May 15, 2020

To: Barbie Robinson, Sonoma County Department of Health Services Director
    Dr. Sundari Mase, Sonoma County Health Officer

cc: Sonoma County School District Superintendents
    Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

Re: Request for Guidance for Schools Regarding Coronavirus

I write to follow up on our Thursday, May 14, conversation in which SCOE and a committee of Sonoma County superintendents requested specific, science-based guidance that school leaders need in order to plan for a safe reopening of school in the fall.

Schools play a critical role in helping our economy reopen by providing childcare to nearly 70,000 students. If there is an expectation to return to a functional business environment, safe school reopening must be made a priority. Schools need specific health-related guidance as soon as possible so they can work with employee unions, students, and families to make the complex changes needed to ensure safety when campuses reopen.

Sonoma County families have been incredibly resilient and patient as schools closed their campuses for 2.5 months to slow the spread of COVID-19. Understandably, they are now eager to know what to expect this fall.

School leaders are creative and willing to do the complex planning required to reopen schools in the best ways to keep students and staff healthy. To this end, SCOE, in collaboration with other county offices, has provided planning considerations to local school districts in an effort to help them get started. And yet, we are not public health experts or scientists. We rely on our public health partners to provide the information and guidance that enable us to make decisions that will mitigate the spread of infectious disease. During our May 14 meeting, it was suggested that schools could adapt the business mitigation plans that have been provided by the county and that these could serve as school reopening guides. However, these templates do not address many of the unique constraints faced by schools.
To ensure our planning efforts are truly safeguarding safety and health, schools need guidance and information from our public health leaders on a number of basic parameters, including:

- What social distancing standards will likely be in place in August of this year? Is six feet apart (or three cubic feet for each student) adequate?
- Is there a limit on the total number of children who should be allowed on a campus at any given time? Elementary campuses average 10 acres, middle schools 15 acres, and high schools 20 acres.
- Under what conditions could students and employees return to campus based on the above assumptions?
- What type of meal service programs would schools have to consider?
- What type of PE/recess breaks would schools have to consider?
- Will students and teachers have to wear masks during the school day?
- What type of transportation arrangements would schools have to consider?

I request guidance that addresses the above questions as soon as possible—preferably by June 1. We recognize that guidance could change as the conditions of the pandemic shift. However, the sooner you can provide this, the sooner we can develop and submit for your review a mitigation guide from which districts can plan.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. Together, we can ensure that students are safe when they return, and the community has clarity about what steps schools must take to ensure this is so.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Steven D. Herrington, Ph.D.
Sonoma County Superintendent of Schools
on behalf of SCOE and the 38 superintendents of Sonoma County