

hidden curriculum to grow for our students is definitely a disservice.”

Pros and cons

Bergmann sees first-hand the challenge of remote learning. Distinct from home-schooling, where families utilize curricula specifically designed for this purpose, districts offer hybrids of their own making, akin to online college classes—but for younger students, with developing study skills and different attention spans.

Bergmann says her son is “pretty independent” and does well in school, but Mom doesn’t have the same influence as a teacher. That’s not unusual, according to Mary Sakuma, superintendent of the Butte County Office of Education, who told the CN&R that many students seek approval more from teachers than parents when it comes to schoolwork.

That’s just one reason she, like CUSD administrators, endorse in-person education.

“Working from home in a distance-learning model really doesn’t work well for most kids,”

Linda Bergmann, parent of a Chico Junior High student, says she’s glad her son can continue distance learning without needing to switch schools.

PHOTO BY EVAN TUCHINSKY



Sakuma said. “It’s not to say the families aren’t trying, because they’re really working hard; and it’s also not to say that teachers who are teaching in distance learning aren’t doing a great job, because they are.

“End of the day, when you’re a kid and you can be face-to-face with your teacher, it really increases the engagement and I think really gives that teacher the in-the-moment feedback that comes from that person-to-person interaction—and really allows the teacher to modify their instructional strategy on the spot.”

BCOE and the county’s districts, including CUSD, anticipated the coronavirus surge that pushed Butte County into California’s most restrictive tier (see “Year-end stats stark,” chico.newsreview.com, Dec. 31). That was the impetus for CUSD’s survey and distance-learning plan.

Sakuma and CUSD administrators noted that none of the county’s coronavirus cases traces to transmission at school.

“I realize the challenges that [pandemic-caused changes] have brought to families,” Sakuma said. “My opinion is that, wherever possible, we want kids in school with their teachers, but there are just so many challenges that this pandemic has brought that there’s no simple or easy answer.” □

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