



## Important Message from the Superintendent Friday, November 13, 2020

### A Message from Superintendent, Dr. Nancy Lynch

Dear Parents/Guardians of the RUSD Community,

We understand that there is a group of parents in our community who are insisting that RUSD allow students to remotely Zoom into the classroom to join students in core classes that are being taught in-person. We are writing this letter to inform and clarify why RUSD will not be following this pedagogy.

As a District, we have integrated Zoom into our learning programs for the 2020-21 school year and we will continue to use Zoom, as well as other online platforms, to support our students during this pandemic. However, we have learned from experience that synchronous instruction via Zoom is best when all students are learning collectively as a group, as they do with their specialists and as they did in Phase 1 Distance Learning. When RUSD transitioned to Phase 2, it was quickly validated that hybrid in-person / synchronous instruction via Zoom is not a sound pedagogy, as it diminishes the quality of education for all students.

Educators have seen first-hand, during whole class meetings via Zoom, the many shortcomings of synchronous interaction and in-class learning at the same time. Many have worked to adjust during this check-in, by having in-person students work independently, while they tend to remote students and vice-versa, and recognize this detracts from the time they are able to spend with any individual group or student.

While a few other school districts have pursued this blended learning method via Zoom, RUSD will not be doing so as we believe it is a subpar educational experience. We depend on teachers' and

administrators' inclusion and support to be successful in any model, as they are the degreed professionals that nurture each and every one of our students. To support our distance learners, RUSD has some of its most experienced teachers working in the ExDL/IDL programs to make sure that every child is given an equitable opportunity to build a community and thrive under these extremely unique circumstances. We also understand that any distance learning program cannot replicate in-person instruction.

### **Why is blended in-person / synchronous instruction via Zoom not a sound pedagogy?**

Instructional practices differ when teaching for distance vs. in-person learning and this blended approach severely hinders the teacher's ability to use the best tool for the learning experience when being split between two pedagogies. To meet safety protocols, teachers and students must wear face coverings while in-person, which creates a barrier to sound and comprehension, as remote students struggle to hear what the teacher is saying. Additionally, teachers rely on body language from their students when in-person, and visual cues and engagement are incredibly difficult to read on students (and adults) on Zoom.

Students in-person are often sitting behind plexiglass barriers, making a two way zoom conversation difficult, if not impossible. Remote students are not able to benefit from fellow classmates' opinions or comments, nor are they able to participate in classroom activities held indoors or outdoors.

This is not an equitable experience for students on Zoom; rather it is an unfair and potentially cruel experience for remote learners. Conversely, when a teacher needs to provide technical assistance, repeat lesson instruction, or dedicate time using any of the Zoom features that are recommended to make Zoom an effective medium for remote learners, it detracts from the in-person experience. "Zoom fatigue" describes the tiredness, worry, or burnout associated with overusing virtual platforms of communication. Zoom fatigue is very real and requiring teachers and students to be bound to Zoom, in or out of the classroom, for extended periods of time for core instruction is not conducive to the learning environment for anyone. [Source](#)

### **Is RUSD in compliance with the CA state law required by Assembly Bill 77 (AB 77) and Senate Bill 98 (SB 98)?**

Yes, RUSD's in-person instruction program, and distance learning ExDL and IDL programs, are each in compliance with AB 77 and SB 98. For the 2020-21 school year, schools are required to "offer in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible" according to [AB-77](#), the education trailer bill accompanying the [2020-21 budget](#) that legislators and Gov. Gavin Newsom signed in June 2020. Schools can

offer distance learning if ordered by a state or local health official, or to students who are medically at-risk or are self-quarantining because of exposure to COVID-19. [Source](#)

Additionally, for the 2020-2021 school year, SB 98 provides that Districts must comply with the minimum number of instructional days per school year set forth under the Education Code and certain regulations. However, SB 98 modifies the instructional minute requirements, imposing minimum instructional minutes by grade level ranging from 180 minutes for kindergarten, 230 minutes for grades one through three, and 240 minutes for grades four through twelve, with variances specified under SB 98. In addition, SB 98 also provides that Districts shall not be required to offer the minimum physical education minutes set forth under the Education Code.

SB 98 provides that Districts may meet the minimum instructional minute requirements by in-person instruction or through distance learning, or through a combination thereof. SB 98 further provides that for in-person instruction, "instructional minutes shall be based on time scheduled under the immediate physical supervision and control of an employee of the District who possess a valid certification document." For distance learning, "instructional time shall be based on the time value of assignments as determined, and certified to, by an employee of the District who possesses a valid certification document." For combination programs, the District would add the time from in-person instruction and distance learning assignments. Additionally, RUSD distance learning programs meet the requirement of daily live interaction with credentialed teachers and peers. [Source](#)

As an educational community, we felt we needed address claims upfront and with factual information on why RUSD is not pursuing simultaneous instruction and how we are in compliance with SB 98.

We are continuing to work together to support our students throughout this academic year and we appreciate our community support as we work to create a learning environment that enables all of our students to succeed.

Sincerely,

Nancy Lynch, Ed.D.  
Superintendent

Ruth Ann Spike  
Reed District Teachers  
Association President

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