



May 27, 2020

Dear Grimmway Schools Faculty and Staff,

As we begin to wind down the current school year, I want to make sure to note just how impressive your work has been these past few months as we were forced to shift our entire program into a distance learning model – in a matter of weeks. The program that has emerged since has maintained student learning, while also ensuring that our scholars remain connected to their classroom and school communities. The feedback from our families was possible due to the talent, grit, and professionalism .

Schools “Reopening”

As the current school year enters our final few weeks, I imagine that many of you have questions about next year - from the calendar and daily schedule, to what the safety protocols and procedures will look like. While we have been discussing various models at a high level for the past few weeks – we are eagerly awaiting the California Department of Education’s “guidebook” that will provide additional clarity on the parameters under which we will be able to develop an approach to reopening that is safe and consistent with our mission. While any plan we develop is subject to the parameters contained in the CDE guidebook, we do have some idea of the broad contours of what the upcoming school year might look like, and are eager to engage in the dialogue with you - our parent communities in Arvin and Shafter.

Our guiding priorities in determining how we will re-open:

- (1) The physical and emotional safety of our students, faculty and staff.
- (2) Determining the most effective approach to ensure learning at a high level next year, while mitigating the learning loss resulting from our transition to distance learning this Spring and the potential impacts resulting from the safety protocols we will have to implement to ensure our scholars are safe when on campus.



As we develop options for reopening, we are using guidance from the CDC to direct our planning. The following are our main considerations as we plan how, and when to reopen.

Safety protocols

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recently released a decision-making flow chart (click for [ENGLISH](#), [SPANISH](#)) outlining a continuum of factors to consider when deciding to reopen. (click to download a version in [ENGLISH](#), [SPANISH](#)). While we await clearer guidance from the California Department of Education, we are currently working on plans for ensuring that we protect children and staff who might be at greater risk, while establishing screening protocols for students and employees as they arrive. We have already established screening/monitoring, safety, and cleaning protocols on both school sites for our child supervision programs that have been in operations for over a month. We are working on the most effective ways to scale up for a greater number of students.

Social Distancing

A central component of safely allowing students back on campus involves maintaining safe social distancing between each student. This will require modifying the physical setup of our classrooms, recess schedules, lunch and nutrition protocols, as well as drop-off and pick up procedures. What it also might entail is alternating student attendance on site – either by day of the week or by time of day – or even perhaps by a combination of both.

Programmatic modifications

While our goal is to have every student back on campus as soon as it is safe to do so, we are also aware that any plan for re-opening will likely include some continuation of distance learning. Whether it is for those students who might be at greater risk, or as students have to scaffold their attendance to ensure that we maintain adequate distancing – it is a safe assumption that distance learning will be a part of our program throughout the upcoming school year.

School Calendar

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We are also considering potential changes in our school calendar. The CDC is predicting a resurgence of the COVID virus during the winter flu season. In addition, NWEA released a preliminary a paper on student learning loss due to schools shifting to distance learning as a result of COVID shutdowns. Based on the NWEA's modeling, there will be significant loss of student learning resulting from the shift to distance learning this spring, combined with the typical learning loss due to Summer Vacation (click [HERE](#) for the report). While we already start our school relatively early (August 3rd), we are considering the option of shift our start date even earlier to provide maximum flexibility for the anticipated resurgence of the virus this winter, as well as to recover some of the projected learning loss before any potential resurgence of COVID during winter. Should we plan to take extended time off during the winter flu season? Should we have extra days built in, in the event we need to use them to shut down the school like "snow days" on the East Coast? Should we extend our winter break through the month of January to avoid flu season? All are questions we are beginning to ask.

Also important is considering the social and emotional impact of self-isolation on our scholars (click [HERE](#)). Subject to state and local health officials' approval and effective internal safety protocols implemented, might our scholars benefit emotionally from being able to connect with their peers and teachers in person as soon as it is safe to do so?

These are just a few of the considerations we are grappling with as we begin the planning stages for next year. While I realize that the past few months have been challenging - and perhaps the last thing anyone wants to think about right now is *next* year - given the rapidly changing dynamics of the situation we find ourselves in, it is important for us to begin the process of developing a plan to address the considerations mentioned above. Equally important is that any plan we develop contains maximum flexibility in case events on the ground dictate that we have to shift in "real-time."

School site leadership teams are beginning the process of developing model options based on the considerations outlined above. Once we have a few



concrete options to share, we intend reach out to the school community to solicit feedback. If you would like to participate on a working focus group with site leadership as they develop possible models for reopening, please contact your school site principal directly:

GA Arvin: Hurshel Williams - hwilliams@grimmwayschools.org

GA Shafter: Joanna Kendrick jkendrick@grimmwayschools.org

Finally, I understand that it can be frustrating as a parent not to have answers and clarity about what school is going to look like for your child when they return next year. As a fellow parent of a Grimmway scholar, I too want the peace of mind that comes with such clarity as soon as possible. That being said, I am confident that working together as a community we will develop an approach to reopen our schools that balances our primary responsibility to keep our children safe, with our professional mission to ensure that they have access to a high quality and rigorous learning environment.

In the meantime, I ask for your patience and flexibility as we continue to work on the most effective ways to fulfill our priorities while addressing the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 on our education system.

We deeply appreciate your continued support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Casey Yeazel', written in a cursive style.

Casey Yeazel
Executive Director
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