As the Yuba County Superintendent of Schools, and in consultation with education leaders of Yuba County, I am calling upon state and local policymakers and medical experts to establish a consistent, coherent, and responsive strategy for managing the COVID-19 pandemic that does not create unacceptable collateral issues for the well-being of our children and families. As outlined herein, the current approach at both the state and regional levels, and the need for closer collaboration, is harming our students and their families. Indeed, it threatens the very infrastructure of our schools.

It is well-documented that education disruptions from the COVID-19 response have harmed students in incalculable ways. Students have lost 20% or more of their learning opportunities. Neglect, physical and sexual abuse have increased significantly under pandemic conditions. Children are experiencing significant negative adverse consequences, including suicidal thoughts and acts.

Economic uncertainty, student and family isolation, and the inequities of distance learning, have reached levels that impel, indeed compel, me to speak out forcibly, and in no uncertain terms. What is especially alarming is how the chain of command and decision-making process has been distilled to a point where only a handful of individuals are making profound policy decisions impacting children, families, and educators.

Specifically, I am respectfully requesting that consideration be given to the establishment of a joint Regional Education Task Force, in collaboration with our Health Officers. Clearly, the ongoing weekly briefing, while beneficial as COVID-19 status updates, are extremely limited with little opportunity to fully engage and problem-solve the profound challenges schools are facing.

I am not assessing blame, but requesting that state and regional leaders engage the education community and assist us in carrying out our critical and ethical responsibilities in addressing the evolving educational deficiencies. Clearly, we support and strongly adhere to all health protocols with uncompromising fidelity. To this end, we have implemented extensive health protocols with the approval of both local and state health leaders.

Of note, I have documented cases where counties under similar COVID-19 restrictions are concurrently offering the vaccine to individuals 65 years and older, as well as educators. This is in keeping with the Governor’s recent announcement directing that this approach be adopted by the State of California.

I am requesting that this same consideration be provided to our area educators. Furthermore, we offer our complete support in appealing to Governor Newsom for adequate vaccine supplies. Indeed, this is the paramount challenge facing all of us. Make no mistake, if we fail to act, to sound the alarm, we are implicitly and explicitly accepting the outcomes. As educators, we cannot allow this on our watch.

Respectfully,
Dr. Reveles