

Del Norte schools to remain open

December 4, 2020



While the surge in COVID-19 cases is making a lot of changes necessary in Del Norte County, there is one major exception - local schools.

Earlier this week, Jeff Harris, superintendent of Del Norte Unified School District, announced in-school classes would continue.

"Under the guidelines, our schools can and will remain open just as they have since October," Harris said. "We've also been working collaboratively with the Del Norte Department of Public Health to ensure our schools and our processes are in compliance with state guidelines."

Harris said the district was determined to keep schools open, but he said to keep in-person classes available, parents and students must do their part.

"If your child is symptomatic or has been in close contact with a known COVID case, please keep them home," Harris said. "Remember, every day your child should be doing the daily screening. By the same

token, if an adult in the home is symptomatic or has been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, we highly recommend keeping your student home."

Harris said there are two reasons to close schools in state guidelines. The one teachers, parents and students have control over is limiting COVID in schools. If any school reaches 5 percent of students with COVID cases in a two-week period, the school would be forced to close to in-person education. If 25 percent of schools in a district close, the entire district will be forced to shut down to in-person classes.

Harris said while the district wants to limit COVID exposure, he also wanted to remind parents that students must be in class, whether in person or virtually.

"We want to make sure your children are in school," he said. "We know they'll have to be gone if they are ill. However, remember school attendance is required five days a week."

Harris said whether in person or at home, students need to be in class, engage with teachers and participate as much as they can.

The district also announced a few other changes.

Students who travel outside the area, whether for times like Thanksgiving or other activities, will be asked to quarantine at home for 14 days before returning to in-person learning. In addition, kindergarten through second-grade students, who are not required to wear masks by state regulations, are being asked to this week and next. Harris said he expects the state rules to change with even the youngest kids required to wear masks.

Harris said he understands there are challenges, but he said teachers and administrators at Del Norte USD are working hard to keep schools open and to provide the best learning opportunities for all students.