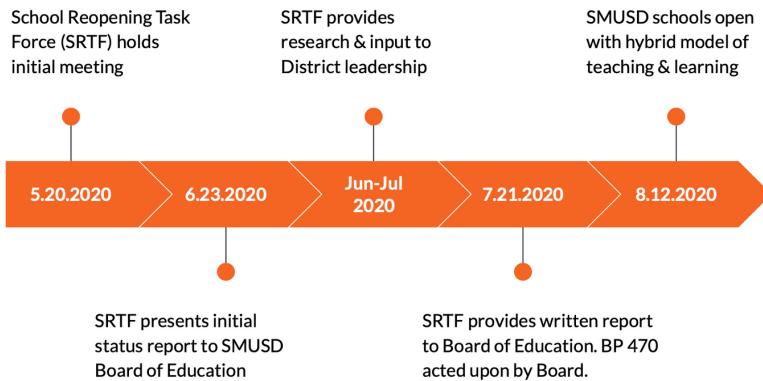
- **July 13 -- School Board Meeting -- 6:30 p.m.**
- **July 21 -- School Board Meeting -- 7:00 p.m.**
- **August 10 -- Teachers Professional Development**
- **August 12 -- School Re-Opens**



COVID-19 and School Re-Opening

Under the direction of the Board of Education, the Superintendent, Executive Cabinet and Principals enlisted a cross-functional School Reopening Task Force (SRTF) to research and develop a comprehensive plan for SMUSD's safe reopening in August. The SRTF includes:

- District and school administrators, teachers, counselors & staff;
- Board members parents, students & community members;
- City Personnel -- Chief of Police and Fire Chief;
- Physicians, nurses and university professors;
- Bargaining unit representatives;
- PTA and SMSF leadership.



AB 77 -- SB 98

California SB98/AB77 does not allow for school districts to deliver pure distance learning unless a state or local health officer directs schools to close once again. The law also prohibits pure distance learning for individual students unless they are deemed "medically fragile, at-risk from in-person instruction, or quarantining to do exposure to COVID-19."



Five Focus Areas to Re-open SMUSD Schools



In order to design the highest quality and most equitable learning environment for ALL students in SMUSD, the SRTF was asked to:

- Develop a written plan for our schools & community;
- Identify resources, supplies and training.
- Provide direct support to schools and departments.
- Provide resources for student and staff social-emotional support.
- Provide resources and training to support a safe campus and work environment.
- Develop community education resources and communicate them effectively.
- Provide screening and/or testing for students and staff.
- Survey stakeholders (parents, students, faculty, and community) on reopening possibilities and priorities.

Reopening Schools 4 Guiding Principles

- 1 We are committed to providing the highest quality learning experiences for all students.
- 2 We are committed to supporting the individual needs of all students and families.
- 3 We are committed to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of all students and staff.
- 4 We are committed to providing clear communication throughout all transitions to stakeholders