



Published October 28th, 2020

## AUHSD to implement hybrid back-to-school model in January, despite doubts

By *Sophie Braccini*

The Acalanes Union High School District board adopted a plan proposed by staff to reopen the three Lamorinda high schools along with Las Lomas in Walnut Creek at the beginning of the second semester, either on Jan. 5 or Jan. 19, two weeks after the return from the holiday break.

Over the last two weeks staff polled parents and staff on their preference: 78.25% responded they would support a hybrid model (no other option for returning to campus was offered) and 21.71% said they would not permit their children to return in person. Eleven percent of teachers indicated that they would not return, and planned to either retire or resign, taking COVID-19 leave, being afflicted by medical restrictions.

The hybrid model that was defined last June divides students into two groups and offers a schedule where Mondays are an asynchronous learning day, and students will be on campus every other remaining week day for four blocks of time lasting about one and a half hours each. When not on campus, students will be expected to work independently or be taught online asynchronously.

Since many teachers will not teach on campus, administrative staff will have to review options and schedules for the next semester. The logistical challenge is quite serious. Due to types of accreditation it may not be feasible to have teachers not able to return to campus, simply teaching all students online.

Several teachers from the district spoke against the hybrid model. They asked that older teachers be exempt from the obligation to return; some believe that teaching behind a mask and shield to masked students will not be an improvement over online live teaching; others noted that the amount of asynchronous time will be higher for students; a science teacher noted that hands-on classes would be impossible live because of the small number of students who could be together at one time.

The board voted to support staff's proposal, but in the weeks to come the hybrid model will be reviewed and safety protocols will be tested by students who have already been invited to come back in small groups, mostly for support activities. The next board meeting is scheduled Nov. 4.

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