



Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update to Families Spring Break and Distance Learning Phase II Friday, April 3, 2020

Dear SMFCSD Families,

As you know, Spring Break begins Monday, April 6 and we hope that it will be a time for personal and family renewal for you. The challenges of COVID-19 have changed all of our lives dramatically. We thank you for your partnership and patience as we transitioned to these new circumstances.

The Remainder of the School Year

Over the last several days, you will have heard California state leaders urging all school districts to extend school campus closures for the rest of the school year. While this is disheartening, we know we must face this potential reality. Health officials who are monitoring the data advise us that it will take longer than originally expected for conditions to improve such that we can safely bring students back to our classrooms. While we do not have a final decision on this at this writing, we are prepared for this eventuality.

At the same time, school is not over. When we return from Spring Break, we begin Phase II of Distance Learning. We hope this message, the questions and answers below, and the Frequently Asked Questions in the APPENDIX will serve as a valuable resource for your family as we go forward.

Transition: A Bumpy Road

First, we know that school closures happened rapidly and that it was a difficult transition to Distance Learning as we all delved into the unknown. Teachers and school leaders have had to make a complete shift, attempting to instruct students in a virtual environment which cannot begin to replicate the classroom experience for students while they are at home. We recognize and appreciate the enormous effort put forth during this pandemic emergency by everyone including our teachers and administrators who may have their own children at home, family members to care for, and at the same time we've asked them to embrace new technology and unfamiliar ways of doing their work.

We have learned that some students and families are having a very successful Distance Learning experience while others are struggling. We need to make improvements so all students continue learning during the period of school closure. As a result of the inconsistency across the District, students and families may be feeling frustrated and/or disappointed with their initial Distance Learning experience. At last night's Board meeting, our Trustees had the opportunity to hear from members of the community about how Distance Learning is impacting their children and families.



Over the past two weeks, District staff have worked to develop Distance Learning Phase II that includes increased structure, additional training and guidelines to move our program forward with greater consistency. Below we provide a summary and in the APPENDIX to this letter you will find Frequently Asked Questions with important details and resources.

Distance Learning Phase II - High Level

Distance Learning for students in our District includes: "...enrichment, engagement, review and exposure to new material through Google Classroom and/or hardcopy materials."

In Phase II, we set clear priorities for teachers to stay connected with students and families, clarified Distance Learning's intended outcomes for students, and strengthened the digital delivery of Distance Learning. We have a plan for addressing equitable access.

In collaboration with our educators, we have established that our preferred method of Distance Learning instruction is online. In this context, we are taking actions in two areas to address equitable access to learning:

- A written, content-rich, curated "placemat" of instructional materials will be made available to all students.
- Beginning April 15, our Technology Team will provide Chromebooks to students with limited or no access. Hotspots (internet access tools) are on order and will be distributed as soon as possible.

Now that children are home for an extended period, a two-week Spring Break may seem daunting. In the APPENDIX to this letter we share a list of activities, and over Spring Break we'll be putting together a District Distance Learning website for parents. We'll advise you when it's available.

When we return from Spring Break, Monday and Tuesday, April 20 and 21 will be dedicated to professional development and instructional planning. **Distance Learning will resume on Wednesday, April 22.** Teachers will be provided information and support on the tools they need to be effective in this new learning environment including Google Classroom, Google Meet and Google Suite to enhance their teaching practice. The District Office will also provide written and video instructional content, technology "trouble-shooting" resources, and expanded translation services that can be utilized during the Distance Learning Phase II.

What should I expect from my child's teacher?

Students should be receiving either instruction or daily learning assignments that may include enrichment, engagement, review and exposure to new material. Activities may include reading, assigned work across all content areas, social-emotional lessons, screen time including group meetings, instructional videos from teachers or assigned by teacher, physical education and independent student activities. The amount of time students are expected to spend engaged in learning activities varies by grade level as follows: TK-K: 1-2 hours/day; Grades 1-5: 2-3 hours/day; Grades 6-8: 3-4 hours/day.



Families should receive communication weekly from your child's teacher that includes their availability to provide support and clarification of expectations for learning as well as the time of scheduled meetings or phone calls. In addition, you should expect your child's teacher to connect with your student/family regularly at least two times each week for elementary and at least once a week for middle school, by middle school homeroom or first-period teacher.

We want to remind you how important this connection and communication is to all of us, so we appreciate your attention to this outreach. Every District teacher and school administrator has made an effort to get in touch with each student and family over the last two weeks but have been unable to reach some families. If you have not been contacted, please leave a message at your school's main number during the week of April 20 with your contact information including phone number and email address as the school/District may not have your current contact information. We want to hear from you and will continue pursuing every method to contact all families.

My child does not have access to a computer or internet. What do I do?

If your child needs a Chromebook and/or access to the internet, please leave a message at your school's main number or email your Principal as soon as possible.

My child is a Special Education student. What should I expect?

If your child receives Special Education services, you should expect a phone contact from their Special Education teacher or case manager at least once a week. They are also collaborating with other related service providers (Speech Language Pathologist, Occupational Therapist, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Adaptive Physical Education) on behalf of your child. You can expect that IEP meetings will be scheduled and held virtually with you. Education Specialists and Related Service providers will work with your child and provide learning activities to complete at home.

You can expect RSP teachers to connect with your child at least twice a week. They also collaborate with your child's general education teacher. SDC teachers will be working with your child and providing instruction/activities on a daily basis consistent with the general education guidelines: TK-K: 1-2 hours/day; Grades 1-5: 2-3 hours/day; Grades 6-8: 3-4 hours/day.

Related Service providers (SLPs, OTs, APE) will be collaborating with your child's teacher to support classroom instruction, and additionally will work with your child to provide instruction/activities once a week. If your child also receives Educationally Related Mental Health Service (ERHMS), you will be contacted by the school psychologist who works with your child to schedule services.

Frequently Asked Questions

Please see the APPENDIX to this letter for answers to these Frequently Asked Questions:

- Can I record or otherwise participate in my child's online classes?
- How can I support my child with Distance Learning?
- If, in my observation, my child's Distance Learning is not going according to these guidelines, who do I speak to?
- Should I worry about student grades?



- What happens if students misbehave in this Distance Learning environment?
- How do I learn the technology you're using with my child so I can support him/her?
- How can I share my family's Distance Learning experience with the District?

Also, as we mentioned above, Spring Break Resources for families are also listed in the APPENDIX.

In Closing

On this day before Spring Break, the future looks different than anyone could have imagined. In just three weeks, we've gone from seeing our students' faces every day to barely leaving our own homes. The toll that this prolonged stress is taking on each one of us is hard to measure but very real.

While we at the District still have much to do, we've worked closely with our unions, our staff and our leaders to support one another in this process, and we continue to make improvements to how we operate and work together. We are both proud and grateful for this collaborative spirit. I have no doubt that when school is back "in session" in late April, we will take what we've learned, the input from our teachers, students and families, and revise again. That is what we have always done, and will continue to do, no matter what the circumstances are in order to provide the very best possible education for our students and keep them safe.

Over Spring Break, we will try not to bombard you with messages, but we will share new resources as they come alive, and we hope you will share your "learning from home" successes and challenges with us.

I wish you peace and calm until we are together again,
Dr. Joan Rosas
Superintendent



APPENDIX

Thank you for reading these Frequently Asked Questions and check out the many resource links for families.

Distance Learning

Can I record or otherwise participate in my child's online classes?

Families are reminded that all of the same expectations of student and family behavior in a classroom applies in a Distance Learning setting. In addition, all of the same Education Code laws continue to apply when your child is engaged with teachers in this Distance Learning environment.

We must all do our part to protect the privacy rights of students and teachers. For example, Education Code section 51512 prohibits any person, including a pupil, from using any electronic listening device or recording device in the classroom without prior consent of the teacher and school principal. A student who violates that provision can be subject to discipline, and for any other person, including a parent or guardian, violation is a misdemeanor and could be referred to law enforcement.

As another example, while people generally have a right to take photos in public settings, we do not allow photos in a classroom without permission and this would be the same in the Distance Learning environment. We ask that students and their families refrain from taking any photos of the virtual class meetings and do not share any images captured on social media or in any other way circulate them to the public.

Lastly, just as you would not expect to attend a class session on campus without principal and teacher consent, parents / guardians should not join their students in online class meetings. While your child may initially need support to engage the technology, we ask that you then allow your student to continue the session with their teacher and classmates. Please do not use the "chat" functionality to engage the teacher or otherwise disrupt the flow of learning for the students. Instead please use email or your customary method of contacting the teacher directly with any questions or concerns.

These are challenging times and we're all in this together. Everyone is working hard to ensure that learning continues in an environment of trust. Please do your part to respect the privacy of each member of our community.

How can I support my child with Distance Learning?

We know that this "Stay-at-Home" time is not easy. In many ways it is much more demanding on all of us than our usual routines. Below we offer some suggestions that, if possible, can help you establish practices that support your child in Distance Learning:

- Create a consistent routine and schedule that balances Distant Learning and your own work and family needs.
- Provide an environment that is conducive to learning.
- Engage in conversation about what your child's teacher is assigning.



- Monitor time spent engaging in online and offline learning, and assist your child in balancing.
- Encourage attendance, as much as possible, to any live or recorded teaching (Google Meets, assigned videos, etc).

If, in my observation, my child's Distance Learning is not going according to these guidelines, who do I speak to?

Parents are on the frontlines of the daily challenges of student education during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you feel that your child is not successfully navigating Distance Learning and your family has questions or needs support, please reach out to your child's teacher directly in whatever format you normally speak to them. If you are unable to reach them, please reach out to the school's principal.

Should I worry about student grades?

We recommend that you not worry about grades at this time. Please focus on helping your child engage with Distance Learning and completing their assigned tasks. For middle school students, we are talking with our high school district to make sure we are aligned with their plan for grades. For elementary students, our teachers are recording completed work and will provide feedback through our Distance Learning communications. Plans for report cards are still being developed.

What happens if students misbehave in this Distance Learning environment?

While this environment is unprecedented, we still expect our students to use good decision making in their interactions with their teachers and classmates. Should an incident occur, we will apply all relevant Education Code statutes and follow our normal discipline practices.

How do I learn the technology you're using with my child so I can support him/her?

As soon as we can, we will share training resources with our families.

How can I share my family's Distance Learning experience with the District?

In the first phase we've been singularly focused on connecting with students and providing support to teachers, principals and staff. As we roll out Distance Learning Phase II, we want to hear what's going well and not so well for your child. District staff is developing a survey to gather information from teachers, parents and students, and we'll use this input to address challenges and iterate solutions.

Spring Break Resources

Want some ideas of things to do with your children while on Spring Break? We've assembled these collections - pick and choose and to create your own enrichment adventure!

[SMFCSD's Family Resources for Distance Learning](#): This was our Phase I list of engagement opportunities, and while it looks like one little link, we invite you to explore the links in depth. The



Curriculum Guide ([English](#) | [Spanish](#)) alone has resource links in Mathematics ♦ English Language Arts ♦ Science ♦ Social Studies ♦ PE ♦ Performing Arts.

[Common Sense Media](#): Plan activities from Common Sense Media's menu of offerings.

[Activity Hero](#) is an online marketplace of camps, after school classes, workshops and kids's nights out, some free and some fee-based, that have adapted to our current stay-at-home circumstance. Check it out!

Music for Minors has been a provider of music lessons for students at SMFCSD for quite some time. Please check out their offerings in their April 3, 2020 letters parents ([English](#) | [Spanish](#)) or to students ([English](#) | [Spanish](#)). They ask that parents or students with questions to submit them to questions4mfm@gmail.com. "We believe that students will be able to interact with our lessons with minimal parent support, enabling parents to attend to their own work or needed activities." Ah, music to a parent's ears...

Want to build your own schedule? We borrowed this [List of Activities to do each day](#) from a fellow school district and thought you might like to use as a guide or follow these links to see where they lead you.

We hope these are a start to keep your child happily engaged. Of course, there are many more resources out there, and as we build our Distance Learning webpage for families, we'll add more.

Health and Wellbeing

How do I support my child's social-emotional wellbeing?

The wellbeing of our students and families is a top priority. Parenting is hard enough, but at these times of difficulty, it can be especially hard to be indoors for extended periods of time. In addition, if your family is experiencing economic, medical or other hardships, your stress is multiplied. No matter what your situation, below are some resources we hope you will find helpful.

- [Social-Emotional Learning Resource Packet](#)
- [Growth Mindset Parenting](#)
- [Supporting Kids During the Coronavirus Crisis](#)
- [Ideas for How to Self-calm and Stop Yelling](#)
- [Helping All Ages and Stages through Life's Challenges](#) (SMFCSD and StarVista)
- Seeking Parenting Consultation? Parents/guardians who would like parenting consultation from the Youth Service Bureau, please email wellnesscoaching@ymcasf.org.
- [Parent's Place Resources for Parents during Shelter in Place](#) includes free online parent chats and low cost support groups. Explore their online services or sign up for a Parenting Support Chat [here](#).
- [How to Get Your Child's Attention with Yelling](#)



- [Empowering Parents Website](#)

24-Hour Parent Support Lines:

- National Parent Helpline 1-855-4A-PARENT: (1-855-427-2736)
- SF Human Services Agency Parent Talkline: 415-441-KIDS (415-441-5437)
- Childhelp Child Abuse Prevention: 800.4.A.CHILD (800.422.4453); TEXT 1-800-422-4453

Crisis Hotlines for Youth:

[List of hotlines from Stop It Now.org](#)

[List of hotlines from the Child Welfare Information Gateway](#)

- Crisis Text Line: text "home" to 741-741
- National Suicide Prevention Hotline: 1-800-273-8255
- StarVista Crisis Hotline: 650-579-0350
- [Lifeline Chat Room](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/) (<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>)
- [Free Mental Health Apps for Smartphones](#)

Other Resources

Last week we sent you an extensive Community Resources document which you can also find on our website in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). Since then, we've located a number of additional resources to share with you.

Housing/Rental Assistance:

Unable to Pay Rent? Please use [this form](#) in English and Spanish from Legal Aid Society of San Mateo to request a pause in rent. If you need more support, please reach out to Legal aid via email to [Michelle deBlank](#) or text Francisca at 415-952-7307. In addition, please refer to these Housing Guides: [San Mateo Housing Guide](#) (English) and [San Mateo Housing Guide](#) (Spanish).

Immigration Support: [COVID-19 Resources for Undocumented Californians](#)

Emergency: In case of emergency, dial 9-1-1 which is always available, or visit your nearest hospital emergency room if you can get there safely.