

Del Norte High School proposes starting with all distance learning

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Del Norte High School students will start the 2020-21 school year under a full distance learning plan if the administration's proposal is adopted.

Superintendent Jeff Harris asked parents to weigh in on the proposal during his weekly Facebook video update Aug. 3. The School Board is expected to take action on the proposal at a special meeting at 1 p.m. tomorrow, Aug. 6.

If the plan is approved, students will begin the school year in Phase 1 of the DNUSD's continuum of learning, Harris explained. About three weeks later, teachers will evaluate which students will benefit from physical attendance on campus in the afternoons, rolling them into what the district calls Phase 2. This next phase features distance learning in the morning and small cohorts of students attending in person at the school in the afternoons.

“Six weeks in, they’ll reevaluate the system and adjust as needed to better meet the needs of students,” Harris said.

Meanwhile, much of the rest the school district (elementary and middle school) will start school in Phase 3, with two days of in-person learning and three days of distance learning.

A work group of administrators, students, teachers and parents worked on the high school proposal. They discarded the two-on, three-off and AM/PM schedules because those would bring more than 500 students in the building — and approximately 17 students in each classroom — at any given time.

“This would create a challenging, and potentially unsafe environment with regards to physical distancing,” the work group wrote. “DNHS classes aren’t self-contained; creating cohorts with the same schedule (six periods) would lead to exponential variations.”

Harris clarified the difference between the planned distance learning and the crisis learning the district was forced to cobble together during the shutdown.

“For those of you that were dissatisfied with crisis learning, and there were many of you and justifiably so at the time, distance learning is different,” Harris said. “Actual class times, actual interactions with a teacher live in the content area, actually using curriculum – math, English, science, history, all of our classes – will be available to your child. They will work as if they were in the classroom, because they are in the classroom, it just happens to be virtual instead of in person.”

He said parents can read the proposal itself online at <https://bit.ly/3kd70Ic> and the rationale and background at <https://bit.ly/2DkgPDz>.

The high school is still exploring the needs and possibilities for its special education population.

Information regarding Chromebook check-out, textbook check-out and schedules will be available within the next two weeks.

To help facilitate the use of technology for all students heading back to school, Harris also said first-day are packets will be mailed out to families this week with important forms to be completed.

Harris said the first-day packets will include a preaddressed, postage-paid envelope to mail it back to the administration without having to worry about dropping it off.