



EXCELLENCE ★ INNOVATION

Superintendent: Matt Doyle, Ed.D.

Board Members: Rich Alderson, Martha Alvarado, Debbie Morton, Rosemary Smithfield and Cipriano Vargas

Community Health Alert# 9

April 20, 2020

Esteemed Parents, Students, Staff, and Community Members,

Thank you all very much for your continued patience, understanding, and support as we work collaboratively to adjust to the new reality of the stay-at-home orders by the San Diego County Health and Human Services. This brief update will highlight the launch of the Vista Virtual School system.

Student Access to Technology

Our primary focus of the first two weeks of the Vista Virtual School system was to get students connected to computer devices, to the internet, and to their teachers. Thanks to a unified effort by teachers, classified staff, and administrators, we were able to distribute 14,273 computer devices to students across the district. We were able to support families getting connected to the internet, with 95% of the students in Vista Unified (19,014 students) successfully logged in and working in the Vista Virtual classrooms. We have already distributed over 1,000 internet hotspots to families, and each hotspot can support up to ten computers. Thanks to our Family and Community Engagement liaisons, we are continuing to reach out to students and families in an effort to reach our goal of 100% of students connected to their Vista Virtual classrooms.

Celebrating Our Seniors

Our seniors across the district and country are most impacted by the school closure. We have a team of student leaders, teachers, parents and administrators working on the design of a plan that will celebrate our seniors during this challenging time. This team is hard at work generating ideas and setting the foundation to amplify and elevate all seniors in the district. They will be reaching out to seniors to gather ideas and suggestions in the coming weeks. To that end, check-out the video they made to launch their great work:

<https://vimeo.com/409610756>

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Vista Virtual School Progress in Elementary School

Elementary students across the district have spent the last two weeks checking out devices, getting connected with the internet, and logging into their grade level Google Classrooms. Students are beginning to engage daily with their teachers in learning activities that can be accessed at any time on a schedule that works for the family. In addition, students may also participate in synchronous activities, such as “live” meetings on Google Meets. Teachers are beginning to develop their own Google classrooms with personalized activities that meet the individual needs of our students. Special Education teachers are working alongside general education teachers to develop these lessons so they are accessible for all students. Third grade teacher and VUSD parent, Tekoa Chilcote said, “Student productivity definitely went up after we were able to make contact through Google Meets. Students and parents appreciated the communication and we teachers were so glad to see their faces again!” We have also made arrangements to have everything translated into Spanish so that our Spanish speaking parents have access to the content and can support their students from home. With participation of 95%, the entire elementary team is committed to ensuring all students are connected, valued, and supported through Vista Virtual School.

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Vista Virtual School Progress in Middle and High School

The first two weeks of Vista Virtual School have been extremely successful for our high schools, with over 97% of our students logged in and engaging with their classes, and for our middle schools, with 94% of our students logged in and working in their Google Classrooms. Teachers are posting targeted lessons, assignments, and resources for each of their courses through Google Classroom, and instruction is focused on the essential standards and skills. Each school has a suggested schedule posted on their websites for students to follow with distance learning, although all instructional material can be accessed at any time to allow for flexibility for families. Teachers are already actively engaging students during office hours to provide extra support and feedback. Teachers and students have reported that they are very happy to be connected to each other and their coursework.

Temporary Grading Administrative Regulation

The Temporary Grading Administrative Regulation was developed in collaboration with over 40 teachers and administrators from across the district and through feedback from over 320 parents from elementary, middle, and high school. The regulation was developed to ensure that our district maintains alignment to our values, with emphasis on the value of equity. The COVID -19 pandemic has placed tremendous stress on every aspect of our society, including our educational system. These pressures, however, are not shared by everyone to the same degree. Some students and their families are more severely impacted than others. The development of the policy and administrative regulation are intended to ensure that all students have the same opportunity to learn and grow academically, socially and emotionally. In times of crisis, opportunity gaps run the risk of widening across racial and economic lines. Additionally, students are susceptible to increased levels of trauma due to stress and conflict arising from this crisis. Our policies and practices during this time should align with Governor Newsom's hold harmless approach for all students because students do not have control over the impacts that they face as a result of the crisis. The Credit/No Credit guidelines in this administrative regulation have been established based on three research-based principles:

- Student academic achievement during this temporary period may be negatively impacted due to a host of environmental factors in the distance-learning environment.
- Student academic performance during school closures is more likely to reflect racial, economic, and resource differences.
- Teachers are being asked to provide high-quality instruction and students are required to engage in a new distance learning environment with very little preparation.

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We are all living in difficult, unprecedented times, and educators are working hard each day to do the best for students and to provide learning in adaptive ways. Based on Governor Newsom's Executive Order [N-26-20](#), current research, and the principles outlined above, adapted from the [Crescendo Education Group](#), these guidelines set out expectations for students, while also recognizing the need to maintain equitable access to learning and grading. The Temporary Grading Guidelines (AR 6301) can be found [here](#).

Job Supports for Families

The San Diego Workforce Partnership has been working collaboratively with Vista Unified for a number of years, connecting our high school students with job preparation, such as resume writing and interview skills, and connecting them with local job opportunities. They also offer a variety of virtual services and support for all workers impacted by COVID-19, including our families in Vista Unified. Visit workforce.org/covid-19 for resources, such as [online workshops](#), [webinars for laid off workers](#), local jobs leads via their [Career Portal](#), and more.

Sincerely,

Dr. Matt Doyle
Superintendent of Schools
Vista Unified School District



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