

# Local schools shelve plans for return to campus as county moves back to purple tier

By Sora O'Doherty and Sophie Braccini

All four local school districts – Orinda Union, Lafayette, Moraga and the Acalanes Union High School District – had been about to launch a limited return to school when Contra Costa County announced that the county would return to the purple tier of COVID-19 risk Nov. 17. Some schools that had already returned to the classroom, such as St. Perpetua in Lafayette, are allowed to remain open, but any schools that had not yet returned are now prohibited from doing so until the county's level of illness permits a return to the red tier designation.

AUHSD Superintendent John Nickerson drew the

board's attention at its Nov. 18 meeting to the fact that Lamorinda and Walnut Creek were not immune to the new uptake in cases at this time and pleaded for the community to "do the right thing," limiting social contacts and large gatherings, and always wearing a mask.

The AUHSD board decided to reopen as soon as the county returns to the red tier for two consecutive weeks, and no earlier than Jan. 5. Like his colleagues in the other Lamorinda districts, Nickerson explained to his governing board that since the county had now exceeded the thresholds of the red tier (more than 7 daily new cases per 100,000 and more than 8% positivity among people tested for COVID-19), the county health authority pre-

cluded school districts that had not yet reopened to wait until the figures got consistently better.

In the meantime, AUHSD staff continues to prepare the schools for a hybrid teaching model starting at the beginning of the second semester. The school site and classroom safety protocols and procedures are being finalized, while training will be provided to staff and students prior to the return to school. Parents are going to be asked to make a declaration, by Dec. 2, indicating if their student(s) will participate in the hybrid model alternating with on campus and at-home instruction, or will continue with remote instruction five days a week when schools reopen.

Online parents' forums will be organized by the dis-

trict and each of the schools before Dec. 2 to answer questions. Staff also perfected the hybrid educational model to maximize the contacts with the teachers. For example, both cohorts of the same class, students at home or at school, will start each teaching period together. How long they remain together and how the teaching is structured will depend on the teacher and the subject matter. When teachers are immuno-compromised and have to stay away from school, they will continue to teach their classes while substitutes will assist with in-class instruction.

As cooler and rainier weather becomes more prevalent, the return to the purple tier will also restrict to "outdoors only" worship ser-

vices, movie theaters, museums and exhibit spaces, as well as institutions of higher education, which may only hold lectures and student gatherings outdoors.

Despite rising numbers, Lamorinda remains at comparatively low levels. As of Nov. 23, Lafayette stood at 228 total cases, with 38 new cases in the past fortnight; Orinda had 170 total cases, with 19 new cases in the past fortnight, and Moraga had only 99 total cases and just 7 new cases in the past fortnight. This compares with much higher numbers in the county, such as Richmond with 4,149 total cases and 341 in the past fortnight, or Antioch with 3,005 total cases, and 303 cases in the past fortnight.

## Letters to the editor

### Have emergency lights at the ready

The latest bill from PG&E reminds us that we should have emergency lights at the ready because "severe weather can cause unexpected power outages." Moragans can find an extensive collection of flashlights at Moraga Hardware. The products available today are much better than those we had in the past, and the variety is remarkable. Particularly impressive is the amount of light that even very small flashlights generate. I did some of my Christmas shopping there recently while my wife was doing the same in Across the Way. It's good to have these quality retail stores so handy. Let's help them survive.

Dale Walwark  
Moraga

### Reopening schools

I just wanted to respond to the topic of schools reopening and to voice my opinion on the article. I am a ninth-grader, and I go to De La Salle High School in Concord. We are already doing a hybrid model at this school, with half of the students going on Monday and Tuesday, and the other half going on Thursday and Friday. While it doesn't have the same feeling as starting school before COVID-19, it's nice to finally meet some of the people who share the same classes as me and to make new friends.

I believe that schools should not reopen at full capacity and I support the notion to try safely and slowly to open up the rest of the schools in Contra Costa County and hopefully the rest of the country as well. The threat of an infection hangs over everyone like an impending storm, but with the right planning and safety measures like they have at De La Salle, the spread of Covid-19 can be avoided, while students get some in-person learning too.

Thank for editing the Lafayette Weekly and helping me and other students all have a little bit more hope of returning back to school.

Milan Reimer  
Lafayette

### Do not reopen classes in Orinda

Covid is back. In the past month new daily cases have doubled in Contra Costa from 5 per 100,000 to 10. Contra Costa is leading the Bay Area in new cases. Well below July's peak of 20 but heading in the wrong direction. This is a world apart from the worst places in the nation (170 per 100,000 in North Dakota), but that should not be our benchmark.

The Weekly reports on Orinda's plan to phase in class re-openings. This is the wrong plan at this time. I understand that staying

home and distance learning is hard on kids and families. My daughter is a third grade teacher and she says this is the toughest year of her career. But to open one more vector of infection, and a huge one at that, is beyond irresponsible. The virus does not consider California or Orinda as exceptional. It is an equal opportunity destroyer. Maybe rich people do not die from it as frequently as the less fortunate, but its long term effects are both unknown and frightening. It's not worth the risk.

Steve Cohn  
Orinda

### Our community

To find meaningful solutions to our problems of inequality or injustice we must discard our emotions and think critically. The following facts and questions should not anticipate answers - they should solicit thought for open dialogue to a better way and recognize how far we've come.

- We have a black mayor.
- America didn't create slavery, it abolished it. Within the first ten years slavery was abolished in most northern states - it took another 80 years and a civil war to finally rid ourselves of that evil completely.
- Implicit bias is not scientific fact. Social scientists have not proven that the Implicit Association Test measures unconscious racism and have failed to rule out alternative explanations. Real scientific debate exists; it's not proven. How does this fact affect the theory of institutional racism?

- What about the family unit? Eighty percent of young black men are fatherless. In fact, President Obama had the facts when he stated, "children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and 20 times more likely to end up in prison."
- What about making good choices? According to the Brookings Institute by doing three things only about 2% of people remain in poverty and nearly 75% join the middle class. Finish high school, get a full-time job and wait until age 21 to get married and have children.

Is our world perfect? Absolutely not, but we must remember that we're all in this together and we've made significant progress.

I am not my color or my sex, and my sexual choices are no one's business. I grew up poor, made a life for myself and I hold my life accountable to God. I am an American; we all are. Let's stop dividing ourselves and solve our problems together with hope and understanding.

Jared L.  
Lafayette

### Flag display

The story about the commendable Rotary Club effort to foster the display of the American flag on Veterans Day deserves comment. Rotary and its members deserve commendation. However the article implies that Lafayette would not allow the American flag to be displayed in the plaza. "After consultation with the city attorney, the council advised her that the city would not permit it..." If true the city officials deserve the opposite of a commendation. I like many others served and in combat. I am appalled that for any reason an American city would refuse a request, let alone a request from a reputable service group, to display the American Flag on Veterans Day. To refuse out

of fear of the consequences is cowardly not prudent. Are we so afraid or ashamed of our national emblem that we won't defend it? The Marquis de Lafayette would turn

away from his namesake town.

David Gow  
Moraga

## Service Clubs Announcements



**Zoom Meetings Every Friday at 7:00 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.**  
<https://lamorindasunrise.org/speakers>

### December Weekly Speakers

- 4: MyKayla Skinner and Sophia Serseri , Olympic Athletes
- 11: Tyler Schultz, Theranos Unraveled!
- 18: Skip McCowan and Avi Mylrea, Common Hope
- 25: No meeting

[www.lamorindasunrise.com](http://www.lamorindasunrise.com)



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