

Statement for December 8, 2020 School Board Meeting*

Over the past several weeks, we have received a multitude of emails, texts, and calls from parents and teachers with very diverse perspectives. We know that emotions are running high right now and that there is much frustration within our community. However, we ask for everyone to join us tonight and in the weeks ahead, to treat each other with empathy, kindness, grace, and respect, and most importantly, to assume good will with each other.

In the spirit of full transparency and as context for our discussion tonight, I will read the letter we emailed to all teachers and staff yesterday in response to concerns and questions raised in emails sent in recent days.

December 7, 2020

Dear Kentfield Teachers and Staff,

Over the weekend, we received emails from many of you that reflected serious concerns about returning to full hybrid instruction at the time of a stay-at-home order. Rest assured that we have carefully read every email and taken them all to heart.

At this time, we want to express our appreciation for your continued commitment to our Kentfield students through this incredibly difficult time. We also want to address the three main concerns of your collective emails and provide some insight into our considerations as a board.

Despite differences of opinion on some of the topics below, we remain confident that our shared goal of doing what is best for our students

while keeping everyone safe in our school community is our guiding principle in this unprecedented school year.

1. Stay-at-Home Order and Schools

The KSD is fully committed to following local and state Public Health guidance in relation to school operations. [Governor Newsom's December 3rd Regional Stay at Home Order](#) does not modify existing state guidance regarding K-12 schools. Per state guidance, if schools already opened for in-person instruction through an elementary school waiver or while their county was in a less restrictive tier when placed in a Regional Stay Home Order, they may continue offering in-person instruction. The Kentfield School District opened for in-person instruction on November 12th, which permits our schools to continue this model of instruction as planned for today.

As a point of reference, per [local Public Health data](#), Bacich and Kent are among the 81% of schools currently offering in-person teaching in Marin (defined by having at least 10% or greater in person). The majority of schools are successfully and safely doing in-person instruction in various models since September, including five days/week with student cohorts of 12+.

On December 4th, Marin Public Health issued a [press release](#) about the implementation of the state stay-at-home order and their guidance reiterated the state's provision about schools staying open for in-person learning during the stay-at-home order. We will continue to closely monitor and follow guidance from local and state public health in relation to school operations.

You have our firm commitment that we will quickly adjust course as needed to operate safely per local and state public health recommendations in the future.

2. Compliance of the MOU and Cohort Size

Per our [December 2nd board community communication](#), it is the KSD's position to follow the MOU as it stands and move to Phase 5 effective today, Monday, December 7th. KSD's position is not a unilateral implementation as a mutually agreed upon date to transition from Phase 4 to 5 is not required under the MOU and the District will continue to follow all provisions of the MOU.

We understand there is a desire from KTA to remain in cohorts of 8 because of a concern for increased safety risk. As described above, our cohort size of 12 is in accordance with Marin Public Health guidance, and is in compliance with their [30 Point Site-Based Instruction Safety Plan](#).

Most importantly from our perspective, restricting cohorts to no larger than eight students severely limits our ability to deliver school-based instruction to our students and compromises their learning.

This realization came into sharp focus for us during the two weeks in November when we had cohorts of no greater than eight. For example, the schedule that resulted for our youngest elementary students provided only 2 days of in-person instruction every 10 days. This model prevented students and teachers from developing routines and a predictable schedule that is a necessary component of students' social and emotional well being and what is developmentally appropriate. Furthermore, the November data showed us that during

the two weeks of hybrid instruction, approximately 57% of cohorts had 4 or less students at Bacich, while approximately 30% of cohorts had 4 or less students at Kent.

On a separate topic, the KSD will make the necessary adjustments to ensure physical distancing compliance with the MOU, which may include using alternate learning spaces such as specialist classrooms, tents, gymnasiums, etc. while we continue to discuss how to adjust the perimeter language in the current MOU.

As you know, the KTA expressed a different interpretation of the MOU and advised they may file an unfair labor practice charge and grievance against the KSD.

3. Our Legal and Moral Obligation to KSD Students

As mentioned in our [December 2nd board community communication](#), we feel legally obligated and also believe it is in the best interest of our students' learning and social emotional well-being, to safely transition to a Full Hybrid Learning Program today. This perspective is supported by guidance from Marin County Public Health and by [local school data](#).

Furthermore, [Senate Bill 98](#) states that Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) must offer in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible. Distance Learning may be offered as a result of an order or guidance from a state public health officer or a local public health officer. Based on the current state and local orders related to schools discussed above, neither the state nor local public health officers have ordered or guided school operations to transition to a Distance Learning model. From a board perspective, the KSD is legally obligated and

shall move forward with continuing Hybrid Instruction since we believe it is in the best interest of our students.

In closing, among us board members, we have nine children currently attending Bacich and Kent, so all of these issues are extremely personal for us as well. None of us take these decisions lightly. We know that these are incredibly stressful times and we all feel stretched thin. We appreciate that so many of you took the time to share your critical perspectives, and hope that you will continue to do so since they are always valued and welcome.

Finally, we wanted to let you know about an event that might interest you. Tomorrow at 11 AM, Marin Public Health Officer, Dr. Matt Willis and Deputy Public Health Officer, Dr. Lisa Santora will host a [Community Conversation via zoom](#) that will also be recorded. They plan to provide an update on COVID-19 in Marin County, and an overview of the Governor's regional stay at home order and its impact on Marin.

With respect,

Davina Goldwasser
Sarah Killingsworth
Heather McPhail Sridharan
David Riedel
Quoc Tran

* We want to sincerely apologize for the data error in this December 7th letter to teachers/staff related to the total number of students and teachers currently engaged in in-person teaching across Marin. We can assure you that there was no intention to mislead anyone. Instead, it was an honest misinterpretation of the [data dashboard](#)

presented by Marin Public Health. The letter now reflects correct data.