

Dear Rocketeer Families,

Over the past three months, we have been building plans to reopen our schools for the 2020-2021 school year. We remain committed to protecting the health and safety of our Rocketeers, families, staff, and community while also providing our Rocketeers with the excellent learning experience that they deserve.

We have been consulting with national and local public health professionals, reviewing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), evaluating how school systems in other countries have successfully reopened, and collaborating with our teachers, staff, parents, and network leaders. Our reopening plan outlined here represents what we believe is the best approach possible given the extraordinary crisis we are facing. There is no perfect plan for an unprecedented crisis and we will need to continue adapting our approach as new evidence and updated guidelines from health authorities are shared. But if we all work together and support each other, the 2020-21 school year will be another year full of learning, growth, community, and progress in our fight for social justice and educational equity.

Hybrid School Model

Our reopening plan is based on a strong belief in the importance of in-person learning whenever possible. The [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\) recently issued guidance](#) *“that all policy considerations for the coming school year should start with a goal of having students physically present in school. The importance of in-person learning is well-documented, and there is already evidence of the negative impacts on children because of school closures in the spring of 2020.”* At Rocketship, we know that we are at our very best when our teachers and students are together in classrooms. That is why we’ve been working hard to create a plan to safely welcome our Rocketeers back on campus for the 2020-21 school year!

Our school model for this year will include both in-person learning days at school and distance learning days at home. We do not have enough capacity at school to reduce the density of students on campus and meet physical distancing guidelines for all students so we designed a hybrid model that includes approximately 50% of students on campus at any one time. This model will help us both protect the health and safety of our students

and staff while also ensuring students continue to benefit from in-person learning at school. It is important to note that we will continue to adjust our model whenever local, state, and federal agencies issue new guidance.

To accommodate guidance from our local public health authorities, our hybrid school model will split our student population into two cohorts. We are calling these student cohorts *Trailblazers* and *Pioneers* (individual campuses may choose different names for the cohorts at their campus). Each cohort will include approximately 17 students per class.

We will operate an alternating weeks schedule. In week 1, the Trailblazers cohort will learn on campus while the Pioneers cohort is engaged in our distance learning program at home. In week 2, Pioneers will come to campus while Trailblazers learn at home. On Fridays, all students will be at home in distance learning while our teachers check in on students virtually and prep for both cohorts of students. We will continue this alternating weeks schedule throughout the school year until further notice.

WEEK 1				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<i>Trailblazers</i> on campus	<i>Trailblazers</i> on campus	<i>Trailblazers</i> on campus	<i>Trailblazers</i> on campus	<i>Trailblazers</i> distance learning
<i>Pioneers</i> distance learning	<i>Pioneers</i> distance learning	<i>Pioneers</i> distance learning	<i>Pioneers</i> distance learning	<i>Pioneers</i> distance learning

WEEK 2				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<i>Trailblazers</i> distance learning	<i>Trailblazers</i> distance learning	<i>Trailblazers</i> distance learning	<i>Trailblazers</i> distance learning	<i>Trailblazers</i> distance learning
<i>Pioneers</i> on campus	<i>Pioneers</i> on campus	<i>Pioneers</i> on campus	<i>Pioneers</i> on campus	<i>Pioneers</i> distance learning

New Health & Safety Protocols

To protect the health and safety of all students, staff, and families we are implementing a series of new health and safety protocols. We can not eliminate the risk of COVID-19 transmission in our schools, but the multiple layers of protection we are implementing will significantly reduce the risk of COVID-19 on our campus. We need all students, families, and staff to work together to follow these protocols and help us reduce the risk for everyone.

Stay at home requirements: Each and every person in our school community - students, staff, parents - will play a vital role in helping reduce transmission risk at school. We need everyone to carefully monitor their own health and the health of their Rocketeer and stay at home when exhibiting any of the following symptoms of COVID-19: fever (100.0 or above), cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, diarrhea, vomiting, headache, and/or loss of taste or smell. In addition, if a person has been in direct contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 they will be required to stay home until they are cleared to return to campus. Rocketeers who are temporarily staying home for health reasons or due to exposure to COVID-19 will be able to attend Distance Learning during their entire time away from school.

Daily temperature reading: We will be taking the temperature of all persons entering our school building with a non-contact infrared thermometer every day. If any person has a temperature of 100.0 or above they will not be allowed to enter campus.

Daily health screening: Upon arrival, all staff and students/parents will be asked to respond to a brief survey on risk factors for COVID-19. All staff and students must answer no to all risk factor questions to enter campus.

Establishing stable cohorts of students: Students will remain in the same classroom with the same group of classmates and the same teaching staff during the school day. This “stable cohort” strategy is a key factor in re-opening requirements from all the counties we serve in California ([Santa Clara County](#), [San Mateo County](#), and [Contra Costa County](#)). This means students will no longer rotate to different classrooms during the school day. They will also eat lunch in their classroom. Our Humanities, STEM, Learning Lab, and Enrichment teachers will rotate into classrooms.

Mandatory mask wearing: Health authorities are emphasizing that face coverings are an effective way of preventing virus spread. All students grades K-5 are required to wear a

mask. Rocketeers will have the opportunity to remove their masks during “mask breaks” when sitting at their desk during lessons and during their lunch period. We will make appropriate accommodations for students with respiratory or sensory processing issues. All staff are required to wear a mask as well and can choose to change to a transparent face shield while in front of their own classroom, physically distanced from students. Parents and guardians will also be required to wear a mask at arrival and dismissal. Rocketship will provide a pack of five reusable cloth masks to staff and students at the start of the year. This specific mask is not part of our uniform requirement -- students and staff can wear their own mask instead if they prefer. We will also have disposable masks available if your student forgets their mask.

Hand washing & sanitizing: Hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds is preferred whenever possible. To supplement regular hand washing, students will also use hand sanitizer throughout the day. We will be teaching and reminding our Rocketeers about proper hand hygiene and building hand hygiene breaks into our normal school day routine. Hand washing or hand sanitizing will be prioritized when students enter the building, any time they enter a classroom, any time they exit a classroom, before and after breakfast, before and after lunch, after all bathroom breaks, after P.E. class, after recess and before putting on or removing their face mask. Practicing good hand hygiene is a simple yet effective way to prevent infection. Please reinforce these habits with your Rocketeer at home.

Physical Distancing: We will be practicing physical distancing across our campus to ensure all students and staff are keeping a safe distance from each other to help limit the spread of coronavirus. This practice is also called *social distancing* but we want to emphasize physical separation that does not limit our ability for healthy and safe social interactions on campus. Supporting our students’ social and emotional development is an essential component of our education model that we will continue to emphasize in the school year ahead. To promote physical distancing on campus, we will be placing appropriately spaced floor stickers in all classrooms, hallways, entryways, and other spaces where people typically gather. Student desks will be appropriately spaced apart in all classrooms. And we will have signage posted in prominent locations throughout the school to remind students and staff to always practice physical distancing.

Recess and physical education: Physical education and unstructured play time during recess are essential to healthy child development. We will continue to provide both recess and physical education this school year with a few modifications. We will create large “play circles” that our stable cohort classes are required to remain within during P.E. and

recess. Play structures will be closed until further notice and use of any play equipment will require supervisor approval first.

Campus cleaning: According to the CDC, the primary mode of transmission for COVID-19 is through close contact from person-to-person. While much less likely to occur, it may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own face. To reduce the risk of surface-based transmission, we dramatically increased our campus disinfecting protocols this year. Every evening after school, we will disinfect our entire campus. During the school day, all “high-touch” areas will be disinfecting at least twice per day. High-touch areas include: door handles, bathroom faucets, light switches, railings, table surfaces, etc. We are training all teachers on how to effectively disinfect their classroom and what areas require regular disinfecting during the school day. Finally, we are investing in an advanced new “electrostatic sprayer” system that disinfects all surfaces more thoroughly and efficiently than manual spraying and wiping.

Monitoring: The majority of students who exhibit COVID-19 symptoms will not likely have COVID-19 but rather a normal cold or flu. Nonetheless, we have to carefully manage any possible risk of transmission on campus. We have developed a detailed protocol for monitoring COVID-19 diagnoses, symptoms, and possible exposure among our students and staff. We have established clear requirements for when individuals at risk of COVID-19 are cleared to return to campus. If any student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, we will notify all families who shared a space with the impacted individual during the last seven days. Students with symptoms or risk factors waiting to be cleared to return to school will be fully supported to continue to participate in Distance Learning from home.

Layers of protection: The new health and safety measures described above create multiple layers of protection on our campus. Parents should not worry if they see a student remove their mask on campus or notice students not physical distancing when playing together at recess. We understand that we can not expect young children to comply with all of these measures 100% of the time. By creating multiple layers of protection our system is not vulnerable to failure if a single measure described above is not adhered to by all students all of the time. This approach will allow us to continue to create a positive, joyful learning environment while still protecting the health and safety of our community.

Chromebook for Every Student

To support our Rocketeers' learning at school and at home this year, every student will be issued a personal Chromebook to use during the entire 2020-21 school year. If your student already has a Rocketship provided Chromebook at home, you will need to return it to your school so that it can be updated for the new school year. Your campus will reach out to you directly with information on when and how you can return your Chromebook.

We are committed to ensuring that all students have access to technology to advance their learning. That is why we invested in one-to-one Chromebooks for all our students this year. But we need your support to make the most of this investment in your child's education. Please remember that your student's Chromebook is property of the school and we ask that you help us ensure your student takes good care of their device while at home.

Before & After Care

We are continuing to explore before and after school program options that adhere to local public health guidelines. We will provide information on before and after care options in our update next week.

Optional Placement: 100% Distance Learning

We recognize that some of our Rocketeers will not be able to return to in-person learning at the start of the school year. In particular, students who have underlying health conditions that put them at increased risk for COVID-19 can opt out of in-person learning and attend distance learning full-time. We are asking all families to select their preferred placement by no later than July 22. Please respond to the placement request sent to your email address. If you did not receive a placement selection request please contact your school principal.

If you select the 100% Distance Learning placement, your student will be required to remain in Distance Learning full-time for the first semester of this school year. To successfully operate two different learning models this year, we need to minimize changes to student placements beyond the changes we anticipate due to the health and COVID-19 risk factors outlined above. We will create a waitlist for students who begin the year in distance learning and wish to change to our hybrid school model before the end of the first semester. We cannot guarantee any placement changes will become available within the semester, but we will do our best to meet your needs. All families will be given the opportunity to change their placement for the second semester of the school year.

We fully understand that full-time Distance Learning places a significant burden on parents and guardians to help facilitate student learning at home. We will provide more detail on our 100% Distance Learning option in our update next week to ensure you have all the information you need to make the best selection for your student and family.

Optional Placement: 100% On Campus Learning

We also recognize that some of our families will prefer that their student(s) attend school on-campus every week. Students with an IEP that require in-person support, parents who are Essential Workers, and Rocketship staff members who are required to be on campus full-time may prefer 100% on-campus learning. We are working to accommodate families who prefer that their student(s) attend on-campus learning full-time. All families must select their preferred placement by no later than July 22. Please respond to the placement request sent to your email address. If you did not receive a placement selection request please contact your school principal.

To adhere to the “stable cohort” public health requirement described above, we cannot guarantee the availability of full-time on campus learning. If this is your preferred option we will make every effort to support you and your family.

Kinder Camp

Starting school can be a big adjustment for our youngest learners. That’s why we offer Kinder Camp for our new TK and Kindergarten Rocketeers. All TK and Kinder students will come to school to meet their teacher, see their classroom, and check out their school (before the big kids arrive). During Kinder Camp, our youngest Rocketeers will learn how to adjust to their new school day routine and prepare for their first day of school!

Kinder camp will be split into two groups this year. Group A will attend school on August 6 and 7, and Group B will attend on August 10 and 11. Families will be assigned a group at your school’s orientation session.

Parent Orientation

This year our Parent Orientation will be virtual. Your campus will communicate what days and times will be dedicated to your student’s group. At Parent Orientation, you will receive key information on health and safety protocols and details about Distance Learning. Attendance at Parent Orientation is critical to ensure you and your student have a positive and successful school year experience.

Stay Tuned

There are clearly a lot of changes in store for the 2020-21 school year. But one thing that will never change is our commitment to providing your child with the safe and excellent education that they deserve. We will surely confront new challenges as we safely re-open our campuses in August. But as the final three months of last school year made clear, our leaders, teachers, staff, parents, and students will [rise to any challenge](#) that stands in our way. When the county ordered schools to close last March, we launched our Distance Learning program just 24 hours later. We acted with urgency, compassion, and an unrelenting commitment to serve your student(s) with excellence. No matter what, that will never change.

We will be sharing more updates to families every week. And as our local education and health authorities update their guidance to schools we will continue to modify our reopening plans as necessary.

Finally, we are offering families three virtual community meetings next week to review our plan and answer any questions. We will send details on how to attend those virtual community meetings next week. These meetings are optional and the discussion will be the same at each so you only need to participate in one meeting.

Meeting 1: Thursday 7/16 @ 5:30 pm

Meeting 2: Friday 7/17 @ 8:45 am

Meeting 3: Friday 7/17 @ 3:00 pm

We are looking forward to continuing to serve your Rocketeer(s) and family this school year. Thank you for partnership and thank you for entrusting us to provide your student(s) with the excellent elementary education that they deserve.

Sincerely,
Maricela Guerrero,
Vice President of Schools
Rocketship Public Schools

Kylie Alsofrom
Director of Schools and Regional Task Leader, Bay Area
Rocketship Public Schools