



Ukiah Junior Academy

# Grapevine

July 20, 2020

## Principal's Corner

### ***On School with Covid-19***

It's amazing how much has happened during the last week. I have spent time listening to our county health officer discuss guidelines for school openings for those of us in Northern California counties. She outlined safe and reasonable ways for schools to reopen with students physically present. I watched the Ukiah Unified School District debate how to conduct school this fall, eventually deciding on a hybrid model consisting of two days of in class school with three days of distance learning. Two days later in his press conference, Governor Newsom ordered schools in counties that are on the watch, or monitoring, list to only offer distance learning in the fall. Shortly afterward Ukiah Unified School District decided to only offer distance learning for all their students this fall. All this in one week!

So, what is Ukiah Junior Academy going to do? The honest answer is, I don't know. Our school board, of which I am a member, will be making that decision. It is not mine alone to make. I can only tell you what my thoughts, hopes and dreams are for this coming fall.

I'll start with the big picture: I hope to bring students back to our campus 5 days a week. Is this safe? How could we mitigate the risks? What would school look like?

Is this safe? What about the risks involved with the students together in school? I believe the greater risk is not having our students in school. I'm a parent of two boys still in school. Our sons finished 7th grade and 10th grade at home with distance learning. They barely left the house from mid March to the end of June. They were lonely, very bored and I suspect depressed. The quality of their educational experience was just not the same. Their emotional, spiritual and physical well being took a big hit as well. The risk to families who need to go to work also needs to be considered, distance learning can have a heavy impact on family finances. No solution to our schooling delima is without risk, however, but we can learn much from the experience of schools around the world who have opened their classroom doors for these three to four months. We have learned that children are far less likely to contract the virus. We have learned that those children who do contract the virus more often are asymptomatic, or have mild or moderate symptoms. We have also learned that there are very few confirmed cases of children transmitting the virus to others. Having our students at school seems to be the safer choice.

UJA parents and staff can work together to mitigate the risks. We can emphasize our traditional Adventist health message to strengthen all our immune responses. We can closely monitor our health to make sure no child or teacher comes to school sick. We have wonderful lawn covered courtyard areas at UJA. We know that virus transmission is greatly reduced when we are outside. It is possible for us to conduct much of our instruction outside for at least the first two months of the year. We could establish smaller cohort groups of students who don't mix with the other students and stagger recesses and lunch to keep them separated. We could limit shared touch surfaces to reduce possible transmission opportunities. Washing hands often during school and sanitizing common touch surfaces

during the day, coupled with disinfecting after school will help mitigate our risks. Teachers will wear shields and students masks (below grades 4 not required). Social distancing will be practiced.

School will have to look different in the fall, we are still working on exactly how different it will be over these next four weeks. As always, we will keep you informed. Our school board meets two more times before the start of school on August 19. Please pray for us. We need wisdom as we work together for the good of our students and their families. I invite you to share with me your thoughts on this matter, either by text or email. I want to leave you all with one of my favorite verses:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart  
and lean not on your own understanding;  
In all your ways acknowledge Him,  
and He will make your paths straight.”  
Proverbs 3:5-6

Lord, make our path straight.

God bless,

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