

School district working out final details as full school calendar adopted

August 18, 2020



The Del Norte Unified School District calendar was officially adopted by the board of trustees Aug. 13, giving students a full 180 days of instruction.

Superintendent Jeff Harris told the trustees that staff will now have from Aug. 19-28 to prepare for the Aug. 31 start date. That includes contacting families, preparing lesson plans and training on safety protocols in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, students will officially log onto district supplied ChromeBooks and other devices Aug. 31 for the first day of distance learning.

“August 31 it’s going to be on, but it’s going to be on virtually. School is happening on that day,” Harris said. “There are going to be challenges. We’re issuing devices to all students — we’re going to have to do a lot of preliminary work over the next two weeks about how to log onto the devices, about how to get to the programs the students are going to be using. Teachers are going to help with that. District staff are going to help with that.”

All students will start the year in distance learning through Sept. 11. The district then transitions into Phase 2 which features bringing small groups of special needs and at-risk students on campus as needed.

Then on Oct. 5, students in kindergarten through eighth grade will transition into Phase 3, which is a blended learning of two days on campus and three days off in distance learning. Meanwhile, Del Norte High School students will remain in Phase 2.

Human Resources Director Coleen Parker explained that distance learning will be different than the crisis learning the district was forced to implement when campus were closed in March. She said different

attendance requirements must be met, teachers will track how much work their students must do, how their students will submit their work and how much of their students' grade their assignments will be worth.

Parker said to accommodate the Aug. 31 starting date, the following days will now be full school days:

Nov. 2 and March 22, formerly professional development days

Nov. 23, the Monday before Thanksgiving

May 28, Friday before Memorial Day weekend

June 11, formerly the final day of school.

Parker explained the revised calendar requires certificated staff to work an additional two days, adding \$181,920 in salaries. The classified staff would also have to work an additional two to five days, adding an additional cost to the district, not to exceed \$256,482.

Harris said distance learning attendance is mandatory and will be based upon whether students are turning in work.

"Students who do not participate, which means they are not completing the work, will be identified as a chronic absentee," Harris explained, adding the student could then be brought to the attention of the School Attendance Review Board.

Several questions the community has expressed to the trustees still need to be worked out, such as how students in daycare would get adequate access to distance learning and how to get students without Internet access to lessons, possibly through phone calls.