May 13, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

“As a nurse, we have the opportunity to heal the mind, soul, heart, and body of our patients, their families, and ourselves. They may forget your name, but they will never forget how you made them feel.” — Maya Angelou

At the end of the 19th century, Florence Nightingale, The Lady of the Lamp, founded modern nursing. Because of her insistence on the use of strict and thorough hand-washing and other elevated hygiene practices while caring for wounded soldiers, Nightingale and her 38 volunteer British nurses were credited with significantly reducing the British Army’s death rate in the Crimean War, ushering in nursing as we know it today and, for the first time, brought national attention to public health. National Nurses’ Week began on May 6 and ended yesterday, but today I want to pause and recognize the important role nurses play in our lives and in saving lives around the world. Thank you to all of our nurses and health aides who daily keep our kids safe and provide care for their scrapes, bruises and tears.

Classified Employee Week – May 15-21

The California State Legislature has designated the week of May 15, 2022, as Classified School Employee Week. This is a great opportunity for us to pause and thank all of those who create the conditions necessary for safe, enriching, rigorous, fun and exciting learning, activities, and programming. At the School Board meeting on May 5, Donna Singelyn-Jackson was recognized as the 2022-2023 Claremont Unified School District’s Classified Staff Member of the Year. Donna is a wonderful representative of our classified employees as she keeps our Educational Services Department organized and supported. Donna was instrumental in delivering materials to homes during the pandemic and working side by side with the Parent Liaison to ensure each family had what they needed for their child to learn remotely. Congratulations Donna!

New Guidelines for Parent Volunteers at Outdoor Activities

Starting this week, unvaccinated parent volunteers are once again invited back to campus to volunteer for our larger outdoor events and activities such as field days, promotion/graduation, PFA events, etc. While indoor volunteer work is not yet allowable, we will continue to monitor county data and guidelines as we near the end of the year regarding indoor volunteer work.

Have a very nice weekend.

Be well,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
April 29, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

"Creativity is intelligence having fun." -- Albert Einstein

I want to open my letter by sharing a short email I received from Ceramics teacher, Anne Mumper at CHS.

Anne writes, “I wanted you to know that Gavin Langhorst won best in show in his age group for the AMOCA (American Museum of Ceramic Art) High School Exhibition!!! Over 300 pieces were submitted and 99 were selected for this juried show. So, just to be selected for the show was wonderful, to be top of his class was phenomenal…. I have never seen a student with the level of technical skill, dedication, and self expression at such a young age.”

Click on this link and scroll through the wonderful pieces of student art. You will find Gavin’s piece, “Masked Emotions,” midway through (look for the Wolfpack logo). We are very proud of you Gavin.

All District Elementary Track Meet

Speaking of races, earlier today I was able to enjoy an all-school track meet, held for the 46th time at Vista del Valle Elementary School. What an incredible spectacle to be there and witness the unbridled excitement of students from all 7 of our elementary schools giving their all to earn a coveted ribbon for placing 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in an event. As I have conducted my Spring visits to campuses, I have seen the months of preparation invested by our kids to get ready to represent their schools at the meet. The mood was great, and it was great to see future Wolfpack athletes together.
Administrative Professionals Week

This week, we are celebrating Administrative Professionals Week. As we recognize these important individuals who are the glue that holds CUSD together, please read more about the history of this important week [here](#). CUSD’s Administrative Professionals are often selfless individuals, committed to ensuring that Claremont schools are welcoming and safe environments for students and families. They coordinate vast amounts of information – schedules, agendas, policies, letters, emails, flyers, budgets, purchases, transportation, meeting space, furniture, technology… the list could go on and on. They are a conduit between parents and sites providing a communication link and a place of first response. When an emergency arises, they calmly navigate ordering emergency services, supporting health professionals, and contacting family members. Our admin professionals are also the first contact parents and community members often have with a school or district office and they do such a wonderful job of lowering anxieties and providing helpful information when needed. Let’s celebrate our admin professionals with simple acts of kindness and gratitude.

Have a nice weekend and enjoy our beautiful weather,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
April 15, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

A good teacher is like a candle - it consumes itself to light the way for others. - Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

As we look forward to National Day of the Teacher on May 3, I just wanted to share with you what you already know – we have such wonderful educators here in Claremont who have worked harder over the last two years than at any other time in the history of public education. Teachers have pivoted multiple times, spent countless hours learning new technologies, created and shared massive amounts of content, completely changed how they assess student performance, rearranged classrooms and learning spaces multiple times for safety and effectiveness, figured out new ways to engage students, have double-downed on social-emotional learning and student wellness, and continued to collaborate in new ways around best practices – all to ensure our students receive the best possible education. They have consumed themselves as warriors, heroes, researchers, counselors, friends, leaders, and caring colleagues. Let’s celebrate our amazing teachers over the next couple of weeks (and beyond!).

Autism Awareness Month
Did you know that April is Autism Awareness (or Acceptance) Month? “In celebration of Autism Awareness Month, the Office of Autism Research Coordination (OARC)/National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) honors the contribution of people on the autism spectrum and the autism community to our nation and the world.” According to the latest CDC biennial prevalence report (2020) on the number of children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder, “the number of eight-year-old children diagnosed is now 1 in 54.” Take a few minutes and read some enlightening and inspiring stories here.

Claremont Educational Foundation Gala
Tickets remain on sale for next Wednesday’s 30th Anniversary Gala of the Claremont Educational Foundation. In Partnership with The Claremont Colleges, the Gala theme is Honoring the Principals of Claremont Unified School District. The event will be held at the Padua Hills Theatre from 6 p.m. – 9 p.m. and all of the proceeds benefit Claremont Educational Foundation’s grants program for CUSD schools. Tickets for this exciting event are $100 for a single ticket and $175 for a pair. Your ticket includes cocktails, appetizers, and desserts. There will be a silent auction and the famous Diamond Earrings Raffle. Tickets for the event may be purchased at http://www.supportcef.com/gala/. Don’t miss this fun night out to support our kids and programs.

High School Voter Education Weeks
Did you know that the California Education Code designates the last two full weeks in April and September to be High School Voter Education Weeks? Check out the California Secretary of State’s High School and Youth Programs portal where young Californians will find information to educate and engage students in the democratic process. Online pre-registration is available for eligible 16 and 17-year-olds by visiting registertovote.ca.gov. California youth who pre-register to vote will have their registration become active once they turn 18 years old.

Have a wonder-filled weekend,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
April 1, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

It is with a heavy heart that I announce my departure from Claremont USD on July 1, 2022. As I approach this new chapter in my life, I am excited about the possibilities ahead as I continue to focus my energies on creating and sustaining student-centered learning environments, empowering innovative and empathetic educators, and encouraging risk-taking focused on engaging every learner.

I have greatly enjoyed my time here in Claremont — having the opportunity to work with such a seasoned and professional team of teachers, leaders, and support staff made my brief tenure a true blessing. There are many wonderful movements, initiatives, and priorities moving forward in CUSD. From an emphasis on mental health to a focus on an equitable and inclusive teaching and learning program, CUSD will continue to grow and thrive under new leadership. I also want to thank the Claremont parents and community for being so gracious and supportive of my leadership.

The Board of Education has asked me to continue in my position until July 1, 2022, and I am happy to do so. Like the pandemic we have suffered through, unforeseen circumstances arose to adjust my navigational beacons here at the end of my career in public education. I will provide any assistance the Board desires as they recruit the next Superintendent of the Claremont Unified School District.

I am looking forward to my final three months here in CUSD.

Best to you,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
March 18, 2022
Dear CUSD Community,

"St. Patrick’s Day is an enchanted time—a day to begin transforming winter’s dreams into summer’s magic." - Adrienne Cook

Just a few updates for this week.

End of COVID Test Clinics
Late Wednesday, we learned that the federal funding supporting our community-based testing program had been cut. Our PCR test provider, Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic, is no longer available to test students, staff, or community members at no charge. Unfortunately, due to this lack of funding, CUSD is no longer able to sponsor PCR testing at our four locations. We remain committed to providing antigen tests to students and staff who have been exposed and who request the test kit.

The updated Exposure Management Guidance from LACDPH recommends that students of an exposed group are strongly recommended to test once in the ten days after the exposure date. Students may test through their own health care provider or other testing locations. If the student is unable to obtain a test, the student can request a home antigen test at school’s health office. Because these test kits are not free to us and are quite expensive, we urge and request that each family place orders for first and second round of free at-home COVID-19 tests by visiting: https://www.covidtests.gov/. We plan on sending a single antigen test home with each student at the start of Spring Break and will ask each student to test on Sunday before school resumes and families to self-report those results using a Google Form. Directions will be provided on the test kits students will bring home.

Claremont Education Foundation (CEF) Gala, Car Raffle, and Diamond Earrings Raffle
The CEF 30th Anniversary Gala is right around the corner. The Gala will celebrate three decades of “protecting and enriching quality public education in Claremont” by our wonderful Foundation. The Gala will be held Wednesday, April 20, from 6 to 9 p.m. at the Padua Hills Theatre. Tickets are on sale for $100 for 1 and $175 for a pair. Senator Anthony Portantino will be a featured speaker and there will be lots of great items up for bid. Tickets are available on the CEF 30th Anniversary Gala website. Tickets for the 2022 Annual Car Raffle are available for purchase at the district office or school sites. Three different automobile choices are available for the winner and the tickets for the Car Raffle cost $20 for 1 ticket and $100 for 6 tickets. Information about the Diamond Earrings Raffle will soon be available on the CEF website.

Board of Education Meeting – March 17, 2022
In the regular meeting of the Board of Education last evening, 10 student winners of the César E. Chávez-Dolores Huerta Essay and Art Contest Awards were recognized, as was our Classified Employee Spotlight on Excellence award winner, Rosa Leong, who serves as our Parent Involvement/Foster Youth/Homeless Liaison for CUSD. We are so grateful for the valuable work Rosa does in welcoming families to our schools—especially those struggling with language deficits or personal needs. The Board also heard a report about the School Safety Plans for all 10 sites and took action to approve those plans.

Coming Back Together
As we have moved to a “masking recommended” or mask optional environmental at our school sites and offices earlier this week, we have rejoiced in once again seeing happy smiles greet us each morning. We have had no incidents of bullying or name-calling reported with regards to our students choosing whether or not to wear masks. In a visit to Condit on Thursday, I was able to see many students and teachers choosing to wear masks, and many choosing not to. There was easy interaction between students and staff. With a return to some semblance of normalcy, however, we are left to assess, unravel, and address the impacts from the pandemic—the learning loss, the anxiety with students and staff, and the loss of relationship caused by the isolation we all felt. Please know that our teachers, principals, counselors, psychologists, mental health professionals, school office staffs, nurses, and leadership team remain committed to professional development, partnerships, and direct intervention to assist students and staff in navigating the difficulties resulting from this pandemic era.

Have an enjoyable weekend,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
March 13, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

As mentioned in the March 4 letter to the community and in the Superintendent comment section of the March 3 School Board Meeting, beginning tomorrow, Monday, March 14, CUSD schools will follow the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) and California Department of Public Health (CDPH) guidelines by no longer requiring students and staff to wear masks indoors. LACDPH Director Dr. Barbara Ferrer asked Superintendents to remind our communities that, while masking indoors is no longer required, it is still “strongly recommended” by both the CDPH and the LACDPH. It remains our goal that all students and staff will be supported in making their own individual choice with regards to masking or not masking. Please ask your children to alert their principal, assistant principal, teacher, counselor, or other caring adult if they are experiencing negative reactions to their individual choice to mask or not mask.

This weekend, LACDPH posted several updated protocols for schools and youth sports including COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan Guidance. Links to these documents are below.

Protocol for K-12 Schools: Appendix T1 (Español) | العربية | ภาษาไทย | 简体中文 | 繁體中文 | فارسی | 日本語 | 한국어 | Русский | Tagalog | Tiếng Việt

COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan Guidance in TK-12 Schools: Appendix T2 (Español)

Protocol for Organized Youth Sports: Appendix S (Español) | العربية | ภาษาไทย | 简体中文 | 繁體中文 | فارسی | 日本語 | 한국어 | Русский | Tagalog | Tiếng Việt

COVID-19 Exposure Management Plan Guidance for Organized Youth Sports Programs

The CUSD weekly COVID testing program will continue to operate so that our staff, students and families have access to quick COVID testing. Please note that the testing time for El Roble has changed to 2:30 to 4:00 PM. Please access our complete weekly testing schedule here.

Have a great week,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
March 4, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

“It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade.” — Charles Dickens, Great Expectations

March has always represented positive growth, change, and progress – animals emerging from hibernation, spring love, the vernal equinox, the Full Worm Moon, and the return of Daylight Saving Time on March 13. Once the days get longer, we know that summer is just around the corner. There are many positive things happening this month, one of which my daughter reminded me of this morning. March 8 is International Women’s Day – a day to not only celebrate the achievements of women and the progress made toward women’s rights but also a day to recognize the ongoing struggles for equality around the world. March of 2022 also brings a new day – a positive pivot in the long struggle with COVID-19.

State and County COVID News – Masking

With a low number of positive daily cases and with hospitalizations well below 1,000, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) provided a news release on February 28, 2022, ending the mandatory indoor masking requirement for schools, effective March 12, 2022. LACDPH Director Barbara Ferrer continues to “strongly recommend” indoor masking “recognizing that many individuals may want to continue additional protections.”

While we are lifting the indoor masking requirement in our schools on March 12, the CUSD Board of Education and administrative leadership wish to maintain a welcoming and supportive environment for those who choose to continue wearing masks as we recognize that some of our students, staff, and families have extenuating circumstances, including medically fragile children and vulnerable dependent adults living in their home. We also recognize that some of our staff and students are experiencing physical and mental health concerns of their own causing them to remain masked. The CUSD weekly COVID testing program will continue to operate so that our staff, students, and families have access to quick COVID testing. Fortunately, the positivity rate of students who are testing has fallen to the lowest level (0.44%) since December 6. Due to the reduced demand for testing, we will no longer provide testing at Sycamore Elementary School on Mondays. Testing will continue to be available after school at El Roble on Mondays, Vista del Valle on Tuesdays, Sumner-Danbury on Wednesdays, and at Taylor Hall on Thursdays. See the complete schedule here.

Every 15 Minutes at Claremont High School

On Thursday and Friday, students and staff at Claremont High School participated in the powerful California Highway Patrol’s Every 15 Minutes safety program. “The Every 15 Minutes program is a two-day program focusing on high school juniors and seniors, which challenges them to think about drinking, driving, personal safety, the responsibility of making mature decisions, and the impact their decisions have on family, friends, their community, and many others.” The program is dramatic and emotional by design to engage students in considering the choices they make and the impact those decisions potentially have on their family and friends. The program is a unique partnership “of the California Highway Patrol, local law enforcement, local hospitals, emergency medical responders, schools, businesses, and service clubs [and it] validates the importance of working together to ensure a healthy community.” School board members and district administration observed the program which concluded Friday with an impactful mock funeral in the gym.

“A cloud comes over the sunlit arch, a wind comes off a frozen peak, and you’re two months back in the middle of March.” — Robert Frost

Have a wonderful March,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent

170 West San Jose Avenue, Claremont, CA 91711-5285 (909) 398-0609 http://www.cusd.claremont.edu
February 18, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

Today marks the beginning of our second consecutive 3-day weekend as we celebrate Presidents' Day – a well-needed break to relax and recover from a frenetic first 6 weeks of the new year. Did you know that Presidents’ Day has become a day of remembrance for all past U.S. Presidents, although it started as an unofficial day of remembrance for our first President, George Washington following his death in 1799? It wasn’t until 1879 that Washington’s Birthday became a federal holiday, joining Christmas Day, New Year’s Day, Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving as our only national holidays at the time. Washington was the first individual granted a holiday and Martin Luther King, Jr. became the second recognized by a federal holiday in 1983. In our ongoing celebration of Black History Month, you might enjoy reading here the chronology of the 32-year effort to bring Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday to the status of a federal holiday.

February 17 Board of Education Meeting

Last evening, our Board of Education (B.O.E.) took action on a resolution to establish trustee areas where future board members will be elected in a “by-trustee” area election process. The B.O.E. selected Map 113 as the trustee area map to forward-on to the County for approval. When approved by the Los Angeles County Registrar’s office, starting in the November 2022 election cycle, board members will be elected by constituents living in their trustee area only. Having said that, this Board of Education is committed to considering the needs of all parents and students living within the district boundaries of Claremont and will continue to serve ALL students of CUSD equally.

School Updates

In my midyear meetings with principals, we have had the opportunity to look at academic data from the first half of the school year. It is remarkable how quickly many of our students are catching-up to where they should be or even moving beyond grade-level expectations. At each of our elementary sites, entire grade levels are showing exponential growth in both their interim assessments and iReady diagnostics. Students who are struggling are being provided interventions and supports like the LINC (Learning IN Collaboration) partnership with Pomona College, and Math and Literacy camps. Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) work is happening at each of our sites to provide students with positive support for behavior and mental health. Programs like Second Step, teaching science-based, research-validated, classroom-based social skills are effectively being used in our schools. At one site, teachers are engaged in RULER training through the Yale Institute to sharpen their tools in the area of emotional intelligence and at another site, a comprehensive Intervention Process Guide has been developed and disseminated to ensure that no students are falling through the cracks. Teachers at our middle and high school are collaborating both vertically and horizontally in developing units of study, integrating their training in the International Baccalaureate, Middle Years Programme (IB MYP). This is a very exciting time here in CUSD as our teachers and leaders are leaning-in to the future.

State and County COVID News

Health data in L.A. County continues to trend in the right direction. Thursday morning Dr. Ferrer of LACDPH said that testing positivity rates at schools have fallen below 2% and daily test positivity rates are falling 8% per day. If this trend continues, LACDPH believes the indoor mask mandate would be lifted as soon as the middle of March, but we will have to wait and see. Claremont parents are doing an amazing job in getting their 5-11-year-old children vaccinated compared to the rest of the County. Countywide, only 34% of 5-11 year-olds have received at least one dose while 78% have in the City of Claremont.

Please enjoy your long Presidents’ Day weekend.

Warmest regards,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
February 11, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

As we head into this weekend of football and love (remember, Monday is Valentine’s Day), I wanted to circle back on this year’s Black History Month theme – “Black Health and Wellness.” I was very interested in some resources and health information made available and wanted to share some of it with you, as a couple of data points profoundly struck me. I learned that, while life expectancy between black and white Americans has narrowed by 48.9% over three decades, there still remains a disparity of 3.6 years (78.5 years vs. 74.9 years) between individuals based only on race? So, the last 30 years have shown that steps taken to narrow the lifespan gap have worked but much remains to be done to eliminate this disparity and increase the life expectancy of black Americans – work that will benefit ALL Americans. We have also learned these past two years that COVID-19 has taken a far greater toll on communities of color. I am proud that CUSD continues to pursue partner efforts in both health and educational equity and that these efforts are part of the exciting equity work ahead of us. If you are interested in reading more and in checking out the resources mentioned above, please click out this link.

San Antonio High School – 2022 Model Continuation High School Award
We are so proud of SAHS for being named one of 36 Model Continuation High Schools in the State of California for 2022. This award comes on the heels of SAHS having received the Apple Distinguished School award just a couple of months ago. Felipe Delvasto and Jessica Ly are doing a tremendous job of leading SAHS in developing programs to meet the individual needs of SAHS students, including providing dual enrollment opportunities with Citrus College.

State and County COVID News
Positive daily cases and hospitalizations continue to fall. As reported earlier this week, California will end its indoor masking requirement for vaccinated individuals starting on February 15. Governor Newsom has made it clear, however, that the school indoor mask requirement will not change just yet, though his team is watching the plummeting numbers of new cases and “…is working on an update to [mask rules] that the governor will announce soon.”

It is important to understand that Title 17 of the California Code of Regulations allows local health officers the power to exercise more stringent measures “where circumstances require.” Sure enough, Dr. Ferrer of LACDPH indicated yesterday in her weekly call to superintendents that LACDPH intends to keep their masking requirements in place beyond the state deadline. As hospitalization numbers continue to fall, we anticipate the end of the outdoor masking requirements (close quarters) to end on Friday of next week. As mentioned last week, if you are interested in understanding why CUSD’S Board of Education, Superintendent, and Principals cannot ignore or violate a county or state health order, click on this link.

Next Board of Education Meeting – February 17
On Thursday, February 17, the Board of Education (B.O.E.) will take action on a resolution to establish trustee areas where future board members will be elected in a by-trustee area election process. The B.O.E. have narrowed their selection to two primary maps – Map 111 and Map 101, asking that the demographer bring back a new map with incremental modifications from 111. The Board will also receive a report on the audited financial records including an independent performance audit of Measure G from the 2020-21 fiscal year, and a supplemental to the update of the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP).

Here’s wishing you a fun Super Bowl weekend with your family and friends. GO RAMS!!!!!!

Take care,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
February 4, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

With my first letter of February comes the opportunity to recognize a very important time of year – Black History Month. I enjoyed reading the Proclamation on National Black History Month, 2022 from President Biden. The President notes: “Our Nation was founded on an idea: that all of us are created equal and deserve to be treated with equal dignity throughout our lives. It is a promise we have never fully lived up to but one that we have never, ever walked away from.”

This year’s theme could not be more timely and appropriate – “Black Health and Wellness,” as the pandemic has amplified the disparities and inequities that exist in physical, emotional, and mental well-being. I am proud of the work of the District Advisory Committee on Racial Equity prior to my arrival in Claremont and look forward to the next steps including the formation of an Equity Advisory Council to guide the implementation of many district equity goals in the coming days. As the President’s proclamation closes with, “Let us carry forward the work to build an America that is, in the beautiful words of the poet Amanda Gorman, ‘Bruised, but whole — benevolent, but bold, fierce, and free.’”

COVID News

In my Thursday morning meeting with Dr. Ferrer and LACDPH, there was positive news. Most significantly, the daily positivity rate has fallen from around 17% a little over a week ago, and 25% three weeks ago, to just 5% on Wednesday. If the trend continues, LACDPH promises to relax the outdoor masking requirements once we are “post surge.” As reported in the Board meeting last night, CUSD is working on securing 7,500 rapid antigen tests to send home over spring break in April to screen for possible positive cases prior to returning on April 11. Tests will be self (or parent) administered and results self-reported via Google Form. More information will be provided as spring break approaches.

Community Questions About “Mandates” or Requirements From Public Health

One interesting question that continues to be asked, both in public comments during Board meetings and via email and phone calls to principals and the executive team, is “how does the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) derive its legal or constitutional authority to enact and enforce health mandates or requirements?” If you are interested in reading more about why CUSD’S Board of Education, Superintendent, and Principals may not ignore, supersede, or revoke a county or state health order, click on this link.

Board of Education Meeting on February 3

In last evening’s Board of Education (BOE) meeting, board members conducted a 5th hearing on proposed trustee area maps for future board elections. The Board postponed taking action until February 17 and tabled the resolution, requesting that the demographer return with slight modifications to Map 111 for consideration alongside Map 101. When the BOE takes action on the 17th and submits the approved map to Los Angeles County for approval, candidates for the District’s Board of Education will be required to reside within a specific geographic subarea of the District called a “trustee area” and will be elected only by the voters of that trustee area starting in November 2022. The Board also heard a COVID 19 Operations Update from staff, said goodbye to Student Board Member Ometeo Villafana, and welcomed new Special Education Director, Dr. Jessica Houpt to the CUSD family.

I hope you enjoy a wonderful weekend of peace and quiet.

Take care,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
January 28, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

After a very difficult weekend of intense wind, I hope you enjoyed a less dramatic week of cleanup and restoration. I cannot thank our Service Center team and site staff enough for jumping-in and getting our campuses cleaned up and safe for student activity. I also want to thank our parent community for being so supportive when we had to close our schools on Monday during the emergency.

The decision to close was both a simple and difficult one. It was simple from the standpoint that we had very real safety issues all over the district—some visible and some unseen. We had to consult with many different agencies, county and city offices, and individuals to gain clearance to close. The decision was based on a number of factors, the most important one being student and staff safety. After working with arborists and inspecting every tree, getting power restored at every site, making sure that our fire safety systems, telephones, and internet service were restored and working properly, we were able to safely reopen on Tuesday morning. I wanted you to know that this decision was not taken lightly, and we understand the hardship it was for our students, staff, and families.

**Omicron and Testing**

Though [Daily Positivity Case Rates](https://www.cusd.claremont.edu) continue to decline, we are not out of the woods yet. While we will continue to offer the CUSD Testing Clinics to help identify infected individuals and to provide assurance of negative results prior to returning after an infection or quarantine, in anticipation of spring break and possible future variants, we continue to adapt and revise our COVID response plan. The Administrative team is currently researching the most effective use of Rapid Antigen Tests, in addition to our weekly PCR testing, and how a different deployment plan for these tests may better help CUSD contain the spread of COVID-19 in our schools.

**Board of Education Meeting on February 3**

An update on the District’s Covid Plan implementation will be presented to the Board of Education on Thursday next week. Additionally, the Board will be considering three possible trustee area maps to submit to the county for consideration and approval. These are Maps 101, 110 (previously 109), and 111 found at this [link](https://www.cusd.claremont.edu). If the Board is able to make a final decision on one of these maps, the chosen map would then be submitted to the county for approval and implemented to guide all future Board elections in Claremont. The Board will also recognize outgoing student Board member Ometeo Villafana. Ometeo has added so much value to our meetings and has inspired us through his reports and wise counsel. We wish the best for Ometeo as he graduates and moves forward with his life. Ometeo will be successful in whatever field he chooses. Good luck Ometeo!

That’s it for this week. I hope you enjoy a wonderful weekend of peace and quiet.

Take care,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
January 14, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” – Dr. Martin Luther King

As we pause this weekend to recognize the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, we must also remember that his life was tragically taken from him at the age of 39. In 1964, Dr. King had become the youngest winner of the Nobel Peace Prize at the age of 35, just six years after surviving an attempt on his life by a mentally deranged woman in New York City. Then on Thursday, April 4, 1968, Martin Luther King was shot and killed while standing on a balcony outside his second-floor room at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. Even as a young child, I recognized a pall had fallen over our home, community, and country as, with the death of Dr. King, the hopes of many Americans were dashed and a level of hopelessness descended like an early evening fog over the entire country.

“The Surge”

Since I wrote to you last week, the deepening Omicron surge has only intensified. For 4 out of 5 days this week, the Daily Case Rate provided by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has been at or above 40,000. Clearly, we are at the height of a widespread infection event that has shown no signs of subsiding. In the meantime, the County and State governments have come to recognize that the current exposure management protocols and personnel policies are not sustainable during this surge. As a result, the State and County Health Departments recognize changes in protocols need to happen soon as our testing services are unable to keep up with the growing demand, creating log jams resulting in unnecessary quarantines and lost learning time.

Governor’s COVID-19 Emergency Response Package

Late on Wednesday, Governor Newsom’s office published a COVID-19 Emergency Response Package and Statewide Situation abstract. The “Emergency Response Package is focused on keeping schools open and the economy moving, by ramping up vaccines, boosters, statewide testing, and increasing medical personnel.” The report concentrates on a couple of problematic areas – staffing shortages and exposure management. Technical guidance has not yet been issued from the LACDPH. I will provide you with more exact information as it is given to us.

Testing

Last week CUSD received approximately 6,500 iHealth COVID-19 Antigen Rapid Test kits from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH). The allocation was one test kit for every enrolled child but LACDPH made it clear that districts should prioritize testing to students with symptoms or those who have been exposed. A supply of kits was sent to each school site to be used for students who were in close contact with positive cases and to support the District’s modified quarantine protocols and ensure students could return to school as quickly as possible. By the end of last week, the County case rate had jumped exponentially approaching 40,000, and has averaged well above that mark over the last 7 days. With the jump in cases, we quickly realized we were going to exhaust the initial allotment of test kits and would need additional rapid tests for students, teachers, and staff. An additional 5,000 tests have been ordered, but due to scarcity of tests and supply-chain issues, we are not expecting delivery for at least two weeks. With high numbers of individuals being tested in our hosted clinics, and with positive case numbers skyrocketing, we had over 1,100 CHS students exposed this week. On Thursday, we hosted
a drive-through event for those students at San Antonio High School and distributed over 1,500 test kits.

We will continue the CUSD COVID Testing Clinics next week, however, with the Monday holiday, CUSD will only be testing from 8:30 to 11:00 AM at Sycamore Elementary School. This special testing clinic is ONLY for CUSD students and staff who are from the same household. Monday’s testing is NOT open to anyone outside of CUSD. If you have not tested at a CUSD testing clinic before you will need to complete the online testing form for adults or students. We will continue our regular clinics at Vista del Valle (Tuesday), Sumner Danbury (Wednesday), and Taylor Hall (Thursday). Last week, labs throughout the State were overwhelmed and results were significantly delayed. It appears that labs are once again keeping up and results are generally arriving within 48 hours.

Exposure Management Flowchart
The CUSD Exposure Management Flowchart has been updated to reflect this week’s changes in health orders. LACDPH is reviewing new guidelines from CDPH and will likely update Appendix T1 and T2 this weekend. I will pass those changes on to you next week.

Appreciation for Teachers and Staff
I want to pause and recognize how difficult it is to be a school-based employee right now. Every single day our teachers arrive at school not knowing how many students will be in their classrooms, how many of the present students might unknowingly be carrying the virus, whether or not students present that day were there yesterday or might be there tomorrow, and to what extent students were taught or learned the lesson. Traditional ways of testing and grading are having to be set aside or adapted midstream. Safety protocols prevent staff from helping students as they used to. The office staff is spending their days chasing leads and answering endless questions. Custodians are doubling down on sanitization. Playground staff are not only having to pay attention to behavioral issues but now have to measure social distances and correct masking. Principals, counselors, TOSAs, and district leaders are subbing in classrooms. Directors, coordinators, and assistant superintendents are daily working at testing clinics or passing out test kits – and they are still doing their regular job after hours.

I only tell you this as a reminder that these wonderful human beings are giving their ALL every single day. We are about to complete our second full year in this COVID maelstrom and folks are tired, anxious, and still giving their very best each day. If you have a few moments this weekend, send along an encouragement to the people who ensure your children are safe and learning and let them know that, while you may be feeling exhausted, afraid, or frustrated yourself, you will continue to stand with them as they do everything in their power to keep our kids safe and well, provide nutrition to them, and deliver the best education possible considering the turmoil of the times.

Final Thoughts
It is hard to imagine that Dr. King was only 34 years old when he made one of the most powerful speeches of all time – the iconic “I Have A Dream” speech, delivered during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963. His powerful speech – a brilliant address of hope, inspiration, and reality, mixed with references to the Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg Address, Constitution, Declaration of Independence, the Book of Psalms, and Shakespear’s Richard III – would activate a generation and lead to sweeping legislation “... marking the most significant advances in civil rights legislation since Reconstruction.” At its foundation, “I Have a Dream” was truly about hope, and HOPE is what we need right now as this season of COVID will soon enter its 3rd year.

“If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do you have to keep moving forward.” - Dr. Martin Luther King

Have a restful extended weekend.

Warmly,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
January 7, 2022

Dear CUSD Community,

Eleanor Roosevelt, the First Lady of the United States during most of World War II once said, “We do not have to become heroes overnight. Just a step at a time, meeting each thing that comes up, seeing it is not as dreadful as it appeared, discovering we have the strength to stare it down.”

Honestly, would any of us have predicted back in March of 2020, that today we would be facing perhaps the most challenging period of the pandemic? Do you remember those first masks you bought nearly two years ago? I remember a staff member sewing homemade masks so that we would have enough to go around. I remember we initially planned on suspending school for two weeks to “knock down the virus.” And yet here we are living day-by-day, hour-by-hour trying to avoid, outrun or prevent ourselves and our loved ones from falling victim to something that feels inevitable. We cannot wish this virus away or become paralyzed by the unseen threat of infection – only meet the challenges presented daily and grow in ourselves and our children “... the strength to stare it down.”

**Current Omicron Surge**

As you are aware, there has been a rapid escalation of the daily case rate infection numbers during the Winter Holiday break. The Omicron daily case rate numbers doubled, quickly tripled, and then exploded exponentially in a matter of several days after Christmas. Since last week, the Los Angeles County daily positive test counts have remained at or above 20,000 compared with 300-400 during the Fall. Coming off the New Year’s weekend where people gathered all over Los Angeles County, the daily case rate soared to 37,215 yesterday. The daily positivity rate has dramatically risen to about 25% – meaning one out of every four who are tested are positive for the virus. Dr. Barbara Ferrer informed Superintendents on Thursday that schools will remain open despite the “worst surge we have ever seen” and that the County is “not preparing to implement school closures.”

Here in Claremont, we are challenged to fill teaching positions with substitutes. This is a problem around the State right now. Our administrative team is jumping-in to help and we are marshaling resources to ensure that classes are covered each day with qualified instructors. Mr. Cuff recounted his experience in covering a class at CHS where the teacher taught via video from her home, obviously struggling with significant symptoms. What a great example of the commitment of our teachers and staff to daily provide the best possible education to each and every student. Like other school districts, we are anticipating that staff shortages will continue to increase in the short term while we continue to take steps to best ensure teaching and learning continue.

**Concentration on Vaccinations**

In the Monday meeting, Dr. Ferrer informed Superintendents that the FDA had approved the Pfizer booster vaccine for the 12-17 year old population. She noted that current data demonstrates a 70% protection rate for those with
two vaccine doses and a booster, and 30% protection for those with a single dose. Ferrer stressed that being fully vaccinated combined with mask compliance and distancing, remains the best strategy for fighting this virus. Vaccinations remain plentiful and available through our partners at Hendrick’s Pharmacy on Harvard Street.

Testing
Late last week, we were informed that the County would be supplying free antigen home testing kits for every school district in the County. The test kits arrived at our warehouse on Monday after schools had opened. These test kits will be issued through school sites, at a parent’s request, when a student must quarantine or isolate. Antigen tests can be used in various scenarios during the quarantine/isolation period to ensure the earliest possible safe return to school. We are only permitted to provide these tests for students to use. The test kits may not be used by staff or parents/families.

We will continue to offer the five CUSD COVID Testing Clinics between Monday-Thursday at El Roble, Sycamore, Vista del Valle, Sumner Danbury, and Taylor Hall (CHS). Additionally, we were able to add last Sunday’s clinic at El Roble where over 1,100 attended and were tested. With concern over the surge, we have tested over 3,000 individuals this week. Unfortunately, due to the Omicron surge, results from labs throughout the State have been overwhelmed and results have been delayed.

We are offering a special Saturday testing clinic tomorrow from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Upland Ontario Medical Clinic at 1520 N. Mountain Ave, Ste. 12B, Ontario, CA 91762. This is a walk-up clinic with no appointment necessary. Be sure to pre-register online if you have not done so in the past. Follow this link for student registration or this link for adult registration.

Updated Masking Requirements
As we begin 2022, indoor masking continues to be required for students, staff and visitors in all situations. One notable change in the new Appendix T1 protocols is that teachers and staff are no longer permitted to wear a cloth mask while on campus. They must wear a surgical/medical grade mask. Double masking or wearing a cloth mask over a surgical/medical mask is recommended. Students are recommended to wear the same surgical/medical grade mask, but are not required to do so. In either case, “students are strongly recommended to wear masks that are well-fitting, non-cloth masks of multiple layers of non-woven material with a nose wire.”

The recent LACDPH update says: “Masking [is] now required for all outdoor activities where physical distancing is not feasible, except while eating or drinking.” We will continue to recommend that students wear a mask outdoors, however, knowing that students need breaks from masks we will only direct outdoor masking in open spaces if students gather for extended periods of time in groups and refuse or choose not to separate in a socially distanced manner. Students will be directed to wear masks during passing periods, lunch lines and in other areas of forced congregation. Principals, playground proctors, teachers, aides and other supervisory staff will be given the agency to direct students to observe outdoor masking guidelines when “physical distancing is not feasible.” We will not ask supervisors to act as enforcers of these guidelines. We have greatly appreciated that even when families have opposed the masking policies, they have been respectful of the new expectations.

It is important to note that following the masking requirements allows us to implement LACDPH’s “modified quarantine” protocols with exposed students, allowing us to keep more students in school. Modified quarantine is only available for school based exposure where we can ensure masking took place. With our outdoor mask protocols in place, we can reasonably assure this.

Exposure Management Flowchart
We have updated our Exposure Management Flowchart to reflect recent changes in the health orders. Most significantly, the chart provides additional clarity with regards to a “modified quarantine” and the timing of testing for return to school. You may [view it here](#).

**Final Thoughts**
As I visited Mountain View and Vista del Valle Elementary Schools this morning with two CUSD Board members, the theme that kept resurfacing in classrooms was that our students have become very resilient and adaptive to change. They are happy and eager to talk about their learning. We observed lessons and activities concentrating on mental and emotional well-being, students who were 100% observing the masking protocols and safety measures, and teachers who continue to weather the worst of this with grace and a commitment to every student – whether the students are absent or present.

I think Mrs. Roosevelt would be proud to see us taking this pandemic just one “... step at a time, meeting each thing that comes up, seeing it is not as dreadful as it appeared, discovering we have the strength to stare it down.”

Have a wonderful weekend.

Warmly,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
December 17, 2021

*There are two ways of spreading light; to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.*

– Edith Wharton

December is a time of unity, family, celebrations, and lights. With the days growing shorter heading into the winter’s solstice, many of the revered world religions are celebrating December holidays that focus either on lights or include lights as part of those celebrations. The kinara of Kwanzaa, the Jewish menorah, the Bodhi tree of Buddhism, and the luminaria and Christmas tree of Christianity all feature lights, serving as traditional reminders of significant events in each of these great bodies of faith.

When we speak of “light,” we often use it to symbolically speak of understanding something (“a light bulb turned on in his head”), feeling the warmth of relationship (“you light up my life”), or emerging from a long, dark period (“I see a light at the end of a tunnel”). Light and dark are often used in contrast to describe the difference between happiness and sadness. As a nation, we have been in a dark time for quite a while and folks are searching for ways to express lightness and to find warmth and understanding. What better season to “be a candle” than in this season of lights.

As my wife and I drove through Claremont on Tuesday evening just after the heavy rain had abated, the holiday lights around our community seemed to sparkle and come alive to warm our hearts. Walking out of the dark and into the beautiful sanctuary at Claremont United Church of Christ, we were greeted by the warmth and light of our students and community. The angelic singing of our various choirs only intensified the feelings of celebration and belonging. Wednesday evening’s instrumental concert at El Roble again brought warmth, hope, and light to a large gathering of parents and community members who just soaked it in.

**School Board Reorganization**

On Thursday evening, December 16, 2021, the Claremont Unified School District’s Board of Education completed an annual “reorganization” with a transfer of the three offices on the Board of Education. Mr. Steven Llanusa received the nomination for President of the Board and was unanimously elected to that post. Mrs. Kathy Archer was nominated and confirmed as Board Vice President and Mr. Robert Fass was nominated and confirmed as the Clerk of the Board. After a year of leading the Board through the heart of the pandemic, Mrs. Nancy Treser Osgood graciously and quietly returned to the status of Board Member alongside 2020 President Mr. David Nemer. As Superintendent, I want to thank Mrs. Treser Osgood for her faithful service and consistent attendance at district and school events and meetings. Nancy graciously supported our students, teachers, principals, and staff by making time to just be there. While we look forward to an exciting 2022 and the leadership of Mr. Llanusa, we also want to pause and recognize the commitment and personal sacrifices of Mrs. Treser Osgood in providing a steady hand of leadership within the eye of the storm that was 2021.

**Mapping Tool For “By Trustee” Districting**

The Board of Education (BOE) conducted the third of four hearings in the Regular Meeting of the BOE on December 16, 2021. Three working drafts of “By Trustee” voting areas were presented to the Board by the consultants at National Demographics Corporation (NDC), with an opportunity for the public to provide input on the draft maps. There will be a fourth and final public hearing at the Regular Meeting on January 20, 2022. Then, at the February 3, 2022 Board meeting, the BOE will likely adopt a District “By Trustee” map to be
submitted to the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization for possible approval no later than February 28, 2022. The mapping tool will remain open on our website until January 10, 2022. NDC will prepare at least two proposed trustee area maps to bring to the BOE for consideration and approval on February 3, 2022. We welcome those of you who are interested to participate in this process by either sharing your thoughts with us or by following the tutorial on how to navigate the online drawing tool.

Equity and Inclusion Work – Quarterly Reports

With the recommendations in hand from last year’s District Advisory Committee on Racial Equity (DAC), staff is regularly working on addressing recommendations from the DAC. K-12 Leadership and the Leadership Team Council (LTC) have devoted a majority of their meeting time this year to disaggregating the DAC recommendations, evaluating past practices and progress made, and studying the research and recommendations found in Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain by Zaretta Hammond. Much of the long-term, culture-shifting work will be included in the strategic planning process ahead of us, but in the meantime, we will be providing quarterly progress reports to the Board of Education beginning at the January 20, 2022 meeting. Staff will report out in January, April, August, and November for 2022.

COVID-19 Update for CUSD

Dr. Ferrer spoke with Superintendents yesterday and the main topic was the coming Omicron variant and the potential impact on Los Angeles County schools and citizens. There is much speculation about the impact this new variant might have on school attendance and outbreak management, but the message from LACDPH is we must continue to move toward higher percentages of initial vaccinations along with boosters for eligible citizens. On a high note, the expected post-Thanksgiving surge in positive COVID cases never materialized here in Claremont. There were only four new positive COVID-19 cases reported within the school district this week – one at Claremont High School, two at Mountain View Elementary School, and one at Oakmont Outdoor School. The district-wide total is now 174 positive cases reported since September 1. There are currently 61 students at home in quarantine due to an exposure at school.

Final Thoughts

While the beautiful holiday lights are very real, and though they often temporarily elevate our feelings of happiness and warmth, we have to remember that there is darkness just outside the door. Holidays are meant to be a time of joy and celebration; however, for some, December holidays are anything but happy and warm. Depression may happen throughout the year, but stress and anxiety during the holidays may cause even those who are usually content to experience loneliness and lack of fulfillment. It is important to remember that while some of us might feel celebratory, there are others who will deeply struggle. Let’s all pay attention to our neighbors and friends and come alongside those who are in need. Look for those who might have recently lost a loved one, lost a job or a home, had a marriage end, or have suffered a loss in other ways. Be with them and be that candle or mirror that brings light into their hearts.

A person’s life may be a lonely thing by nature, but it is not isolated. To that life other lives are linked.
— Haruki Murakami

Winter Break


Happy Holidays and Be Well,

Dr. Jeff Wilson
December 3, 2021

Good evening CUSD Family and Friends,

"Of all the months of the year there is not a month one half so welcome to the young, or so full of happy associations, as the last month of the year." - Charles Dickens

As we enter this month of happy associations — holidays, celebrations, parades, decorations, music, family, friends, and great food — it just feels like we are inching closer to “normalcy” (whatever that ends up being). With the return of our school and community traditions comes better opportunities to reconnect with one another. It has been great to have the technology to be able to meet via Zoom during the pandemic, but to now be able to attend community events like Village Ventures or to be with an enthusiastic crowd supporting our football team’s CIF semi-final game in Orange County, has brought true life back to our community.

Mapping Tool For “By Trustee” Districting

As you are likely aware, the Claremont Unified School District will move to a new “By Trustee” process for electing school board members in November of 2022. The current at-large system of electing board members is no longer valid under the California Voting Rights Act of 2001 and will be replaced with a voter area selection process. We have opened an interactive web-based mapping tool for our community to offer suggested trustee districts by drawing voting area maps. The mapping tool is available on our website and you may submit possible maps until January 10, 2022. The National Demographics Corporation will take submitted maps and determine themes from those maps to prepare at least two proposed trustee area maps to bring to the Board of Education for consideration and approval on February 3, 2022.

The Board of Education (BOE) will conduct the third of four hearings in the Regular Meeting of the BOE on December 16, 2021, and a fourth and final public hearing at the Regular Meeting on January 20, 2022. There will also be one last opportunity for public comment at the Board of Education Meeting on February 3, 2022, before the Board takes action. In that meeting, the Board will likely adopt a District “By Trustee” map that will then be submitted for possible approval to the Los Angeles County Committee on School District Organization before their deadline of February 28, 2022.

Vaccinations and Clinics

Our final scheduled vaccination clinics will conclude this coming Wednesday, December 8 at several of our elementary sites. The clinics have been a terrific success with over 300 students receiving their first or both vaccinations. Your child may attend any one of these clinics even if they attend a different school:

- Vista del Valle - Monday, 12/6, 3:30-5:30 p.m.
- Condit - Tuesday, 12/7, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
- Sycamore - Wednesday, 12/8, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

If you would like to schedule an appointment at one of these clinics for first-time vaccination for children between the ages 5 and 11, please go to First Time Vaccination Appointment.
COVID-19 Update for CUSD

There were 12 new positive COVID-19 cases reported within the school district so far this week. This includes 3 new cases at CHS, 4 at Sycamore, 4 at El Roble, and 1 at Oakmont. The district-wide total is now 160 positive cases reported since September 1. Fortunately, most of the recent cases began while school was closed last week so other students and staff members were not exposed. There are currently no students at home in quarantine due to exposure at school.

Final Thoughts

I hope your family enjoys a happy season of lights, festivals, music, gifts, good wishes, mini-vacations, cool weather, wonderful food, and other traditions that draw us together.

Warmly,

Dr. Jeff Wilson
November 19, 2021

Good evening CUSD Family and Friends,

The holiday of Thanksgiving, while not celebrated or recognized by all, is honestly not about the day itself -- it is really about the mindset of pausing, reflecting, considering our blessings, and being grateful for what we have. It has been said that what we focus our attention on grows larger. At least for this upcoming week, let’s all agree to focus on what we are thankful for and less on what is wrong in the world.

Fall Break

Today marks the beginning of our Fall Break. We will return to school on Monday, November 29, 2021, with three weeks of instruction leading up to Winter Break beginning on Monday, December 20, 2021. Take some time with your family and renew old traditions or maybe initiate new ones with friends and family that will last a lifetime. For me, this week means that I will be baking pies with my daughter Ally -- something we have been doing since she was a little girl.

Initial Board “By Trustee” Districting

In last evening’s Board of Education meeting, the school board heard a presentation regarding next steps in the ongoing initial districting proposal to create “By Trustee” areas for the November 2022 election cycle. The Board has held two of the four required public hearings in August and September and will hold two more hearings at regular board meetings on December 16, 2021, and January 20, 2022, to receive public input and consider proposals for mapping the five trustee areas.

We will open a web-based mapping tool for community members to participate in this process by drawing and submitting possible voting area maps. Community members will be able to access the mapping tool on our website by November 30, 2021. Input from the community will influence the two or three maps that will be submitted to the Board of Education by National Demographics Corporation on January 20, 2022, and again on February 3, 2022 -- the final hearing and board adoption meeting for the “By Trustee” areas. In the February 3 meeting, CUSD’s Board of Education will likely take action on a districting map to be submitted to the Los Angeles County Registrar of Voters no later than February 28, 2022.
Vaccinations and Clinics

Our first round of vaccination clinics concluded this past Wednesday at our seven elementary sites with approximately 400 of our younger students having received their first round of vaccinations at one of the clinics. If your child received the first vaccination at one of our clinics, just return to that school site at the same time for the second vaccination (see schedule below). You do not need to schedule a new appointment.

- Mountain View - Monday, 11/29, 2:45-4:45 p.m.
- Chaparral - Tuesday, 11/30, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
- Sumner-Danbury - Wednesday, 12/1, 1:00-3:00 p.m.
- Oakmont - Wednesday, 12/1, 1:30-3:30 p.m.
- Vista del Valle - Monday, 12/6, 3:30-5:30 p.m.
- Condit - Tuesday, 12/7, 3:00-5:00 p.m.
- Sycamore - Wednesday, 12/8, 1:30-3:30 p.m.

If you would like to schedule an appointment for a first-time vaccination for children between the ages of 5 and 11, please go to First Time Vaccination Appointment.

Just a reminder that there is NO vaccination mandate at this time.

Final Thoughts

A recent study appearing in the journal *Psychotherapy Research*, indicates a strong correlation between expressing gratitude and psychological well-being. The study “found that people who consciously count their blessings tend to be happier and less depressed.” In fact, the study concluded that the benefits of practicing psychological gratitude include a decrease in toxic emotions and actual positive physiological changes in the brain leading to “… greater neural sensitivity in the medial prefrontal cortex, a brain area associated with learning and decision making.” Simply put, if we are actively grateful, our mind, spirit, and body will benefit.

I want you to know how grateful I am for our students, faculty, staff, administration, Board of Education, and community members who love and support our schools. I attended a CLASP event this past Sunday and had the pleasure of being with folks who have devoted decades of their lives to helping our most vulnerable students. I was moved to hear the stories and experience the selflessness of these wonderful volunteers. I am profoundly grateful for the years of service provided by outgoing director, Jan Creasey. Jan’s influence and effect on students’ lives will be felt for years to come. THANK YOU, JAN!

Have a Great Thanksgiving.

Warmly,

[Signature]

Dr. Jeff Wilson
November 5, 2021

Dear CUSD Community,

As we enjoy this month of gratitude highlighted by Thanksgiving on November 25, it is important to pause and recognize the little blessings in our lives that we often take for granted while we continue to be mired in the uncertainty and anxiety surrounding COVID, masks, vaccines, and complex social and political issues. Thoughts of gratitude swept over me as I visited classrooms at Vista del Valle on Thursday morning. I not only saw the smiling faces of eager students and grateful teachers but witnessed expressions of thankfulness and gratitude in rooms across the Viking campus. In one primary room, I came across a whiteboard on a tripod asking what each student was thankful for. Answers varied from “my family”… “my teddy”… “my bunny,” to “trucks” and “my cousin’s pool.” Simple thoughts that were at the same time, so profound.

In expressing gratitude, we are reflecting on the blessings in our lives and recognizing that whatever we have received has, in part, been provided by something or someone outside of our own control or abilities. There are very real benefits associated with being grateful and expressing our thankfulness. Harvard Medical School has published studies linking positive reflective writing and benevolent actions to higher levels of exercise, fewer visits to physicians, better relationships, and superior employee/employer relationships. In other words, when we focus on the blessings in our lives and express those feelings of gratitude, we feel better and make others around us feel better.

Board Meeting

The Board of Education (BOE) held their regular meeting on Thursday night. I was grateful that we had a handful of community members attend in-person for the first time in quite a while, and that they provided meaningful feedback to our Board. The Board heard two school reports from Mountain View Elementary with Principal Rria Cruz-Soto and parent Mike Méndez, and from Sycamore Elementary with Principal Amy Stanger, joined by parent Sarah Rockne and teacher Jessica Marchant. Both principals and guests spoke with pride about the various inclusive programs and activities for students, parent engagement and community involvement, and vision and goals for the future at each site.

A comprehensive report on CUSD Student Mental Health Services was also provided by Assistant Superintendent of Student Services, Brad Cuff, and Coordinator of Mental Health, Lisa Banks-Toma. The Board and attendees greatly enjoyed hearing from our mental health support leaders about the wonderful programs and resources available to students and families here in Claremont. A Board member noted that it would be great for all of our families and community members to view the CUSD Student Mental Health Services report attached here.

Vaccination Clinics

On October 29, 2021, “... the U.S. Food and Drug Administration(FDA) authorized the emergency use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine for the prevention of COVID-19 to include children 5 through 11 years of age.” While Governor Newsom has issued a press release stating that he expects “... the
requirement... to apply to grades 7-12 starting on July 1, 2022,” no mandate currently exists for school-age children to be vaccinated. Many parents have expressed an interest in having their children vaccinated as soon as possible. As a result, we will be offering voluntary vaccination clinics at each of our elementary school sites over the next two weeks. So far, over 800 reservations have been made for one of our clinics and we anticipate many more over the next two weeks. The tables below provide you with dates, times, and locations for each of the clinics. This link will take you to the reservation page should you wish to secure a spot in one of our clinics. For those parents with concerns about vaccinations for their young children, I would suggest they consult with their pediatrician.

Vaccination Schedule November 8-10
Provider: Hendricks Pharmacy

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>School</th>
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<tr>
<td>11/8</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>2:45-4:45</td>
<td>Mt. View</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/9</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>3:00-5:00</td>
<td>Chaparral</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/10</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1:00</td>
<td>Sumner</td>
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<tr>
<td>11/10</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1:30</td>
<td>Oakmont</td>
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Vaccination Schedule November 15 - 17
Provider: Upland Ontario Medical Clinic

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<th>Day</th>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11/15</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>3:30-5:30</td>
<td>Vista del Valle¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/16</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>3:00-5:00</td>
<td>Condit¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/17</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>1:00-3:30</td>
<td>Sycamore¹</td>
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¹Check back for links to register.

I want to thank the folks at Hendricks Pharmacy here in Claremont and our testing partner, Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic for their assistance in offering these clinics.

Final Thoughts

Circling back to the research on gratitude, it will be my goal this month to actively look for ways to express my gratitude for the many blessings in my life. I feel so blessed to be working in a community where the vast majority of our citizens care so deeply about our schools and every single one of our students. Even where disagreements exist, the underlying reason(s) for those disagreements tend to center around what is right for each and every student.

With Gratitude,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
October 29, 2021

Happy Spooky Weekend CUSD Family and Friends,

When was the last time that you walked into a place that instantly transported you back to your childhood? That happened to me on Tuesday when I had the opportunity to visit Chaparral Elementary School’s library. Though I had not previously been in Chaparral’s wondrous library, my mind was instantly flooded with memories of one of the favorite places of my young life -- the school library at La Fetra Elementary School in Glendora. I was drawn to the even rows of books organized by author and category; the comfortable seating areas for students to lose themselves in magical worlds of wizards and witches, heroines and heroes, legendary athletes, and movie stars; and the unforgettable sweet and musky smell wafting into my nose from the more “seasoned” books -- these sensory inputs took me all of the way back.

I was so excited when Chaparral’s librarian, Amy Bassett, led me over to my favorite childhood mystery series -- *Encyclopedia Brown, Boy Detective* -- still alive, well and popular with today’s students. On the next shelf sat some favorite books to read with my daughter Ally when she was a small girl, *Goosebumps* by R.L. Stine. I distinctly remembered her moving closer to me as we read those spooky stories together (remember *Welcome to Dead House, Night of the Living Dummy,* and *The Haunted Mask*?). It got me thinking about our fascination with mystery, horror, and dread, especially as children, and our equal excitement with Halloween.

**Updates From Around CUSD**

Homecoming is happening tonight at CHS as the Wolfpack hosts Colony High School. Dance tickets have been purchased in record numbers with the dance being held this Saturday outdoors for an extra layer of safety. Students have been building floats all week and enjoyed the annual parade from Memorial Park to El Roble Intermediate School earlier today.

Speaking of El Roble, our proud marching band participated this past Saturday in the annual *Village Venture* parade, the kickoff of a highly successful and well-attended Saturday fair in and around downtown Claremont. Each of our elementary schools has been celebrating the Harvest season through parades, trunk or treats, art activities, and other events to draw in our families and launch the holiday season for our students. I continue to be uplifted by the sheer joy I see in the eyes of students who are re-engaging in the daily life and activity of our schools.

**Health Updates**

CUSD’s testing clinics at 5 school sites continue to be well-attended and greatly appreciated by our parents and community. Over 1,750 tests were administered in September, and 1,865 so far in
October by Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic. This works out to between 400-500 tests administered per week. Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic has been providing timely results to our students, parents, staff members, and sites since we opened schools on September 1. We have truly appreciated their flexibility and willingness to expand services as we have requested and have shown a need.

This week was relatively quiet with infections and quarantines at CUSD schools. We did have to move one class at Oakmont into quarantine after a confirmed positive case and contact tracing this past week, but we are doing very well overall.

CUSD is scheduling vaccination clinics with Hendricks Pharmacy and the Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic for children between the ages of 5 and 11 at each elementary school. Pending vaccine availability, we hope to schedule clinics as early as November 8. These clinics will be scheduled after school and a parent or guardian will need to accompany their child. Though vaccinations for students is not currently a “mandate,” we are strongly encouraging parents to participate in this opportunity to help stem the tide of COVID-19. If you want to participate in a vaccination clinic, please sign up to reserve a vaccination for your child by completing this online form at https://forms.gle/CuWGLeexmEvZrFgc6.

Final Thoughts
I have heard Halloween defined as “... the only time of the year when children are encouraged to take candy from a stranger 😊”. When you were young, did you choose costumes that were whimsical and fun or like me, scary and dangerous? What was your chosen candy collection receptacle? Mine was a pillowcase and I would fill it up. I loved Halloween!

Dani DiPirro, at a particularly low point in her life, “decided to start a blog (Positively Present), documenting [her] attempts to live a more positively present life.” Dani provides one of the best explanations of why so many Americans love this holiday. She argues that Halloween serves to build community in a way that “... almost everyone can participate in;” that Halloween is perhaps the only holiday where we become universally generous with anyone who comes to our front door; that Halloween affords both children and adults the opportunity to transform (if only for an evening) who they are to become something extraordinary; and that Halloween is one of our great celebrations as Americans where shelves are stocked with colorful decorations and treats, and entire empty strip mall stores are taken over to sell all things Halloween. You might love to check out Ms. DiPirro’s entire blog post about Halloween at this link.

That’s it for this week. For those who will be celebrating on Sunday night, have fun and be safe.

Warmest Regards,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
October 22, 2021

Good evening CUSD Family and Friends,

What is IT we love about the fall season? Perhaps the changing colors in the trees or the cool evening air along the foothills? Maybe your heart soars like mine when you see the pumpkin patch appear downtown or simply when you walk into Trader Joe’s and see all of the orange, gold, yellow and everything made of pumpkin (coffee, burritos, chips, etc.)? There are fun arts and crafts to do with your friends and family and awesome events like Village Venture, or the Spooktacular at Vista del Valle to stir your childhood memories. Perhaps fall has become living and dying on every pitch with the Dodgers annual run towards a championship? Whatever fall means to you, when the weather changes and we are staring-down the beginning of the holiday season (yes, winter holiday decor has already made its first appearance at Costco), it means that we are well into the school year with days accelerating towards the end of the calendar and the prospect of a new, and hopefully brighter year following. Believe it or not, we are already more than one-fifth into this school year.

I want to pause and thank this community for the tremendous outreach of support this past week in the wake of the loss of my father. You truly are a caring community of parents, staff and friends, and your concern for me was felt and appreciated. I have only a few updates this week:

**Last Week’s Outbreak at Claremont High School**
You may have heard that we had a significant number of positive COVID test results last week at Claremont High School associated with our boys’ water polo team. I was notified on Saturday, October 16 that the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health visitation team provided a [Environmental Health Official Inspection Report](#) that confirmed the positive COVID cases associated with the team constituted an official “outbreak.” The report found no oversights or incorrect procedures on the part of CHS or CUSD, but did include both general and specific observations and recommendations. You may view the report at this [link](#).

**Updates from CUSD’s Health Offices**
CUSD has had a quieter week (loud knocking on wood here) after the outbreak last week at CHS, which consumed significant staff resources. Briefly on Wednesday morning, we had zero students quarantined due to COVID. However, as the week progressed, we did have a few more cases and resumed quarantining of some elementary students. I am very proud of the vigilance of our principals, teachers and staff as they carefully follow the safety and sanitizing protocols looking after the well-being of our students. I am equally proud of our students for taking the safety measures seriously and for helping us remain a lighthouse district with low infection and high vaccination rates of both students and staff. We
will continue to offer our five weekly testing clinics. Please check our website for information about the clinics and to complete an initial registration. We hope to provide additional vaccination clinics for both booster shots and initial vaccines in the coming weeks.

**News from Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH)**
The Daily Positive Case Rate and 7-Day Testing Positivity Rate has plateaued, but remains relatively low. In her report to Superintendents on Thursday morning, Director of LACDPH Barbara Ferrer revealed that she expects the Pfizer vaccine to be made available for children ages 5-11 sometime in “early November.” A New York Times article noted that the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) will meet on October 26 to consider approving the vaccine for “emergency use,” a first step in bringing the vaccine to market for pre-teens. After the FDA approves its use, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) will then need to approve the Pfizer vaccine for use with younger children. The State of California would then likely move quickly to approve it as well. The Governor’s press release predicts a vaccination mandate for grades 7-12 beginning on July 1, 2022 with a mandate for 5-11 year-olds following on January 1, 2023. We will continue to update the community with any new information as it is provided.

On Thursday, LACDPH published an updated T-1 Protocols for Schools. Only two items were updated:

- Appropriately documented medical exemptions are the only acceptable reason a student may be excused from the requirement to wear a mask indoors at school; and,
- Playing of wind instruments is now permitted indoors. There are rules for playing wind instruments indoors that you may read about in the protocols on page 13.

**Final Thoughts**
I had the opportunity to meet with a group of ten teachers and counselors this week and asked each of them to share how their teaching or counseling has been impacted these past 18 months. While sharing many of the difficulties (anxiety, stress, the loss of reflective time, the absence of being physically present with their colleagues), they really wanted to talk about the positives that have arisen after being forced to completely iterate their practice overnight. Many talked about the ways Canvas has helped them organize their teaching, access resources, track student progress, and assess students in more authentic ways.

Some said this period of time helped them get to know their students better as they really had to look each kid in the eye, every day and make sure that they were engaged. But the most profound point that was raised by every single teacher and counselor was that the era of the pandemic brought them to a higher level of awareness related to the importance of Social Emotional Learning (SEL) for their students. They keenly felt their students pain, confusion, anxiety and loss of social interaction. Each articulated a belief and willingness to really dig-in and help students navigate through their reintegration into school and to look at every student as an individual who needs individualized attention and support. What a great group of teachers and counselors we have here in CUSD.

Thanks again for your support and have a great fall weekend.

Warmest regards,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
October 15, 2021

Dear Claremont USD Community and Friends,

I hope this week’s letter finds you and your family well. I apologize for not writing to you last week, but sadly we suffered the loss of my father last Thursday and my attention was drawn away to his passing and the subsequent rush of activity and arrangements.

Our school doors have been open now for six weeks, and while we have experienced the frustrations of quarantining students, teams, groups, and whole classrooms, spirits remain high with our teachers and staff despite the uncertainties and additional work required to meet our students’ academic needs and social-emotional well-being in both physical and virtual environments. We continue to struggle with the realities of positive COVID tests leading to seemingly endless contact tracing causing inevitable disruptions in learning and participation. The positive energy of our students continues to buoy us while we confront the reality that our kids missed 18 months of school leading to gaps in learning and regression of social skills. I am just so thankful for our entire staff and their commitment to helping ALL of our students during these difficult days.

COVID-19 County and Local Updates
On the health front, the news is good as we continue to see a steady decline in Los Angeles County in the 7-Day Testing Positivity, Death, and Hospitalization Rates. The best news of all is that the daily reported positive cases fell below 750 for the first time since the Summer of 2020 this past Wednesday.

We have been experiencing some recent positive cases at Claremont High School, mostly in athletics (see Dashboard). We did have a visit from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) at CHS on Wednesday for an inspection and review of procedures and protocols. We were pleased that the lead doctor, who has conducted numerous visits to other high schools, deemed our processes and environment as safe for our students and staff. LACDPH will provide us with some additional recommendations for sports but did not indicate that any changes were needed in classrooms. We have yet to receive a full report from LACDPH but will share any pertinent information with you when it becomes available.

Testing Opportunities
We continue to offer five separate COVID testing opportunities for our community around town -- El Roble Intermediate (2:00-4:00 p.m.) and Sycamore Elementary (2:45-3:45 p.m.) on Mondays; Vista del Valle Elementary (2:45-3:45 p.m.) on Tuesdays; Condit Elementary (1:00-2:00 p.m.) on Wednesdays; and Claremont High School (3:30-5:00 p.m.) on Thursdays. The testing events have been well attended and those who have attended have been very patient and cooperative. If you would like to register in advance for a test, please access these registration links for students or adults/staff. The tests are provided by Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic at no cost to you.
Final Thoughts
I shared with you something profoundly personal at the start of this letter -- that my father passed away last week at the age of 101. I was hesitant to share that news with you (perhaps some might think it to be too personal for a community letter), but I did so because I see profound lessons in my father’s life and in his passing that are relevant for our present experiences.

My father was born in Vancouver, Washington in 1920. When Jack Wilson was born, the world was just recovering from the “war to end all wars” (the moniker subscribed to World War 1 due to the great slaughter and destruction it caused). His life was bookended by the 1918-19 H1N1 flu pandemic, which took the lives of between 50-100,000,000 worldwide, and the present COVID-19 pandemic which to this point, has claimed the lives of nearly 5,000,000. He lived through six wars involving Americans; the race to space and Cold War with the Soviets; 19 different U.S. Presidents; the Great Depression; Prohibition; the culmination of the Women’s Suffrage movement (two days before his birth, the 19th Amendment was ratified); the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the 9-11 attacks; and an exponential growth in technology (the major invention impacting homes in 1920 was the toggle light switch).

I listed these life-defining historical events only to remind us all that we have been here before as a country and as a people. Our parents and grandparents have experienced the destructive forces of nature and of mankind, accompanied by high levels of anxiety and fear, loneliness and heartbreak, hopelessness and yes, HOPE restored. This is not the first time we have been polarized as a people around decisions made by politicians, bureaucrats, and demagogues. We have always found a way to get back up on our feet as a nation. We will do it again. As parents, grandparents, teachers, principals, counselors, support staff, and leaders, we must be a beacon of hope -- a shining light to provide guidance, assurance, perspective, and restoration to our children and students, helping them prepare for their own long journey through a profoundly difficult, but wonderful life.

My hope is that, as we emerge from these dark days, the lessons we have learned; the tools we have developed, honed, and deployed; the relationships we have built, and the difficulties we have faced head-on, will help us find our way back to one another as a community and country. The community of Claremont has always placed a high value on the well-being of students, has consistently supported its educational institutions, has supported teachers and the art of teaching, and has been a thought leader in areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion. What a privilege it is to serve this community as your Superintendent.

Thank you for allowing me to share these thoughts with you.

With all sincerity,

Jeff Wilson
Superintendent
October 1, 2021

Dear Claremont Parents, Staff, and Community,

October is National Hispanic Heritage Month, an opportunity to recognize the achievements and contributions of Hispanic American champions who have inspired others to achieve success. Check out documents, exhibits, films, blog posts, and more from the National Archives and Presidential Libraries here.

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) September 30 Update
In her weekly update to Superintendents on Thursday, Dr. Barbara Ferrer spoke about the importance of “targeted mandates” for vaccinations to further mitigate the virus. As of today, all healthcare workers have been mandated to be vaccinated without a testing exemption provided. The mandate for all school employees to be vaccinated for COVID-19 is just around the corner. As of October 15, a public health order will require all school staff to either show proof of full vaccination or be tested at least once per week. Claremont Unified has actually met this health order since the first week of school in September. Our current vaccination rate for certificated employees (teachers, administrators, counselors, psychologists, speech pathologists, etc.) is over 90% and growing by the day. On Thursday, we offered a second LACDPH Vaccination Clinic to our students, staff, and community at Claremont High School. Over 220 took advantage of the clinic both for 1st-time vaccinations and for boosters. In fact, the bulk of these was by CUSD employees who came to receive a booster vaccination.

Positive data shared by Dr. Ferrer on Thursday included:
- Active L.A. County student cases have fallen from over 2,800 in August to just 500 last week.
- Close contacts have also plummeted from over 11,000 per week in August to just 2,800 last week.
- There were only 12 identified school outbreaks last week, countywide.

Governor Newsom’s October 1 Announcement Regarding Mandated Student and Staff Vaccinations
The Governor addressed California educational leaders at 10:00 a.m. today and addressed:
- California’s success in mitigating the case rate to the lowest level in America;
- California’s success in getting school staff vaccinated with the October 15 deadline approaching;
- California’s success in masking mandates;
- The Governor will now issue a statewide vaccination order or mandate for in-person instruction.
  - Once the FDA approves the vaccine for ages 5-12 (anticipated in November), the State will require vaccinations for school attendance just like other vaccination requirements.
    - Phase 1 -- 7-12 grades. Starting with 12+ years old will have to be vaccinated, either by July 1, 2022 or January 1, 2023. Concurrent with this phase, all staff will be required to be vaccinated.
    - Also, waiting for the Biden administration or federal mandates to possibly speed up the timeline;
    - Phase 2 -- K-6 grades will follow or be concurrently implemented depending on the full approval of the vaccine.
  - We will await guidance from the LACDPH on how the Governor’s order overrides or coordinates with County guidance.
CUSD News on Testing and COVID-19 Cases
We are currently providing free COVID testing at El Roble Intermediate School on Monday afternoons and at Claremont High School on Thursday afternoons. We are working with our partners at Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic to further expand testing by adding a testing clinic at 3 additional school sites in the community (sites to be determined). We will now be able to offer wider opportunities for testing to anyone in the community. Despite declining infection, hospitalization, and death rates in the County, with more testing comes higher numbers of positive tests (from vaccinated and unvaccinated persons and from symptomatic and asymptomatic individuals) and we have not been immune to that. This week (9/21-9/30) we have had nine positive cases at elementary schools and twelve positive cases at the secondary schools. Please continue to check our CUSD COVID-19 Dashboard for regular updates.

Upcoming Musical Performances
We want to invite you and your friends and family to a special FREE “Concert Under the Stars” at Claremont High School’s football stadium this Saturday night featuring our El Roble and Claremont High School Instrumental Music programs. The concert will begin at 7:00 p.m. with food & drinks available for purchase. You are asked to bring a blanket or cushion to sit on.

The CHS Choirs are very excited to announce their first LIVE PERFORMANCE since February 2020! The Pop Show: "Beach Party!" will be Oct. 14-16 at 7 p.m. as well as a 2:30 matinee on October 16 at the CHS Theatre. For ticket information, go to www.chschoir.org.

Final Reflections
On Wednesday, I was able to meet with Baldy View R.O.P.’s Superintendent, Shelley Adams, to learn about the great programs available to students from Claremont, Upland, Chino Valley, and Chaffey Joint Union High School Districts, and to tour the facilities in Ontario. I learned about unique programs like Criminology, Cybersecurity, Dental Assisting, Firefighting Technology, Game Animation, Law Enforcement, Medical Arts, and Logistics (including a UPS sponsored logistics building) -- all available to our high school students as they either seek to begin their careers right out of high school, gain work experience and certification so that they might work while going to college, or seek to gain advantages for college through certifications and/or internships.

On Thursday, I was privileged to spend time with Principal Felipe Delvasto and Assistant Principal Jessica Ly at San Antonio High School. What I found at SAHS were inspiring teachers who had a warm and caring spirit and who were personally and professionally invested in the success of each of their students, two amazing administrators who love their school, a transition guide/counselor/father figure in Tyrone Newman who makes a meaningful connection with every student he comes in contact with, and SAHS students who are highly engaged, comfortable in their surroundings, and taking control of their individual journeys.

I was struck by these two visits, on successive days, because when we talk about what a modern and equitable public education should include, we discuss the importance of removing barriers, acknowledging the importance of the individual and their culture, discovering the strengths of each learner, and designing learning experiences and assessments to accurately reflect and meet the developmental needs of each learner.

What I witnessed and learned at both the Baldy View R.O.P. and our own San Antonio High School was that these equity leaders are taking on very difficult challenges, not the least of which is shifting away from the manufacturing model mindset of “school production,” where students are a product that emerges at the end of an assembly line. How refreshing it was for me to listen to and learn from leaders and teachers who have devoted their lives to celebrating differences, lifting up students, and providing them the guidance and support to pursue their life’s dreams and full potential.

Have a great weekend!

Sincerely,
September 24, 2021

Good evening CUSD Families, Staff, and Friends,

I am sure that you stepped outside your home this week to observe and enjoy the brilliant harvest moon as it welcomed our annual autumnal equinox -- the one time in the year when the sun is exactly above the Equator and day and night are equal in length. Almost on cue, large orange pumpkins have appeared in every market and home decor has turned towards the orange, yellow and brown hues. Percy Shelley wrote a long time ago: “There is a harmony in autumn, and a luster in its sky, which through the summer is not heard or seen, as if it could not be, as if it had not been!”

Local and County Health News
With 2021’s bright harvest moon comes the surging hopes and reality of regathering with family and friends, school dances, performances, games, PFA events and fundraisers, Village Ventures, and other fun Claremont traditions. Our hope for the future was bolstered this week by several noteworthy events and data points. First and foremost, on September 22, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) cleared Condit Elementary School of their “outbreak” status of last week. I want to thank Principal Dr. Malally, Nurse Alicia King, Health Assistant Griselda Becerra, and Assistant Superintendent Brad Cuff for their relentless 24/7 work in contact tracing, communications, testing, updating protocols, and increasing signage and student awareness that helped elevate us out of the outbreak status. Currently, we have two new positive cases that have arisen this week -- one at Claremont High School and one at Vista del Valle Elementary School. As a result, we have had to temporarily close one classroom at Vista and quarantine 43 students there. Nine students are currently quarantined at CHS for a total of 52 CUSD students in quarantine due to school exposure. If you would like to take a deeper dive into CHS’S positive case rates, please click this link and visit our CUSD COVID-19 Dashboard. The dashboard is updated as new information is received from our testing partner or parents. Another piece of good news was provided in our weekly call with LACDPH where the county reported that positivity rates continued to decline even while testing record numbers of people in L.A. County since the beginning of the pandemic.

Vaccination and Testing Updates
We have also been thrilled to learn that over 90% of our certificated staff have been vaccinated against COVID-19 and that 88.8% of Claremont’s 12-17-year-olds have also received the shot. Additionally, 992 individuals have been tested at our two testing sites since September 8, with less than five students and only one faculty member testing positive. Finally, as I have said before, the students and staff are doing such a great job at following the masking requirements along with social distancing and cleaning/sanitizing their hands and the materials and equipment they come in contact with. All in all, we are currently in a good place and are growing more confident by the day that a corner has been turned. This is not, however, the time to let our guard down and we will continue to look for opportunities to expand our testing and vaccination efforts while observing and enforcing policies and practices that help mitigate the possible spread of the virus.

District News
Other neat artifacts of our ascent into “normalcy” include the return of the outdoor Sadie Hawkins Dance at CHS on Saturday, Girls Tennis starting their league run towards a championship with a commanding 18-0 win over Colony High,
and the CHS Theater announcing their 2021-22 lineup including Chicago, The Man Who Came to Dinner, and Cinderella in June. At El Roble, tryouts have been going on for football, volleyball, and cross country with their seasons just ahead.

**CUSD Teacher of the Year Honored**

Today, the Claremont USD Teacher of the Year was honored in a special ceremony held at the Universal Sheraton Hotel in Los Angeles for Sycamore’s own Lisa Schuster. Congratulations to Lisa, who became the first Sycamore teacher selected in 37 years, chosen by peers who have won the award previously. Lisa is known as an innovative, engaging, and student-focused teacher who exemplifies the stellar qualities of a Claremont USD Teacher of the Year.

**Theft, Vandalism and Tik Tok in CUSD Schools**

Like thousands of schools and districts across America, CUSD schools have been vandalized by students responding to a Tik Tok feed called “Devious Licks.” This movement has encouraged students to be truant, to steal, to destroy bathrooms and school equipment, and has outlined various illegal activities that students should engage in each month according to a schedule. Currently, we have sustained nearly $10,000 in damage and have been forced to close bathrooms at El Roble and CHS. I would ask that each and every parent or guardian have a simple conversation with your child and explain the importance of not becoming involved in these destructive activities and in providing the District with information to help our students stay out of trouble and improve their school community. Most importantly, these illegal acts are really only hurting the student experience as the vandalism has negatively impacted student resources, services, and materials.

**Final Thoughts**

Finally, as we head into another weekend of beautiful Southern California weather, college football, shopping, and dining out, we must also pause to remember those across our country who have been touched by recent and unthinkable tragedies -- victims of senseless shootings in Kentucky and Tennessee, victims of California wildfires who have lost 1,300 homes and structures, and flood victims in the South who have experienced unimaginable loss of property, health, and income. Living during this sustained time of suffering and loss, it is imperative that we listen carefully to our students and watch for signs of anxiety, sadness, fear, and despair. Take a look at our wellness resources and do not hesitate to ask for help from our school principals, mental health professionals, and counselors. As adults, we must be beacons of hope to our young people and be ready to step in to help and guide them through these unprecedented difficulties.

As I drove north on Indian Hill yesterday, I was absorbed in the grandeur of our San Gabriel mountains, with the noble Mt. San Antonio lording over our beautiful town. What an amazing resource for us all to be able to drive or hike up into those gorgeous hills, reorganize our thinking, and experience a level of wellness not easily found in the flatlands. I leave you with these thoughts from perhaps the most famous American naturalist, John Muir. “Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature’s peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop away from you like the leaves of autumn.” Take a hike or even a drive this weekend and experience the glory of yet another perfect SoCal autumn day.

Have an amazing weekend.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
September 17, 2021

Greetings CUSD,

I hope you are enjoying the final weeks of this amazing Summer weather. The days have been warm but we are beginning to feel the coming fall in the cool breezes that sweep across our foothills each evening and the mist that stubbornly hangs around each morning. Corrine and I had so much fun under the Friday Night Lights both last Friday in our win over Colony and last night in a great game between Claremont and Alta Loma. And how cool was it to see our marching band and cheer squads perform under the lights for the first time in quite a while? I am looking forward to getting out and rooting for our tennis, water polo, golf, volleyball, and cross country teams in the coming weeks as well.

DAC Report to the Board of Education

On Tuesday, September 14, 2021, the District Advisory Committee on Racial Equity provided its report to the Board of Education (BOE) in a Special Meeting of the BOE. Drs. Natalie Taylor, Brett O’Connor, Frances Kellar along with Mrs. Rosa Leong presented as representatives of the three subcommittees -- Academic Achievement, Staffing and Professional Development, and Safety and School Climate. Board members had the opportunity to interact with committee members and the public was given the opportunity to provide comments and questions to each of the subcommittees. Board members recognized that the committee report was the first step in a long journey forward. The report contained both recommendations that might be addressed in the short term and those that will take many months and years to accomplish.

COVID and Public Health Data

Last week in L.A. County, our 7-day cumulative case rate decreased 35% from the previous week to 104 new cases per 100,000 residents, making it the third week in a row of decreases in the County’s case rate. Overall, the County has seen a 50% decrease from the peak of 204 cases per 100,000 on August 19. And, while case rates rose among children in all age groups between mid-July and mid-August, over the past 2 weeks, cases have declined in all age groups by about 30%. Finally, Dr. Ferrer revealed that the test positivity rate has fallen from 0.9% Aug 15 to 0.4% on Sept. 9, which she said is “a very low positivity rate.” On Wednesday, it was announced that “California also became the only state to advance out of the CDC's "high" transmission category, and is currently experiencing the lowest case rate in the nation.” With the good news of declining numbers, LACDPH announced “modified” quarantine protocols beginning today that will help us keep more students in school when positive, asymptomatic cases are discovered.

Prior to these new protocols, CUSD’s quarantine numbers jumped a bit this week due mainly to a single issue in our BLAST after-school program. While it has become a daily part of our lives to monitor school sites for student or staff symptoms, we have only received reports of positive test results from Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic (currently after school on Mondays at El Roble and Thursday at CHS) 24 hours after samples are collected. The only other positive test results we have received are from parents who communicate test results from individual appointments or tests. What that means for us is our COVID Dashboard is only updated as we receive new data. As of this week, we have expanded to twice weekly voluntary testing and will now receive more up-to-date information to post to the Dashboard. Again, we look forward to our own quarantine numbers declining in the coming days thanks to the new County modified quarantine rules.
Vaccination & Testing Updates
We have confirmed over 85% of our certificated staff (administrators, teachers, nurses, counselors and psychologists) and over 87% of our 12-17-year-old students are currently vaccinated. Even with these terrific numbers, we would love to push those numbers closer to 100% in the very near future. We are working with our friends at historic Hendrick’s Pharmacy right here in Claremont to help us with the final push towards having a fully vaccinated staff and eligible student pool. Please keep your ears peeled for special announcements and promotions to help propel us to the finish line. In our Thursday call with LACDPH, Dr. Ferrer let superintendents know that the vaccine for ages 5-12 might be available as soon as late October or could stretch to the end of the year.

We continue to offer our Monday testing clinic at El Roble and our Thursday clinic at Claremont High School. Hundreds and hundreds of students and families have taken advantage of our convenient testing sites and we look forward to continuing and deepening our partnership with Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic in the coming weeks.

Final Thoughts
As I walked through classrooms this week, I came across a sign in the front of one of our elementary classrooms:

What a profoundly simple and funny thought...

In their book, “Humor, Seriously: Why Humor is a Secret Weapon In Business and Life,” Stanford researchers and professors Jennifer Aaker & Naomi Bagdonas note that a 2019 worldwide Gallup poll revealed that our ability or willingness to laugh and smile begins to plummet at around age 23, bottoming out in our late 70’s before making a stunning comeback in our late 90’s. In fact, those who make it to 100 show a similar willingness to laugh and smile as a 25-year old. They note that “… we need more of ourselves, and more human connection -- especially as in-person meetings are replaced by video chats and more relationships are sustained entirely by email (pg. 23).”

What a joy it was to visit Claremont High School this week and see those human connections return and witness our students laughing, chatting and, yes, playing together for the first time in a long-time. Those of us in our middle-age years, trapped in that humor trough noted by Gallup are told to lighten up a bit and look for those moments “… of levity to shift a moment, or a relationship, from transactional and robotic to relational and authentic.” I have so appreciated our Claremont community’s good spirit -- folks’ willingness to reach across lines and defy the forces that/who try to divide us, and those who continue to look for the good in people as we navigate the craziness around us. It is so simple to sit behind a screen and scrutinize, criticize and condemn others with great vigor, yet it is so much more rewarding and wellness-promoting to reach out, encourage, support, and come alongside those who we might not completely understand or even agree with. Let’s continue to build bridges instead of walls as we move past this profoundly negative epoch in our history.

Have a fun and humorous weekend,

Warmly,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
September 10, 2021

Good evening CUSD,

Over the last three days, I have had the pleasure of visiting six of our campuses to see our teachers teach, principals lead, counselors guide, front office staff care for students, playground supervisors connect with the kids, support staff work with students, and our students learn in safe environments. I have been so pleased with the level of engagement of our learners and the joy in the eyes of our staff and students as they have finally been able to be back with their friends and classmates.

Los Angeles Department of Public Health (LACDPH) Update
As we complete our second week of school, I have several updates for you. First, two important pieces of positive data have emerged from the LACDPH's COVID-19 Dashboard.

As you can see above, the 7-day county average of positive cases of COVID has continued to decrease (currently 1.87% of tests yield a positive result) since the beginning of August, when the rate was nearly 6.5%. Additionally, the daily case rate has declined significantly over the previous four weeks from a high of over 4,000 to Wednesday’s low of 1,060. We are now seeing the impact of the August decline through the decreasing hospitalization rate in September (right graph above).

Testing and Quarantine in CUSD -- COVID Update
Even though we opened school later than many of our neighboring districts, we have not been immune to the impacts of positive tests and the quarantine of some students and staff. We have so far been forced to temporarily close 10 classrooms district-wide along with individually quarantining a number of students at our elementary schools and high school. The total number of students and staff under quarantine this week, at some point, adds up to over 225 students and staff with 26 testing positive for the virus (as of Friday at 2:00 p.m.). Several quarantined classrooms will return on Monday with others returning later next week. I was so pleased when I visited Condit today to observe the quarantined classrooms that have quickly and seamlessly transitioned back into remote learning. I was able to greet many of the students online and to see first-hand that they were doing a great job of staying focused on the teaching, learning, and activities.
Student Support Services
As potential or real cases have emerged, our leadership team and Student Services department (led by Assistant Superintendent Brad Cuff and District Nurse Alicia King) have marshalled resources to locations of need, including providing additional testing capabilities and contact tracing for staff and students. We have made a conscious effort to be proactive with classroom closures erring on the “better safe than sorry” side of things. We have reached out to LACDPH for support in contact tracing, testing and vaccination clinics and are concentrating on keeping the community as informed as possible. Of course, we also have to be cognizant of HIPAA laws in relaying information to our public when it comes to jeopardizing personal privacy.

Vaccination Clinic and Community Testing
We were so excited that over 300 students, staff, and community members took advantage of our Thursday testing clinic at CHS on September 9 along with 30 community members taking part in a LACDPH vaccination clinic on Thursday as well. We stand a much greater chance of eventually creating herd immunity and mitigating this virus by encouraging a 100% vaccination rate here in Claremont. Our 12-17-year old Claremont community members continue to lead the way with 86.5% of them receiving at least one round of vaccinations. In contrast, the overall community stands at just 68.2%. Let’s encourage our friends and family to visit a Walmart, CVS, Kaiser facility, or CUSD clinic to KNOCK THIS THING OUT.

Back to School Nights
Each of our sites has held its virtual Back To School Night to welcome parents and guardians back and to provide them with information and resources to help students be successful during this time and over the course of 2021-2022. Thank you to our staff and parents for continuing to adapt to current circumstances by meeting in a safe environment.

Special Meeting of the Board of Education -- September 14, 2021
We look forward to a Special Meeting of the Board of Education this coming Tuesday, September 14 as the Board receives a report from the District Advisory Committee (DAC) on Racial Equity. The DAC is made up of three subcommittees — Academic Achievement, Hiring and Professional Development, and Safety and School Climate. Each subcommittee has worked very hard to research issues and solutions and has gathered data to help inform their recommendations. This hybrid special meeting will allow for up to 40 in-person attendees and unlimited Zoom attendees to listen in as members of the DAC present their research, findings, and recommendations to the Board.

Final Thoughts
As I walked through Costco on Tuesday evening, I quickly spotted a new rack of kid’s Halloween costumes right next to the latest LED Jack-O’-Lantern decoration. There were firefighter costumes, bright princess outfits, Batman, Storm Troopers, Ninja Turtles, and even Harry Potter scarves dangling from the display. I instantly felt some sense of happiness… joy… maybe, HOPE. Remember last year? Nobody on the road, empty streets, the sun went down alone (inspired by Don Henley). Even though we aren’t completely clear of this insidious pandemic and we continue to be concerned about the Delta and MU variants (and whatever might come next), we are making progress. AYSO kids are back practicing at schools. Teenagers are able to take driver’s training courses. RECESS IS HAPPENING!!! We can’t let our guard down and we must see this to the end, but there is hope. Hope is a powerful thing. It inspires us to do the impossible and helps us carry on during difficult times. I hope that you have a safe and renewing weekend with your loved ones.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
September 3, 2021

Good Friday evening CUSD,

Did you know the first Labor Day holiday was celebrated on Tuesday, September 5, 1882, in New York City? Today we observe Labor Day on the first Monday in September. This national holiday has become an annual celebration of the social and economic achievements of American workers. I want to start my letter with a huge “thank you” to our faculty and staff who have worked so hard to open our schools and classrooms and who have labored under the most difficult of circumstances. It was with full hearts that we witnessed thousands of Claremont students returning to our campuses for an incredible first day of school on Wednesday, September 1. Parents and students were warmly met at screening stations by principals and staff as students were welcomed onto campus. Of course, we had several teary eyes -- not only by our kindergartners but by many parents as well. As I watched the morning drop-off, I realized that many of our parents and students haven’t left each other’s side for the last 18 months.

Principals are to be commended for working so hard to not only put in the difficult work associated with opening schools but to dig even deeper with new safety protocols, major changes in normal routines like lunch, PE, and recess, navigating the difficulties of having some students remote while the majority are in-person, communicating with our parents and students, and many other big-ticket items. This behind-the-scenes work, necessary to open schools, required months of planning and execution. I would be remiss if I did not recognize District support staff for their tireless efforts in making sure our sites and staff are well cared for and have what they need to be excellent. Most in the public do not know the faces behind the scenes in our business, human resources, student support services, educational services, and service center, but these folks step up to ensure safety, security, wellness, beautification, and solvency of our great school district.

Our Board of Education returned to full in-person meetings for the first time in over a year for the September 2 meeting. While the Board has been meeting in person since late Spring, last night’s meeting was the first regular meeting of the Board where the public was invited back into the Boardroom since the beginning of the pandemic. At last night’s meeting, Board members addressed two major topics: An update on the reopening of schools including protocols and procedures related to student and staff safety, as well as a report and second public hearing to provide the community with information regarding the California Voters’ Rights Act (CVRA) and to receive public input from the public on the criteria that should be used to draw the boundaries for the five trustee areas. The next step is for the District’s demographer to provide the Board with a minimum of two proposed maps reflecting public input that the Board has or will receive. The Board will then hold a third and fourth public hearing to gather public input on the proposed maps in January and February 2022. At a subsequent meeting, the Board will make a decision on which map to adopt. Just a note that the change in the election system will not affect school attendance boundaries.

The next meeting of the Board of Education will be a special meeting on Tuesday, September 14, 2021. This meeting will be an opportunity for the Board to receive the report of the District Advisory Committee (D.A.C.) on Racial Equity and hear its recommendations and insights gained over the last year from this important work. The Board will take no action during this special meeting but will be given the opportunity to interact with members of the DAC and the public.
Regarding COVID-19 and data received from the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH), the Delta variant’s impact on County health continues on a bit of a roller coaster. In the last week, we have seen daily case rates as low as 1,900 and as high as 2,741 (Sept. 2). Thankfully, the 7-day Testing Positivity Rate continues to trend in a downward direction giving us hope that we are on our way out of the woods with the current surge. A couple of COVID-related items you should be aware of is that in addition to our Thursday testing site at Claremont High School, we hope to add a second day and time at El Roble Intermediate school. Any student or community member may access the tests at no out-of-pocket expense with results usually available within 24 hours. Additionally, we are excited to announce that we will be holding a vaccination clinic at Claremont High School on September 9 from 2:00 to 6:00 PM. Anyone with a birthday on or before September 9, 2009, will be eligible for this no-cost Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Here is the link for reserving your vaccination on the 9th (https://forms.gle/Y5dfBq2B7o3jNEZ7bA). A second clinic may be added in the coming days depending on the need. We encourage our staff and community to become 100% vaccinated.

One of the surest ways that we will put this pandemic in the rearview mirror is for all of us to become fully vaccinated as soon as we are able or allowed to be. In just the last week, Claremont 12-17-year-olds (https://bit.ly/3DNKyiI) have increased their vaccination rates from 82.7% to 85.9% -- a really great increase with the County average for 12-17-year-olds hovering at 62.4%. If we could get our 18-49 age group moving forward like our pre-teens and teens have, we would have much greater assurances that outbreaks will be fewer and breakthroughs less serious. A peer-reviewed study (https://cbsn.ws/3n2klXu) just released in the U.K. using large-scale, real-world data has shown that “...people who contracted the coronavirus despite being fully vaccinated were almost twice as likely to have no symptoms at all, compared to the wider population.” For those who are vaccinated who do experience symptoms of the virus, “...the odds of a fully-vaccinated person who does catch COVID-19 ending up hospitalized with severe symptoms were reduced by more than two-thirds compared to an unvaccinated coronavirus patient. The survey also found that the risk of breakthrough patients suffering from long-COVID, with symptoms lasting more than a month, was cut in half by full vaccination.”

We will continue to look for ways to offer our students, families, and community cost-effective services that increase our ability to fight this deadly pandemic, as well as solutions for quickly identifying and mitigating possible outbreaks. We ask for your help and support in keeping our schools as safe as possible by continuing to encourage mask-wearing wherever and whenever possible, frequent hand washing and sanitizing, and encouraging smart social gatherings with sufficient social distancing in place. We would also encourage you to report positive test results from outside of school hours (i.e., sports team, club, scouts, church, etc.) that might lead to outbreaks within our walls. The sooner we are aware of positive tests of individuals, the better able we will be to contact trace and quarantine affected individuals.

With that being said, I truly want to wish for you a restful, fun, and adventurous Labor Day weekend. I hope you have a wonderful time with family and friends and that you enjoy some amazing food and warm sunshine.

Best regards,

Dr. Jeff Wilson, Superintendent
Dear USD Family and Friends,

It is with a sense of great expectation that I write my final letter prior to the opening of schools on Wednesday, September 1 -- the expectation that we are ready to safely welcome our students back, the expectation that teachers and staff are excited to meet their students and get back to the routine of “doing school” in person, and the expectation that students are ready to be back with friends and to reconnect to school. With just five days left before students return, I want to update you on key information and data points.

In Thursday morning’s briefing to Superintendents, Dr. Barbara Ferrer of the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) addressed the current state of the COVID-19 pandemic in Los Angeles County. She noted that the Delta variant is more infectious and seems to be impacting children more than previous strains. Clearly, some parents, students, and staff are anxious about schools reopening and the potential for outbreaks. Data in L.A. County indicates that currently as of August 25 there were 12 total reported outbreaks (3 or more cases) in a county of 81 districts, nearly 2,000 public schools, and many hundreds of private schools. The twelve outbreaks are as follows: 7 cheer squads, 1 football team, 2 elementary schools, 1 children’s center, and 1 day-care. The new sports protocols, released earlier this week, look to decrease the already small percentage of schools facing outbreak shutdowns by requiring weekly testing for student-athletes in certain sports, and prior to competition.

Dr. Ferrer emphasized that vaccinated teenagers do much better than non-vaccinated teenagers regarding protection against serious illness, hospitalization rates, and recovery time. In a congratulatory email from the LACDPH on Thursday, we (CUSD leadership) were informed that “...the vaccination rate in 12 to 17-year-old children in the city of Claremont is 82.7%.” I confirmed that number by going to the COVID-19 Vaccinations Dashboard. This is fantastic news; the countywide average for the 12-17 age group is only 61%. A huge “THANK YOU” to our parents and staff for encouraging Claremont teens to get vaccinated. We are not, however, resting on our laurels with student vaccinations. I have a meeting scheduled with LACDPH on August 30 to set up vaccine clinics at our secondary school sites in the coming days. We are closely monitoring developments related to the clinical trials and future emergency use authorization of vaccines for the 5-11 age group sometime in the fall or early winter.

On the CUSD front, we have reached an agreement with the Claremont Faculty Association (CFA) and with Chapter #200 of the California School Employees Association (CSEA) regarding working conditions. The Memos of Understanding also contain agreements regarding staff vaccinations. All CUSD employees are required to present proof of the COVID-19 vaccination or submit to weekly COVID testing starting the first week of school, a full month ahead of Governor Newsom’s October 15 deadline. CUSD also has engaged in a valuable partnership with the Upland-Ontario Medical Clinic, which has provided our athlete COVID testing since last year. We will be expanding that partnership with the clinic to conduct the employee testing at all our school sites and provide voluntary weekly testing for all students, staff, and families at Claremont High School on Thursdays. We are working
with the clinic on a possible second testing site and/or time for added safety and convenience. We are also working to increase the percentage of our staff who are vaccinated. As the Human Resources Department collects staff vaccination status this week, we will soon be able to report to the community the percentages of staff who are vaccinated.

As we open for school next Wednesday, please know that we will continue to work with our County and State offices of Public Health and Education, with our teachers, staff, and bargaining units, and with our Board of Education to create and maintain a clean, safe and welcoming environment for all of our students. Our teachers, principals, counselors, office managers, health professionals, nutritionists, custodians, paraprofessionals, administration, and support staff will work in unison to enforce the indoor masking requirements and will encourage safe practices including handwashing, maintaining social distancing, self-screening for exposures or symptoms, voluntary weekly testing, using open spaces to the greatest extent possible, and utilizing air purifiers and HVAC filtration to provide the best possible environment for learning. We will also follow LACDPH guidance with regard to outdoor activities and events.

If you have specific questions about your school site opening plan, please visit individual school websites for information or contact numbers.

Warmest regards,

Dr. Jeff Wilson
Superintendent of Schools
August 20, 2021

Good Friday Evening,

At the end of the 2020-2021 school year, spirits were high as we held out hope that the threat of COVID infection and quarantine might be left in the past. The forced stay-at-home orders, closures of classrooms, canceled events, drive-through graduations, restaurant, and retail closures, empty stadiums and concert halls, and deserted downtown streets seemed to be part of a not-so-fun past.

Yet, as we sit here today readying our campuses to open on September 1, the Delta Variant is raging through California causing disruptions in schools and classrooms that have already opened. Mixed messages surrounding testing, vaccinations, and masks continue to emerge from Sacramento and downtown Los Angeles as a political firestorm envelops the Governor’s office. Local guidance and community health conditions change by the day -- sometimes, even by the hour. One of the benefits of Claremont Unified opening at a later date than surrounding school districts is that we have been able to watch and learn from others as they have opened for the fall semester.

What we have heard and learned from colleagues is that there have been immediate challenges in keeping classroom doors open. Multiple positive tests and COVID outbreaks have hamstrung efforts to keep all kids in their classrooms. Quarantines are becoming routine while the classroom models proposed by the State are limiting and inflexible. We have also been told that enrollment is down throughout the area with nervous parents keeping students at home and frustrated families relocating elsewhere.

Here in Claremont, I am happy to report that our Cabinet and leadership team continue to spend countless hours every day staying on top of guidance from both the State and County departments of public health and education. Here is what we know as of August 20, 2021:

- All CUSD schools will open for in-person instruction on Wednesday, September 1, 2021.
- K-12 students and adults are required to mask indoors, with exemptions per the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) face mask guidance.
- Masks are optional outdoors for all in K-12 school settings (unless that order changes).
- Proof of vaccination will be required of all school staff as school opens, well ahead of the Governor’s October 15 deadline. The Governor has allowed for weekly testing of non-vaccinated personnel.
- We will continue to observe and enforce all safety protocols under the current guidance from the CDPH and Los Angeles Department of Public Health (LADPH).
• We will provide free polymerase chain reaction (PCR) COVID testing for staff, parents, and students on Thursday afternoons at Claremont High School.
• Food service will continue for students with safely wrapped, pre-packaged items offered at no cost to all students.
• Surface cleaning and sanitizing will continue to be a focus of our school staff to help mitigate the spread of any potential virus.
• Air purifiers with HEPA filtration have been added to each classroom and common area, as well as higher-rated filters on our heating and air conditioning units.
• An optional CALM (Claremont Alternative Learning Model) independent study program will be offered (deadline to sign-up is Monday, August 23) for families opting to remain in a remote learning environment.

As Superintendent, I would be less than transparent if I did not tell you that the impossible dilemmas our parents, students, and teachers feel right now -- to weigh the physical health of our children over their academic, social, or emotional growth -- keeps me awake at night. What breaks my heart is that we all know that some of our most vulnerable students suffered the greatest losses during school closures last year.

With only two current options available for educating our children and with the current increase in active COVID cases in L.A. County, I want to assure you that we are keeping the overall well-being of our students and staff front-and-center with each of our decisions. Your Board of Education cares deeply about student and staff health and safety and will continue to make and support student-centered decisions.

As has been the case, I will continue to keep you informed of changes and shifts in policy and practice. If you have specific questions about how your school site will welcome students back, feel free to contact their front office. We will shortly be posting on our website the most commonly asked questions from our Community Meeting with our best efforts at honestly and accurately answering those questions.

Until next week, be well and enjoy your friends and family.

Warmest regards,

Jeff Wilson, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
August 13, 2021

Happy Friday Claremont! With 19 days left before school opens on September 1, we want to continue to share as much information as possible about our school reopening plans. Know that we are committed to a full physical reopening of our sites but ask for your patience as we continue to adjust past practices and adapt to required and recommended guidance from State and County health departments and the Los Angeles County Office of Education.

I am excited to announce that we will be holding a CUSD 21/22 Reopening of Schools community meeting on Wednesday, August 18, 2021, from 6:00 - 7:30 p.m. The purpose of Wednesday’s presentation is to provide the community with the latest updates from the California State and Los Angeles County Departments of Public Health and to address as many questions and concerns as possible. Here is the link for Wednesday’s Zoom community meeting. Cabinet will also provide a CUSD School Reopening report at the August 19, 2021, Board of Education regular meeting.

School websites are being updated this week and next to include pertinent information related to the opening of schools including screening protocols and other important information as we approach September 1. While this may be a very challenging time for many of our students and families, it is important to understand that as a public agency funded by State, Federal, and County sources, we MUST follow regulations around in-person learning, and the safety protocols required for a safe reopening.

In Thursday morning’s semi-weekly Superintendent briefing with Dr. Ferrer, the mood was best described as “somber.” With the current surge of the Delta Variant daily case numbers and hospitalizations, health data is starting to look similar to what we experienced last February (“Purple Tier”). Though the 3 or 6-foot Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LADPH) social distance requirement is no longer in effect, we will be asking our teaching staff to “do their best” in providing the greatest social distance possible in classrooms to mitigate as much as possible the risk of transmission, in conjunction with masking and air filtration.

As reported, on Wednesday, August 11, Governor Newsom became the first governor to mandate vaccinations for all state employees including teachers (see Newsom makes California the first state to require teacher vaccines or COVID tests). The Governor did leave an option for twice-weekly testing of those who are not vaccinated. Newsom’s order is supported by the California Teachers Association (CTA) and endorsed by CTA President Tony Boyd.

In other news from around CUSD, we have now set a date for the District Advisory Committee (DAC) to present the Equity Impact Plan to the CUSD Board of Education (BOE) on Tuesday, September 14. The committee has diligently worked over the past year to bring this report forward. The DAC will present their findings to the Board and community within the construct of three themes -- Staffing, Safety/School Climate, and Academic Achievement. This special meeting of the BOE will serve as an opportunity for the Board and community to hear and digest the report. It is not the intention of the BOE to take action on any of the recommendations at the September 14 meeting except for identifying the next steps in the process.

As we move towards opening our schools, we recognize that students and families are approaching the new year with some mixture of emotions including excitement, joy, expectations, anxiety, and fear. Some students
might be “chomping at the bit” to resume friendships, attend games, concerts, and dances, or just be at recess or in a classroom with other students. Others may feel overwhelmed by the idea of going to a new school, rising to a new grade level, or possibly being exposed to a stubborn virus.

We want you to know that, while the decisions we make are based on the latest guidance and mandates from state and county agencies, we are truly approaching the opening of school with the greatest care of our students in mind. Our principals, teachers, and staff are committed to optimizing our learning environments while keeping kids safe and well. Our maintenance & operations team is focused on creating and maintaining the safest of environments. Our district leadership and support teams are working endless hours to communicate and provide the resources needed by our teachers, counselors, and student support services teams to ensure the well-being of our students. Our Board of Education is committed to a thorough study of the issues of reopening, including issues of equity and inclusion, to help guide me as I lead this amazing school district into a very bright future. With your help, 2021-2022 promises to be one of the finest years in our long and storied history.

Best to your family and enjoy your weekend.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wilson, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
August 6, 2021

Good Friday evening to our students, parents, guardians, teachers, staff, and community. I hope this hot stretch of August finds you well and thriving with your family and loved ones. Having just completed my first month here in Claremont, I can report that the CUSD leadership team is diligently working to prepare for the safe opening of schools on September 1.

Next week, CUSD principals and leaders will be meeting for two full days to coordinate plans for an amazing 2021-2022 school year -- one filled with fun traditions, spirited activities, thrilling performances, and rigorous academics. Most importantly, CUSD is planning for a complete year of our students physically attending school and connecting with their friends, counselors, teachers, and staff.

On July 28, 2021, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health revised Appendix T-1, Reopening Protocols for K-12 Schools: Appendix T1, providing L.A. County school districts with additional guidance for the reopening of schools for the 2021-2022 school year. The revisions include:

- The State of California will require that masks be worn by students and adults indoors in school settings when in the presence of students, regardless of vaccination status. “Customary exceptions” apply to this mandate. Masks remain optional in outdoor settings for both students and adults.
- Consistent with CDPH guidance from the 2020-2021 school year, districts must develop and implement local protocols to enforce the mask requirements.
- Students who do not comply with universal mask-wearing guidance may be placed in an alternative learning setting like our CALM (Claremont Alternative Learning Model) program.
- Physical distancing strategies, while not required, are still recommended as long as they do not interfere with full-time attendance for all students. It is important to note that without universal masking, we would only be able to implement hybrid schedules as we did last year.
- Mitigation strategies, like improved air quality, regular handwashing, PPE, contact tracing, quarantines, and regular cleaning remain recommended to help keep our students safe and our schools open.
- CDPH will determine no later than November 1, 2021, whether to update mask requirements or recommendations.

While the July 28 guidance does provide some level of clarity, there are still many questions to be answered by the State and County of Los Angeles regarding the opening of schools. As we plan for next year, we will keep the health, safety, and well-being of students, staff, and families at the forefront.
CUSD continues to plan for a traditional learning model of full-time, in-person instruction while adhering to the requirements of federal, state, and county protocols. Families who wish to exercise the option to enroll pupils in independent study during the 2021–2022 school year are encouraged to explore CUSD’s CALM program. Please note that the CALM program will not replicate the remote and hybrid study programs from 2020-2021 (CORE and CHAMP). Education Code exemptions that allowed for the CORE and CHAMP programs expired on June 30. Independent Study (CUSD’s CALM program) is the only program available to California public schools for students who cannot return to in-person instruction for the 2021-2022 school year. It is very important for any family considering the CALM program to understand those differences -- the types of support provided by classroom teachers; the increased reliance on parents/guardians to co-teach their children; and the parameters for returning to in-person learning.

For families desiring to enroll in the CALM learning option, registration information is provided in the following link https://bit.ly/3CnDsAK. We are asking that registration information be completed as soon as possible, but no later than Monday, August 23. With the opening of school, a little over three weeks away, CUSD leaders need to finalize plans for classes including student site placement, the addition or placement of staff, instructional materials, and technology support.

We are planning a Community Meeting for Wednesday, August 18, 2021, from 6:00-7:00 p.m. to provide reopening information for our students and families, and to address questions and concerns from the community. A link for that Zoom meeting will be provided on our website next week. Additionally, we are preparing an FAQ document to address many of the questions that parents and/or students may have leading up to the opening of school. The FAQ will be available well in advance of the Community Meeting on the 18th. During this time, we will continue to listen to our students, teachers, staff, parents, and guardians as we navigate the delicate issues surrounding PPE, social distancing, and the protocols of cleanliness and sanitation. Thank you for your support during this protracted and difficult time in our history.

That’s it for this week. I look forward to communicating with you regularly as we approach the opening of our schools and beyond.

Warmest regards,

Jeff Wilson, Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
July 23, 2021

Dear CUSD Parents, Guardians, and Staff:

I hope you are having a restful and adventurous summer with your family and friends. I wanted to provide you with information emerging from both federal and state agencies regarding COVID 19 on the latest surge in cases and protocols for reopening schools in the fall including new legislation (SB 130) addressing independent study for students who are considered medically fragile.

Agency Reports: On July 9, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published its updated recommendations for K-12 schools. On July 12, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) followed with updated COVID-19 guidance for schools. The latest State guidelines provide modified recommendations designed to provide a high level of safety in fully re-opening schools in CDPH health directives. I have provided links to agencies who either directly or indirectly influence, enforce, or inform public agencies regarding guidelines and protocols associated with the pandemic.

- California Department of Public Health  https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/contact_us.aspx
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health  http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/contactus.htm
- Los Angeles County District 1 Supervisor -- Hilda Solis  firstdistrict@bos.lacounty.gov
  Read  Hilda Solis’ statement on temporary masking mandates
- ALL L.A. County Supervisors  executiveoffice@bos.lacounty.gov

“The Surge” - No doubt, you have been hearing of a “surge” in new cases here in L.A. County. A couple of key indicators substantiate the reality of the uptick in new cases:

- On June 1, 2021, the 7-day daily average percent positivity rate was 0.4. On July 14, 2021, that rate grew to 3.84.
- The cumulative 7-day case rates have risen across all age groups. Here are samples of various populations:
  - Ages 5-11 – June 1 - 9.63; July 14 - 53.42
  - Ages 12-17 – June 1 - 11.12; July 14 - 64.5
  - Ages 30-49 – June 1 - 13.58; July 14 - 116.46
School Reopening, SB 130 and Independent Study

While we look forward to welcoming all our students back to campuses in September, we also are aware that the State has directed us to provide accommodations for those who are unable to attend in person due to medical conditions or concerns. The California Department of Education just released general guidelines on the revised independent study requirements for families that cannot return for in-person instruction. If you feel that your student is at risk to return for in-person instruction, you may want to consider our Claremont Alternative Learning Model (CALM). We will be sending out an interest survey with information about the CALM independent study program next week.

I just want to thank you for standing with us in supporting our students as we work with you to create a safe and healthy environment where all students are able to learn and flourish through in-person instruction. CUSD will continue to share information with the staff and community as it is provided by CDC/CDPH/LACDPH, updated legislation, and/or other governmental agencies.

Have a great weekend and be well.

Sincerely,

Jeff Wilson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
July 8, 2021

Dear Claremont Community,

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter to you at the start of my tenure here in Claremont as Superintendent of Schools. Claremont Unified School District has a stellar reputation in the education community and the unified work of the Board of Education, leadership team and faculty and staff, has made CUSD a destination district for many families. My wife Corrine and I cannot wait to immerse ourselves in the Claremont community and look forward to many opportunities to get to know our students, parents, faculty and staff.

As Superintendent, I am thrilled that our Vision and Mission statements focus solely on the value that a CUSD education should provide each of our students:

- Each CUSD student is recognized and valued, inspired to be a life-long learner, and prepared to be a contributing member of our global society.
- Each CUSD student is equipped academically, prepared socially, and empowered to participate and thrive in a challenging, diverse world.

The core values that support our mission and vision center on the qualities of intellectual curiosity, creativity, individuality, mental and physical health, kindness, dignity, respect, equity, honesty, integrity and transparency. For the last 10 years, I have been focused on the work of providing every student with an individualized approach to learning that is student centered, emphasizes student voice & choice, challenges assumptions about traditional learning spaces, places of learning and timeframes for learning, and strengthening programs that connect students to school in meaningful ways. I am thrilled that CUSD has been focused on a whole child approach to learning for many years and that our programs supporting the arts, athletics and activities are equal in importance to the outstanding academic program we offer.

Having completed one of the most difficult years in the history of American education, I look forward to an exciting return of full in-person teaching and learning in 2021-22. We have just heard from Sacramento in AB 130 that an independent study option will be required next year for K-12 students if a student's health would be put at risk by returning to in-person instruction. We anticipate that most students and teachers will return to our school sites in the Fall. Details of what a new Independent Study Program will look like have yet to be provided by the State, but our team is working through different possible scenarios based on what we know today. We will soon communicate a basic framework for the Fall and survey the parent community to better understand the needs of our students and families.

As we begin this journey together, I look forward to learning more about the students and families of Claremont Unified and of the community itself. I cannot wait to greet students, teachers and staff as they return to campus in September for, what promises to be, a year of renewal and opportunity. Until then, please do not hesitate to reach out and say “hello.”

Warmest Regards,

Jeff Wilson, Superintendent