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## 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 med-

ical 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 hy-

brid 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.

## Locals find spooky, socially distanced ways to celebrate Halloween

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One social media poster declared that she was putting out a bowl of candy, with individual scoopers provided for the trick-or-treaters to take with them. Others said they'll put individual treat bags out, placing each one six feet from the other, use a grabber to place candy in bags or even tossing pieces out.

And then there's Sue Carlson, who, in past years has given out more than 500 pieces of candy. This year, with the help of her adult son, she'll be shooting candy through a lighted tube from the top step of her well-decorated Moraga home to the treat bags held by costumed trick-or-treaters down on the sidewalk. "Halloween has always been one of our favorites," Carlson said. "This year, more than ever, having a day we can celebrate something fun makes it all the more special. Families can spread joy by decorating, handing out candy safely or walking up and down the street in costumes and feel a sense of community as well as a little bit of magic."

Celebrations may be different but certainly no less fun. A.J. Brown and her family have, for the last eight years, gone to a party at the same friends' house. No party this year; instead she took her two kids to an immersive outdoor drive-in haunted house.

Mike Seitler and his family have also celebrated Halloween in the same way for many years: trick-or-treating

with a particular group of friends. But this year, all seven families are donning their costumes and going to play mini-golf. "It's a socially distanced activity," Seitler noted, "with each family at a different hole. We'll still be able to be together while apart." This will be followed by a "dark and spooky" candy hunt for just his two kids, who, like most others, are still excited about their favorite holiday.

Erin Roth said her 8-year-old twins, who usually trick-or-treat on Martha Street with throngs of kids, will be partying with their small pod in Orinda. They actually seem "super excited" about doing something different, Roth said. "At this age, the goal is to get candy and they don't really care from where. They want costumes and they want candy," she noted. "And they'll have both."

It appears there will be no lack of candy.

Zoonies, the popular Lafayette candy shop, sells Boo Bags that are meant to be given anonymously and include a "You've Been Boo'd" note and a suggestion to "keep the spirit going and boo your neighbors." These bags range in price and can be generic or custom made. Orinda's Glorietta Elementary School's PTA even sold Boo Bags as a fundraiser. (It may not be too late to get your own Boo Bags. Call Zoonies at 925-299-9866.)

Local real estate agent, Kristina McCann, put together Boo Boxes containing candy and small toys. "I did this be-

cause I knew many parents were feeling sad and unsure about what Halloween would look like this year. I wanted to provide a little something to make kids happy," she explained. A social media post offering her free Boo Boxes resulted in hundreds of requests.

The schools and local PTAs know their students are missing the typical costume parades, room parties and school carnivals so they, too, are creating a variety of fun virtual activities. There are pumpkin carving contests, themed craft projects, Zoom and drive-by costume parades, COVID-safe candy scavenger hunts and virtual as well as socially-distanced dance parties.

Finally, the city of Lafayette is getting into the Halloween spirit by sponsoring the "spooktacular" Lafayette Halloween Dress Up Drive, encouraging residents to dress up their houses, businesses and cars. Participants were asked to register and a map of decorated houses and businesses will be posted Halloween week. (love-lafayette.org). A ride around town on Halloween will provide another safe activity for Lamorinda residents.

Lamorinda has really come together for the kids. Moraga's Amy Sidensol notes that Halloween 2020 seems to be bringing out the best in parents. "The creativity is amazing and I can't help but wonder if this will be the start of some new traditions for future Halloweens."

## DJ brings safe Halloween bash to local kids



Photo provided

DJ Ryan O hosts one of his many outdoor, socially distanced high-energy dance and game events.

Ryan Oettinger, better known as DJ Ryan O, has been providing socially safe, high energy, engaging entertainment throughout Lamorinda neighborhoods since COVID hit. With Halloween upon us, he's created a special "spooktacular experience" for "spooky and kooky creatures of all sizes."

DJ Ryan O will go to local "ghoulesacs, treats or graveyards" and provide Halloween-inspired, socially distanced outdoor dancing, games, activities and entertainment. He has dozens of fun activities, including Frankenstein Freeze, Winnie the Witch Says, Monster Shuffle, Musical Pumpkins and Pumpkin Patch Stomp. "I can entertain 10 kids or 25 kids for several hours," Oettinger said, "with spaced out curated activities themed to music." He'll be doing just that for a group of local second-graders. "We'll gather in a parking lot, the kids will all be safely spaced out and we'll do high-energy, high-impact Halloween-themed dances, activities and challenges."

For more information, check out [www.driveupdj.com](http://www.driveupdj.com).

— D. Claytor