

# Marin City ‘learning hub’ offers alternative to private tutors

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Kids in Sausalito and Marin City who are struggling with distance learning could get some help from the community very soon.

Sausalito Marin City School District parents Alena Maunder and Jen Conway have teamed up with Marin nonprofits, educators and local organizations to set up a free community [learning hub](#). The operation, which is set to open Tuesday at the Marin City Community Services District recreation center, is one of the first such learning hubs in Marin.

The learning hub idea was born as almost all Marin schools opened last month with only distance learning. Since distance learning is problematic for many kids, some local families who can afford private tutors were forming their own [“micro-school pods,”](#) or homeschooling groups.

The learning hubs will providing the same extra support with distance learning to kids and families who can’t afford the private tutor pod arrangements — or to those where both parents need to work outside the home.

“It was all about making sure that children who did poorly with distance learning, that we didn’t fail them again,” Maunder said. “We want to make sure that the children, especially in the Marin City and Sausalito areas, that they’re provided the support they need in order to be successful.”



Maunder and Conway have compiled a list of kids who might need help from both of the district's two schools — Willow Creek Academy charter school in Sausalito and Bayside Martin Luther King Jr. Academy in Marin City.

Children from other schools in the immediate area who also need aid with distance learning will be welcome to attend as well, they said. Also included at the hub are seventh- and eighth-graders from Bayside MLK. They are not technically eligible yet for in-person classroom learning under a state waiver application the district is receiving to open classes for transitional kindergarten through sixth grade.

“Our goal was not to just to support kids at Willow Creek,” Conway said. “This is truly setting up an inclusive process for all kids who need this kind of support and who don't have access to in-person learning.”

Mary Jane Burke, Marin County superintendent of schools, said she supported the effort.

“This is something that will provide an opportunity to get help for our most vulnerable students, sooner than later,” she said. “It's very good.”

Burke added that a community learning hub is also set to open Tuesday at the Novato Library.

The hubs are expected to follow new guidance for small groups released last month by Marin County public health. That includes class sizes limited to 14 students, with a limit of two teachers per cohort.

Shelley Hamilton, a spokesperson for Marin Promise Partnership, said the organization is helping with the Marin City learning hub. A community-based crowdfunding campaign, Marin Education Equity Fund, has also raised about \$8,000 so far to help Marin Promise Partners in this work.

“Our hope is that by working together through this crisis, our education ecosystem will emerge and continue as a more equitable integrated partnership that better supports the kids who have traditionally been impacted by systemic inequity,” Hamilton said.

Of the approximately 500 students in the Sausalito Marin City School District's two campuses, about a quarter are covered by a state [waiver](#) to open for in-classroom instruction. The waiver, approved in recent days, will allow kindergarten through sixth grade at Bayside MLK to open Tuesday for in-classroom learning.



Not included in the waiver are seventh and eighth grades at Bayside MLK and Willow Creek. Those students will be staying in distance learning until at least Sept. 22, and so would benefit most from the learning hub.

Conway and Maunder said they are also working with organizations such as Conscious Kitchens, 10,000 Degrees, Play Marin, Bridge the Gap College Prep, Shore Up Marin City and the Marin City Library to offer meals and enrichment programs at the learning hub.

Conway and Maunder are two of four candidates running for two open seats on the Sausalito Marin City School District board of trustees in the Nov. 3 elections. Also running are school parents Yasmine McGrane and Lisa Bennett, who both said they supported the learning hub idea.

“Now, more than ever, school leaders must look through a racial equity lens on all education programs, given the increased learning loss from distance learning for our Black and brown students,” McGrane said. “Our school leaders must overcome political divides and lean into collaboration for the benefit of those students that need it most.”

Bennett said all means need to be used to help students during distance learning.

“I strongly support any effort that mitigates the learning loss that can come with distance learning,” she said. “Not all students take to it, and it’s important that we acknowledge this and provide them with the support they need.”

Maunder and Conway said they are connecting with Marin County officials and others for help with financing staffing, food, equipment, custodial staff for cleaning and COVID-19 safeguards and other expenses.

“We’re just putting all the available pieces together,” Conway said.

To contribute to the project, see their page on [gofundme.com](https://www.gofundme.com).

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