August 27, 2020

Dr. Steven Sherman, Head of School
Palm Valley School
35-525 Da Vall Drive
Rancho Mirage, CA 92270

Thank you for your waiver application, which has been both approved by me as the Riverside County Public Health Officer and by the California Department of Public Health. This letter will serve as evidence you have been granted a waiver for operation of grades 6 and below in your institution, as applicable, and you may reopen these grades for in-person instruction immediately in compliance with your application and reopening plan as presented.

You are reminded that as per your attestation, your school is bound by the presented reopening plan and your application, as well as all state guidance. Similarly, you are reminded you have agreed to promptly abide by any closure order that is presented by the county or by the state, and to return to distance learning should your declared triggers be exceeded.

You are not required to cease in-person instruction should the county case rate exceed 200 per 100,000 residents. Likewise, if the county exits the statewide monitoring list for at least 14 continuous days, then all schools may reopen per state order, and this waiver will no longer be required.

Because your application is a public document and substantial public interest in the waivers process exists, your application and supporting letters as well as this letter of approval will be posted to the County coronavirus website.

We would like to maintain a continuous conversation with those schools who have reopened under the waivers process, and Public Health staff may reach out to you intermittently for status updates, for which we would appreciate a reply. We look forward to learning from your experiences so that the school reopening process can be made safer for all Riverside County students throughout the county.

Again, we appreciate your desire to reopen safely and your commitment to do so.

Attentively,

Cameron Kaiser, MD, MPH, FAAFP
Public Health Officer
County of Riverside
August 21, 2020

Riverside County Department of Public Health
Attn: Cameron Kaiser, MD, MHP, FAAFP
4065 County Circle Drive
Riverside, CA 92503

RE: Board of Trustee’s support of and request for a waiver to resume in-person instruction

Dr. Kaiser:

On August 18, 2020, the Palm Valley School Board of Trustee’s voted unanimously to petition Riverside County for permission to resume in-person instruction of Palm Valley’s K-6th grades.

Palm Valley School is uniquely positioned to provide the safest in-person educational environment within Riverside County due to:

1) A total Pre-K through 12th grade student body of approximately 300 young people. This translates to an average classroom size of approximately nine to 12 students. These small class sizes are held in normal public school-sized classrooms capable of holding 30+ students.

2) The various schools (Pre-K, Lower, Middle, and Upper) and the respective students are spread out over a forty (40) acre campus;

3) A proactive safety, distancing, and sanitization program designed to meet or, in most cases, exceed County and State requirements;

4) A Hyflex education delivery system which allows a seamless transition between on-line and in-person learning. This system allows parents, even the morning of a school day, to keep their students at home if the parent believes there is an actual or perceived need to quarantine.

5) A Head of School, administration staff, teaching staff, Board of Trustees, and PTA committed to ensuring a safe in-person learning environment for every student, and every faculty member.

Our students need the option to resume in-person instruction. Please let us know what we can do or provide so the County knows granting the Palm Valley School the ability to resume in-person instruction is the right thing for the County, the right thing for the broader Coachella Valley community, and the right thing for our Palm Valley families.

Sincerely,

Stone James, MRED
Palm Valley School Board of Trustees, Secretary
August 21, 2020

Re: Riverside County K – 6th grade Waiver Application

To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Dr. Steven Sherman. I serve as the Head of School at Palm Valley School in Rancho Mirage, CA. Our teachers or staff are not members of any organized labor group. In planning for the physical re-opening of our school, I confirm that I have continuously consulted our Administrative Team and all teachers/staff throughout the summer, including our Professional Development week this week. They have confirmed on every occasion their support for a return to in-person instruction provided that we follow all CDC, CDPH, and health official guidelines. In addition, we have arranged for any teacher or staff member who has indicated an individual concern to work remotely from their home.

I and the members of our Administrative Team affirm their support for a return to in-person instruction.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven J. Sherman, Ed.D.
Head of School
Palm Valley School
August 20th, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

I am parent of a third grader at Palm Valley School in Rancho Mirage. We have been at Palm Valley School since 2015 and I cannot be more pleased that my son receives the extra attention academically and socially. Our school is the gem of the desert with large classrooms and large physical campus that is conducive to the requirements for prevention of the spread of COVID 19.

To the committee that will be reviewing our application for a waiver to open our school for on campus learning, I ask humbly for you to consider our request and realize our school is set up of the requirements the state of California ask to prevent the further spread of COVID 19 and our parent body and student body are very well-versed on the precautions and necessary steps for safe learning and interaction.

It is also, my professional opinion as a Board-Certified Family Physician practicing for over 25 years, I have been on the frontline of taking care of infants to seniors aged 102 years old since the beginning of this pandemic. It has been my clinical experience that children under the age of 12 do not seem to transmit the virus to each other as easily, and young children are in great need of the social interaction and academic guidance that this age needs in order to grasp the basic concepts.

I have personally on-going depression of young children patient population due to isolation and a lack of contact with other children. The detriment of lack of emotional and social fulfillment might last a lifetime of psychological anguish.

Again, it is with gratitude and appreciation that this committee takes the time to review our application and come to the conclusion our Head of School, Administrators, Educators and Staff have been well trained and prepared to allow our student body on campus exercising the utmost care in the prevention of this virus spreading and our parents and most importantly the students are aware of the required protocol for safety and curbing the spread of this virus with the direction and support our school is providing for best practices under these circumstances.

If you have any questions regarding my support for requesting this waiver for Palm Valley School, please contact me personally at my cell number (760) 861-4146.

Sincerely,

Erik G. Palmer, D.O.
Board Certified Family Medicine
Medical Director, Desert Family Medical Center
Clinical Assistant Professor, Loma Linda Medical School of Medicine

555 East Tachevah Drive Suite 2W-203, Palm Springs, CA. 92262
27765 Landau Boulevard, Suite 104, Cathedral City
Main Line: 760.323.4272 Website: www.desertfamilymed.com
August 19, 2020

Re: Palm Valley School’s Waiver Application for the Re-opening of K – 6th Grade

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Theresa Hall. I am the current Parent Association President serving at Palm Valley School. I am also a parent of two high school students at the school. I am writing this letter in support of Palm Valley School’s application for a waiver to allow the re-opening of K – 6th grades. We have a very large campus, with ample space and very small class sizes (we currently have only about 100 students total in the K – 6th grades). In addition, the parents and I have confidence in the school’s ability to meet and even exceed all CDC and CDPH guidelines.

On July 20, 2020, I met with our Head of School, Dr. Steven Sherman, to discuss a variety of things, including the possibility of re-opening our K – 6th grades. Many of our parents are desperately hoping that Palm Valley will be granted a waiver as they serve as essential workers and are eagerly anticipating the re-opening of our school this fall.

I recognize that this letter is just one aspect of the waiver application and that you have several things to consider. As our parent representative, I ask that you support our application and grant the waiver as soon as possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration as I am sure that you are exceedingly busy during this challenging time.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Theresa Hall
PA President, Palm Valley School
TK-6 Elementary School Waiver Application
For use in the County of Riverside ONLY.
August 17, 2020 Revision

For the documents on which this application is based, see
https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/CDPH%20Document%20Library/COVID-19/Waiver-Letter-Template-Cover-Form_8.3.2020.pdf (hereafter Template) for the state template application and

Instructions

This application is for a school within Riverside County that is requesting a waiver to permit in-person instruction. It constitutes an attestation that the school meets state guidelines and intends to comply with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) state educational framework. It must be completed and attested to by the district superintendent, or the equivalent official if a private school is applying.

All waivers are granted on a discretionary basis and may be withdrawn. The submission of an application does not guarantee a waiver will be issued, and waivers may be deferred or phased-in if the volume of applications is high to allow appropriate monitoring. Waiver applications will not be accepted if the countywide case rate is 200 or higher per 100,000 population, as determined by CDPH.

Only elementary schools in the transitional kindergarten through grade 6 (TK-6) grade span are eligible. If the same educational institution offers TK-8 or TK-12 education, then only grade levels 6 and below may resume in-person instruction if the waiver is granted. Standalone middle schools with 6-8 education, and all standalone high schools, are not eligible for application.

This document is designed to act as a template for information specifically relevant to evaluating your application, and also as a means for community review. As such, do not reference or include your reopening plan or school procedure manual except if specifically requested. Once submitted, this application, any supporting documentation, the state consultation and the written county decision become subject to the California Public Records Act and may be posted and/or furnished to any member of the public or media who requests them under the terms of that statute.

Other than the documents specifically requested, do not attach or reference other documents in this application. RUHS-Public Health will neither evaluate nor approve these documents. If additional documentation is required, you will receive a request.
Incomplete applications will not be accepted for state consultation. All applications must be submitted electronically. Do not send applications by fax or postal mail. You may complete this application using this document as a template in Microsoft Word to complete the sections, or print the application, manually add answers, and scan it to PDF. Only PDF or Microsoft Word documents will be accepted. Please mail applications and requested attachments to rivco-schools@ruhealth.org, keeping in mind that response time will vary based on number of applications received.

School Terms and Attendance

1. Name, address and main telephone number of institution:

   Palm Valley School
   35-525 Da Vall Dr.
   Rancho Mirage, CA 92270

   (760)328-0861

2. Please provide your expected student enrollment numbers for grades 6 and below, by grade level, while school is in session.

   Grade 6: 12
   Grade 5: 15
   Grade 4: 10
   Grade 3: 27
   Grade 2: 16
   Grade 1: 12
   Kindergarten: 20

3. Please provide your expected number of staff and educators that will be on campus while school is in session.

   Staff: 13
   Teachers: 11

4. Please provide the dates of instruction for each school term, including the proposed date of reopening in-person instruction.

   Beginning school (Distance Learning) – August 26th
Proposed date of re-opening in-person instruction – September 8th, 2020
First semester concludes on December 18th
Final day of classes for the school year is June 3rd, 2021

Community Consultation

The waiver process requires that you have consulted with labor, parent and community organizations (Framework, page 1; Template, page 3). Please attach at least one letter each demonstrating support from:

☐ A representative parents’ association that your school serves as evidence of parental support. If your typical enrollment is too small to have a parents’ association, a signed separate attestation by you that parents have been consulted and concur with in-person instruction is sufficient.

☐ Your school’s governing board, or district board as appropriate, as evidence of community support indicating that they concur with in-person instruction.

☐ Your school’s union as evidence of labor support, or, if your institution does not have unionized staff, a signed separate attestation from you that teachers and staff have been consulted as part of this process, indicating they concur with in-person instruction.

Please see attached for letters of support from our Parents Association, Board of Trustees, parents, and my attestation of faculty/staff support

Reopening Plan

The Department of Public Health does not review reopening plans, but you are required to have one (Template, page 3). If you are a district, you may use the same reopening plan for all schools on this application. All elements specifically mentioned in the Template must be present in your reopening plan, and your reopening plan must be publicly posted at the time of application for comparison to your statements below. Do not attach your reopening plan to this application unless requested.

Please provide the permanent web URL (address) where your reopening plan is posted. This location will be verified.

https://www.pvs.org

You must indicate (initial, checkmark or type “Yes”) for or next to each item below that your reopening plan provides each prescribed element and is in full compliance with the state framework and school guidance documentation.
YES Cleaning and Disinfection: How shared surfaces will be regularly cleaned and disinfected and how use of shared items will be minimized.

Yes Cohorting: How students will be kept in small, stable, groups with fixed membership that stay together for all activities (e.g., instruction, lunch, recess) and minimize/avoid contact with other groups or individuals who are not part of the cohort. Your cohorting plan will be required in detail in the next section.

Yes Entrance, Egress, and Movement Within the School: How movement of students, staff, and parents will be managed to avoid close contact and/or mixing of cohorts. Your cohorting plan will be required in detail in the next section.

Yes Face Coverings and Other Essential Protective Gear: How CDPH’s face covering requirements will be satisfied and enforced. CDPH recommends all children over 2 years of age to wear a facial covering, and requires grade levels 3 and up (and all staff) to wear a facial covering, except where a medical reason applies. Schools that do not explicitly indicate they will follow and enforce CDPH face covering guidelines will not be permitted to open.

Yes Health Screenings for Students and Staff: How students and staff will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and how ill students or staff will be separated from others and sent home immediately.

Yes Healthy Hygiene Practices: The availability of handwashing stations and hand sanitizer, and how their use will be promoted and incorporated into routines.

Yes Identification and Tracing of Contacts: Actions that staff will take when there is a confirmed case. Confirm that the school(s) have designated staff persons to support contact tracing, such as creation and submission of lists of exposed students and staff to the local health department and notification of exposed persons. Each school must designate a person for the local health department to contact about COVID-19. Your response plan will be required in detail in the next section.

Yes Physical Distancing: How space and routines will be arranged to allow for physical distancing of students and staff. Schools that do not explicitly indicate they will implement and enforce CDPH physical distancing guidelines will not be permitted to open.

Yes Staff Training and Family Education: How staff will be trained and families will be educated on the application and enforcement of the plan.

Yes Testing of Students and Staff: How school officials will ensure that students and staff who have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 will be rapidly tested and what instructions they will be given while waiting for test results. Describe how staff will be tested periodically to detect asymptomatic infections. Your staff surveillance plan will be required in detail in the next section.

Yes Triggers for Switching to Distance Learning: The criteria the superintendent will use to determine when to physically close the school and prohibit in-person instruction.

Yes Communication Plans: How the superintendent will communicate with students, staff, and parents about cases and exposures at the school, consistent with privacy requirements such as FERPA and HIPAA.
School Response Planning

Certain aspects of your plan are of particular public interest, and the County of Riverside requires that these plans be specifically explained in this application for public review. If you are a district, you may use the same testing, cohorting and response plan for all schools on this application. You may choose to cut and paste appropriate portions of your plan below, but do not simply refer to your reopening plan or school procedure manual in the following sections. Answers such as “see plan, page 45” are not acceptable and your application will not be processed.

1. Please provide a contact at your school designated to receive reports from RUHS-Public Health of a positive student or staff member if detected by an outside entity, including telephone number and E-mail address.

   Ms. Tasha Romo: (760)328-0861 or email: tromo@pvhs.org

2. The state requires a response plan to a case of COVID-19 (Template, page 4). Please indicate your institution’s plans for receiving, reporting and responding to both a result of a) a staff member testing positive to COVID-19 and b) a student testing positive to COVID-19. Your plan should at minimum state how you will receive such results, determine who was exposed, notify the Department of Public Health, deal with the cohort involved, handle individuals who are quarantined or isolated, and determine if your trigger(s) to cease in-person instruction have been hit. Do not simply reference your reopening plan or school procedure manual in this answer.

**Staff member testing positive to COVID – 19:** All reports of positive COVID – 19 testing will be received and coordinated by our HR – COVID Designated Coordinator, Ms. Tasha Romo. If the employee is a staff member, contact tracing will be initiated to determine any and all close contacts that the staff member has had. (Our staff will be utilizing several aids to contact tracing including contracting support from the NOVID App to help determine proximity interactions) We will be using the 6/15/48 rule: Close Contacts are defined as people that have been within 6 feet proximity for 15 minutes or more in the last 48 hours with both people wearing face coverings OR any contact less than 6 feet with one or more people not wearing a face covering. The California Department of Public Health will be notified. All individuals having close contact will be notified and will be quarantined for a period of 14 days for testing and self-monitoring. If feasible and the employee feels well enough, the staff member will work from home for a period of 14 days or until cleared by their medical provider. We will evaluate the report in light of our overall positive testing rate to determine if school closure is warranted. The same procedure will be followed if the employee is a teacher with the addition of all students in the cohort will be notified and transitioned to Distance Learning. At no point will individual medical information be supplied.
with the exception of reporting requirements of the CDPH, in strict adherence to FERPA and HIPAA privacy laws.

**Student testing positive to COVID – 19:** All reports of positive COVID – 19 testing will be received and coordinated by our HR – COVID Designated Coordinator, Ms. Tasha Romo. All individuals in the students’ cohort will be notified and transitioned to Distance Learning, including any teaching personnel related to the cohort, for a period of 14 days. The California Department of Public Health will be notified. We will evaluate the report in light of our overall positive testing rate to determine if school closure is warranted. At no point will individual medical information be supplied with the exception of reporting requirements of the CDPH, in strict adherence to FERPA and HIPAA privacy laws.

3. The state educational framework requires a 2-month staff surveillance COVID-19 test plan for in-person instruction (Framework, page 2). Please indicate your institution’s plans for testing, including individuals eligible for testing and any providers you currently plan to use (which may be staff’s medical plans), how you will collate these results and how you will act upon them. This plan must not rely on county resources to provide testing. **Do not simply reference your reopening plan or school procedure manual in this answer.**

All employees will be tested for the COVID 19 virus with 25% being tested every two weeks. Thereby ensuring that all employees are tested every eight weeks. Employees will seek these tests from their medical provider (We offer both Kaiser and Blue Shield plans to all employees) Results will be tallied and coordinated through our HR – COVID Designated Coordinator, Ms. Tasha Romo and our COVID Task Force. Positive results will be responded per the answer provided above.

4. Please provide a contact at your school who will provide information on tests that your school has performed as either part of surveillance or outbreak testing, including telephone number and E-mail address. This may be the same contact as provided above if this same person will perform both roles.

Ms. Tasha Romo: (760)328-0861 or email: tromo@pvs.org

5. The state educational framework makes reference to cohorts to reduce mixing and the impact of exposures (Framework, page 3 and 4). Please indicate your institution’s plans for how to define a cohort and how they will be selected and separated during the school day. **Do not reference your reopening plan or school procedure manual in this answer.**
Our cohorts are defined by grade level and our ample space allows for isolated cohorts throughout the day. Our Lower School campus (K – 6th) is physically separated into class cohorts, including separate play areas, separate buildings, and individual grade-level classrooms. Our Kindergarten, for example, is isolated with their own Kindergarten building and their own isolated play/recess area that is surrounded by iron fencing…. unused by and inaccessible to…. any other cohort. Similarly, student drop-off and pick up locations are unique to our Kindergarteners, so no contact outside of their cohorts will occur during the school day. Similarly, 1st and 2nd grades have their own buildings. While they share a recess/play area… cohorts (grade levels) will not be mixed at any time. The same is true for our 3rd – 5th grades. Again, our 6th grade is housed on another part of our campus with their own building and isolated, fenced-off play area. We are fortunate to have exterior doors for all classrooms – we do not have any indoor hallways on our lower school campus. So, any and all student movement will be done outdoors with physical distancing required.

Certification and Attestation

- I attest that the foregoing is true and correct.
- I attest, as the district superintendent or equivalent, that the referenced elementary school(s) is/are eligible for the waiver. I further agree the school(s) will follow the terms set forth in this waiver application and all applicable state guidelines, including those for hygiene, facial coverings and social distancing.
- I attest that our reopening plan addresses all of the required elements, and that it is publicly posted on our school website and available to all inquiries on request.
- I understand that the waiver, if granted, applies only to in-person instruction for grades 6 and below inclusive. If my school offers in-person instruction for grades 7 and above, those grade levels are not covered by this waiver, and this waiver does not cover any standalone middle or high school institution.
- I understand that the waiver, if granted, is discretionary and a school may be ordered at any time to cease in-person instruction according to the outbreak guidelines in the state education framework (Framework, pages 4 and 5), or if evidence is received indicating the school is consistently not following state guidance, or if the school fails to close as promised according to its declared triggers for switching to distance learning, or as according to any other applicable county or state public health officer order. If so ordered, I agree the school will comply promptly with all terms of the order and cease in-person instruction immediately with students having departed campus no later than the end of the school day.
- I understand that submission of this completed application and its supporting documentation to RUHS-Public Health will make them public documents, which may be posted or disclosed at any time.
- I understand that the granting of a waiver does not absolve the school of any legal liabilities it may have or incur by resuming in-person instruction.
I understand that the decision to grant or not grant a waiver is exclusively the sole joint discretionary determination of the Riverside County Public Health Officer and the California Department of Public Health.

Name of attesting superintendent/official (your name serves as signature): Dr. Steven Sherman

Title, and school: Head of School
Palm Valley School

Telephone number and E-mail address: (760)328 - 0861
ssherman@pvs.org

Date of attestation: Monday, August 24, 2020