

June 25, 2020

Superintendent Dr. Jesus F. Jara's Opening Statement - Reopening Plan Presentation

The job of a parent is one of the most challenging and rewarding jobs anyone can take on during the course of their life. The desire to keep your children safe, happy and healthy moves into the core of your very existence the moment you hold that little one in your arms for the first time. And, it changes your perspective on what it means to be a protector of all children. A reality that truly hits home as I stand with the care of 320,000 children entrusted to me by thousands of parents and guardians in our Valley.

I want to thank our students, families, educators, Board of School Trustees, and members of our community regarding our collective efforts to educate our students during school closures as a result of COVID-19. As a community, we have faced immense challenges and obstacles and have proven to be a stronger, united team by defying these obstacles together.

For the past few months, this district, alongside the rest of the global community affected by COVID-19, has faced one of the toughest ordeals ever. The sudden shutdown of almost every facet of life - retail, banking, entertainment, some medical facilities, and yes, school - all over the world, has shaken the foundation of our lives. Getting back to a place of normalcy will not be an easy process, but it's one we have to work towards with thoughtfulness and patience. My focus is getting our children back on track with their educational goals and we need the help of the entire community to get there. Goals that we cannot ignore even as we continue to try to understand what this virus means for our lives well into the future. But the safety of our children and staff is of the utmost importance.

The plan that our team will be sharing tonight is not optimal, but it is sound. In January, an entire country was brought to a standstill due to a virus that wreaked havoc across our world, so this unconventional plan isn't an educational structure that is conducive to long term positive outcomes, but it is a plan that will ensure our students have an educational future. Now, let me be clear, urban public education was already in a crisis! The world just ignored the harsh truth and this unfortunate pandemic pulled back the veil on the bleak and dire issues our students face and the inequities that we faced in our urban schools. Our plan was guided by educational experts and we used mandatory guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and follows the guidelines and restrictions of Nevada's Phase 2 requirements. The reopening of schools plan takes all learners into consideration, especially our students with special needs and ELL students, and it takes into account the health and safety of our staff at school sites. I value the input of the Board of Trustees and the input of the community. Therefore, I

pushed the team to bring our recommendation forward as soon as possible to provide everyone time to process and refine our thinking. Returning our students to schools is a community challenge; it will take all of us to do what is best for our students.

None of us could have ever imagined that this is the world in which we would currently live. As businesses are reopening and getting people back to work, we understand that the approach that we've chosen will make it tough on parents who don't have child care options during the day. We live in a community that operates 24 hours and I understand the challenges that we are facing. I want to assure our parents that we understand your concerns and we are working with our partners to try to find solutions.

Time is of the essence! Our principals need information ASAP! As a matter of fact, today is too late - but we have been waiting for decisions to be made that are out of our control! Our school leaders are already under an intense amount of pressure with a nearly impossible timeline to plan, prepare, and implement a plan for instruction to serve our students. At this time, we still do not have any information from the State regarding our budget; therefore, we are building plans of which we have definitive information regarding our potential budget. We must lead with a sense of urgency. Our students are depending on us.