

Christopher R. Hoffman, Superintendent of the Elk Grove Unified School District

Delivered July 20, 2020, Elk Grove, California

“Back to School Message to EGUSD Parents”

[Speech transcript...]

First and foremost, I hope each of you and your families are safe. We hear repeatedly that these are unprecedented times and that we need to prepare for a new normal. Well, this new normal leaves much to be desired especially when it comes to the education of our children. Our current reality makes everything we do as parents and educators extremely difficult and complex. And, while I know things have not been easy, we will get through this together.

As your Superintendent, I look forward to starting the school year and although I wish conditions were better, maintaining your child’s safety is my first concern. Even though we will start the year with distance learning, I am fully committed to ensuring that your student is provided with a high-quality learning experience and they are offered the support they need for their emotional well-being. As a father and husband, I understand the challenges you are up against and I am particularly aware of the struggles of our parents of students with disabilities. We accept this challenge and our team is actively searching for solutions and working tirelessly to develop the resources and capacity to better serve you and each student every day.

We sent you many surveys and I want to say thank you for responding and for sending us ongoing feedback, questions and concerns. We continue to make improvements and innovations in response to the current conditions and we will remain focused on providing your students with: A high-quality education; Ways to monitor student growth and mastery, and; Services and support for their well-being.

Your continued engagement will also be important in their education. So, we will continue to provide you with regular communications, resources and parent seminars. In our surveys to parents and students about their experience with distance learning, parents listed their three top priorities for their children’s learning experience. Ensuring physical health and safety was, of course, the top priority. Learning and instruction ranked second. And in third, there was a tie between interests for supporting emotional

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and mental health and assessing academic needs. These results combined with the emails and comments we've received allowed us to assess gaps, make improvements and find new ways of delivering instruction.

The emergency situation we faced in the spring was all very shocking and new to everyone. I don't anticipate the same scenario for the fall. Our operations, services and instructional models will look and feel very different. In preparation for the new year, and being uncertain about the health conditions, we created and continue to refine educational plans for better teaching throughout the organization and increased support for our students. Enhancements you will notice this fall will include:

- Regularly scheduled instructional time for students with their teachers during school hours, including daily live sessions
- Teacher training and development, which has been happening and will continue throughout the year.
- And, assessing student progress...this common practice helps our teachers understand where students are and where they need to be. It's a critical phase in preparing lesson plans.

My expectation is that we leverage existing or in development common assessment tools, particularly for literacy and numeracy.

Another area our teachers are doing professional development in is meeting the emotional and mental health needs of our students. This training will provide critical support and motivation for our students that they will need to bring them back into a structured learning environment we're providing. With regard to student interaction, there will be more to come on this as each school will be working on their school activities and creating different avenues and opportunities for students to connect and interact, even from a distance.

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As you have heard me say many times, “A connected kid is a successful kid.” We will be looking for as many ways to keep students connected to school, connected to learning, and connected to their hopes and dreams.

Our path forward and hopefully out of this pandemic will be a rough road to navigate. Know that you don’t have to go it alone. We are here for you and we have support and resources that we can offer you and your family.

We know that many of you are juggling several things right now and we want to work together with each and every family to help reduce your anxiety, make learning more consistent in your household and provide you with the support you need. By working together, my hope is that we can get to a point where we can safely bring our students back to school. That being said, your leadership at home and in the community to heed public health recommendations of social distancing, wearing a mask and maintaining hand hygiene is greatly appreciated.

In closing, I want nothing more than to bring all our students back to school. Until we can do that safely, our educational services will be in full operation to serve you, our students and our community.”