

School start delayed a week to Aug. 31; parents can bring concerns to town hall meetings via Zoom on Aug. 11

August 8, 2020



Parents will have a chance to voice concerns and suggestions at two town hall meetings Aug. 11 at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. via Zoom at <https://dncoe.zoom.us/j/91987208400>.

The Del Norte Unified School District has pushed back the start of school to Aug. 31 to allow more training time for staff.

All students will now participate in distance learning from that date through Sept. 11, or Phase 1 of the district's continuum of education. The district then plans to transition into Phase 2 of its back-to-school plan, allowing small groups of special needs and at-risk student on campus.

The administration expects to move students in grade K-8 to Phase 3 by Oct. 5, which is a combination of two days on-campus and three days off. Meanwhile, Del Norte High School students will remain in Phase 2,

which is distance learning except for small groups of special needs and at-risk students who will be schooled on campus.

Superintendent Jeff Harris gave the new recommendation to the Board of Trustees Thursday, Aug. 6, which they approved.

He explained the new plan had less to do with current COVID-19 levels in the county and more with extra training staff still needed.

“There is a truckload of training, a truckload of plans that need to be written, plus time to get technology out, which all combined to create perfect storm,” Harris said.

He added ongoing and shifting guidance from the state requires additional time for COVID-19 safety mitigation planning and training.

Harris outlined the new timeline for August:

Aug. 17 students receive ChromeBooks for online, distance learning

Aug. 19 certificated staff return to work

Aug. 21 classified staff return to work

Aug. 24-28 training for everyone on distance learning and curriculum.

Harris added that during this time, families will have to familiarize their children with how to access online lessons.

“Kids aren’t going to be sitting in a classroom with the teacher showing them how to do it,” Harris told the trustees Thursday. “Training, outreach, prep are all going to be wrapped up in the first eight days.”

Moving the start date back requires the administration to adjust the 2020-21 calendar. Harris said that will incur additional personnel costs, which the DNUSD could use federal COVID-19 Learning Loss Mitigation dollars to cover. In addition, the administration will have to renegotiate with the teachers and certificated staff bargaining units. Harris said the administration is looking at moving two professional development days from November and March to the beginning of the year to make up for pushing back the start date.

“We’ve not done anything at this point to extend the school year or impact student vacation time,” he added.

Harris said the administration is still working out how to get Internet access to about 700 students in families without access. Plans also still need finalizing to meet federal and state requirements for special needs students. Their parents will have a chance to voice concerns and suggestions at two town hall meetings Aug. 11 at 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. via Zoom at <https://dncoe.zoom.us/j/91987208400>.