

**CAPISTRANO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT  
BOARD REPORT**

To: Board of Trustees

From: Susan Holliday, Associate Superintendent, Educational Services

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Date: April 29, 2020

Board Item: Update on Distance Learning and Graduation

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**HISTORY**

Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a respiratory illness that was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in 2019 caused by a novel (new) coronavirus. The first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the United States was announced on January 21, 2020. On March 4, 2020, Governor Gavin Newsom declared a “state of emergency” to help prepare for the spread of the virus. On March 13, 2020, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order N-26-20 regarding the physical closure of schools by local educational agencies (LEAs) in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The order provides that even if schools close temporarily because of COVID-19, LEAs will continue to receive state funding for those days so that they can:

- Continue delivering high-quality educational opportunities to students to the extent feasible through, among other options, distance learning and/or independent study;
- Provide school meals in non-congregate settings through the Summer Food Service Program and Seamless Summer Option, consistent with the requirements of the California Department of Education and United States Department of Agriculture;
- Arrange for, to the extent practicable, supervision for students during ordinary school hours; and
- Continue to pay employees.

The guidance provided a framework for how LEAs can continue to deliver high-quality educational opportunities to students when the school site is physically closed and the LEA has suspended onsite instruction. In providing this instruction, it is critical that LEAs take steps to ensure that these opportunities are available to all students to the greatest extent possible, including economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English learners.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to maintain the safety of District students, families, and staff while mitigating the spread of the virus, Trustees approved temporary closure of all schools on March 13, 2020 with spring recess being moved to March 16-20, 2020. On April 15, 2020, Trustees approved to extend closures and distance learning through June 4, 2020. In order to provide all students with educational opportunities during temporary school closure, the District has implemented a Distance Learning Program which includes innovative ways to provide differentiated instruction and social emotional support in a remote learning environment. Additionally, the District has expanded the meal program in order to increase access for families.

District and site staff have collaborated to develop a robust distance learning plan for all grades, from early childhood through high school and including the Adult Transition Program. As part of the Distance Learning Program, teachers, counselors, support staff, and service providers use both online platforms and conference calls to engage and support students with their learning.

Since March 16, 2020 the District has accomplished the successful distribution of chromebooks, hotspots, and delivered an incredible number of online learning opportunities:

- Trained over 2,000 teachers and staff on virtual classroom technology
- Distributed more than 6,000 chromebooks and 500 hotspots
- Participated in over 50,000 Google Meets
- Distributed over 150,000 breakfasts and lunches
- Met virtually with key stakeholders, including PTA Presidents to receive feedback on distance learning, discuss temporary Board policies for grading, and options for graduation celebrations.

This evening staff will provide Trustees more details and information regarding upcoming activities, and events, including but not limited to the 2020 graduation ceremonies.

## **CURRENT CONSIDERATIONS**

On March 24, 2020, distance learning began Districtwide. The District has begun its fifth week of distance learning. “Distance learning” means instruction in which the student and instructor are in different locations. This may include interacting through the use of computer and communications technology, as well as delivering instruction and check-in time with their teacher. Distance learning may include video or audio instruction in which the primary mode of communication between the student and instructor is on-line interaction, video, or other instruction that relies on computer or communications technology. It may also include the use of print materials incorporating assignments that are the subject of written or oral feedback. Delivery of content to all students was successful, although, now we continue to refine and improve the delivery of instruction through distance learning. This update provides guidance and information on how we collectively developed agreed upon baseline expectations for the delivery of learning. The purpose is to clarify the roles of students, teachers, and families relative to distance learning, as well as the different options teachers have for content delivery. We also clarify expectations relative to the amount of time students will need to devote to learning each day and throughout the week. Many publishers are generously providing free access to fee-based content and we have included high quality, standards-aligned titles that

will benefit our teachers and students. We created a web site repository for all teachers to use to help them navigate the best resources to use and provided daily Google hangout meetings with our content area experts to guide teachers in understanding what to use and how to use it during distance learning.

#### Teacher Expectations:

The Capistrano Unified Education Association (CUEA) partnered with Human Resource Services and Education Services to collaboratively identify minimum agreements and expectations for teachers to assist with consistency and clarity of distance learning across the District. The finalized Memorandum of Understanding was announced on April 24, 2020. Our teachers and staff have worked tirelessly to transform classroom instruction to our new distance learning environment all while retaining the same standards and expectations from the State of California and California Education Code.

Our new standards for distance learning regarding daily instruction includes the following:

- Elementary: at least 2 assigned lessons daily. Weekly communication about office hours/small group support hours via Virtual Classroom Platforms (including, but not limited to, School Loop or Google Classroom) shall be made available. Meeting times, classroom times, and office hours are included in the weekly plan.
- Secondary: Clearly defined plan of lesson(s) to be implemented by teachers and completed by students on at least a weekly basis. Communication of such plans and office hours/small group support hours via Virtual Classroom Platforms (including, but not limited to, School Loop or Google Classroom). Meeting times, classroom times, and office hours are included in the weekly plan. Suggested daily activities or learning objectives will be stated in the weekly plan.

Our new standards for distance learning regarding office hours includes:

- Elementary: create a schedule of daily “office hours” for students to receive assistance, interact with peers, and discuss weekly learning objectives. This shall be a minimum of 90 minutes total per day. This can be through audio or video, but will not be limited to email interaction. These minutes are cumulative (do not need to be continuous), and will be communicated in the weekly schedule.
- Secondary: create a schedule of daily “office hours” for each prep where students can get help with assignments, ask questions, etc. This shall be a minimum of 90 minutes total per day. This can be through audio or video, but will not be limited to email interaction. These minutes are cumulative (do not need to be continuous), and will be communicated in the weekly schedule.

Our new standards for distance learning regarding 1:1 or Small Group Support includes:

- Provide support to students who are struggling or unable to connect during scheduled office hours, which can include 1:1 virtual appointments or small group hangouts.

These standards will take some time to roll out Districtwide. If you have specific questions or if you are experiencing challenges or concerns, please reach out to your student’s teacher(s) and, if necessary, your principal.

#### Middle School Course Placement Criteria

Placement in courses that naturally follow in the course sequence will be determined using traditional methods of placement including grades, teacher feedback, and parent input. For placement in accelerated courses, placement practices will continue to use a combination of grades and performance on assessments. Smarter Balanced Assessment 2019 data will be used for placement of students in courses that have required that score in the past. End of course exams that are used for placement will not be used for the 2020-2021

school year. Staff will provide Trustees an update on recommendations for middle school Math accelerated placement at the April 29, 2020 Board meeting.

### Attendance Tracking

As a result of Governor Newsom's Executive Order on March 13, 2020, Districts will not be penalized for not offering regular school days as a result of closure due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation. Schools closed due to COVID-19 will not receive instructional day and minute penalties for COVID-19 closures. Average Daily Attendance will be based on full school months only from July 1 to February 29 for the 2019-2020 academic year. While districts should not record regular daily attendance on school closure days for apportionment purposes, districts are encouraged to track engagement in distance learning while schools are closed. Every site is expected to have a system for tracking engagement and each site has established a system to make sure students are reporting into their classes/teachers. Every site has a system to reach out and track students that are not checking in. Staff has asked elementary principals to report out each week the number of students, by grade level, who are not engaging in distance learning in order to have a clear picture of what is happening in distance learning and to plan for future intervention. Secondary principals have been collecting student engagement data weekly by student name and will be implementing a system this week to collect and report data on the engagement of students by subject area.

### Fifth Grade Promotion

Elementary principals are working with their fifth grade teachers and parent groups to determine plans to celebrate the promotion of fifth grade students in light of the school closures and the expectation that social distancing measures will still be in place at the end of the school year. While sites are still finalizing their plans, staff surveyed principals to get an indication of what sites are considering. Among the approaches being considered are virtual promotion ceremonies, car caravans, providing each fifth grade student with a yard sign celebrating their promotion, creating a fifth grade video featuring the students, and providing fifth grade students with free materials (such as a yearbook or t-shirt). Many sites were considering several of the above in combination. Elementary principals will finalize their plans and share those plans with families in the next few weeks.

### Eighth Grade Promotion

Each middle school principal will engage Parent Teacher Association members to determine the appropriate way to recognize grade 8 students as they complete middle school. Several ideas have already been generated including posting yard signs for eighth grade students in front of their houses, a drive thru "Clap/Honk Out," utilizing social media or local media to recognize students, and providing special t-shirts. Each site has unique traditions and resources available to them and staff would like to honor these site-based approaches. A Districtwide consistent approach would be less possible due to these variables. For example, each school has a fixed budget to work with for this recognition. In addition, some schools' parking lots or locations might accommodate a drive thru "Honk Out" while others' would not. All schools have committed to retaining their current traditions insofar as possible and working collaboratively with their school and local community to recognize the accomplishments of their eighth grade class.

## Graduation

It may still be a bit early to make graduation plans because the timing and conditions of our release from the health restrictions remain uncertain, but we realize how important and significant graduation is and want to provide guidance to our students, families and community. School-site administrators normally are responsible for planning graduation events, but in these times, the District and public health authorities will be providing guidance and support. Our goal will be to avoid putting people at risk. Graduation gatherings involve people of all ages, including people who might be particularly at risk in a "second wave" of infection.

If we can be safe, it would be wonderful to conduct graduation, even into summer. To guide our recommendation, staff reached out to students and principals to provide us input on developing next steps. Superintendent Vital and Josh Hill met with Associated Student Body (ASB) presidents on April 1, 2020. The ASB representatives expressed wanting some form of live graduation at some point in the coming summer or fall. Principals shared ideas and feedback at the high school principal meeting on April 4 and on April 24 2020. Principals agreed that a uniform and consistent ceremony should be followed at each of the comprehensive high schools and to hear more from students.

A Districtwide survey was sent on April 15, 2020 to all grade 12 students and their parents to solicit additional input on ideas for commencement ceremonies for the class of 2020. The survey results illustrate that of the 1,185 students and 1,581 parents who completed the survey, 75 percent and 68 percent respectively preferred an in person commencement ceremony sometime in the summer. Five percent of students and 13 percent of parents were in favor of some sort of televised or video production and recognition on June 4, 2020.

High school principals and District administration discussed the data and what would be feasible moving forward with the following three limitations:

- The date of June 4, 2020 is significant to students and not all might be willing or able to participate in a later event.
- Restrictions on group gatherings may still be in place during the summer.
- Once walkthrough registration for the new school year begins, hosting a commencement ceremony would be very difficult to plan and carry out.

Based on these limitations, the input provided by the survey, and other conversations principals have had with staff, students, and parents; principals and District staff recommend the following:

- If the restrictions that are in place on May 13, 2020, will accommodate a large group gathering, proceed to hold commencement ceremonies on June 4, 2020. Staff feels this is highly unlikely.
- If social distancing restrictions prevent a ceremony on June 4, 2020, commemorate June 4, 2020 with a video presentation recognizing the accomplishments of the class of 2020.
- If commencement ceremonies cannot occur on June 4, 2020, postpone them until July 23, 2020. A postponed ceremony on July 23, 2020, would have to adhere to the social distancing restrictions that may allow for larger gatherings in one place at one time.
- If social distancing restrictions require smaller groups participate in the ceremony, allow for the flexibility during the week of July 20, 2020, to July 24, 2020, to spread the ceremony over 1 day or multiple days if necessary.

Each year students have the opportunity to graduate early from District programs through 1 of 2 methods. The first method includes students at comprehensive high schools submitting a request to graduate early to Education Services, and upon approval working with their academic advisor to adjust their schedule enabling them to take the required classes to graduate early. The second method involves students transferring to Junipero Serra High School (Serra) to complete the required 190 credits needed to graduate early. Early graduates are recognized during normal commencement ceremonies at the end of each school year. Additionally, Serra hosts quarterly recognitions for students who complete graduation requirements at the end of the first, second, and third quarters. The only students who would have completed the District required number of credits to graduate as outlined in Board Policy 6146.1, *High School Graduation Requirements/Standards of Proficiency*, by the end of the first semester or the end of the third quarter would have already been approved for early graduation and completed high school. All other currently enrolled students would have to wait until the end of the second semester to be awarded the full 5 credits for their current grade 12 courses needed to graduate. Typically these include a fourth year of English and a Government or Economics course. The number of students who graduated early during the 2019-2020 school year is 60. Of those, 48 students completed the program at Serra.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

This is an information item only and no Board action is necessary.

**PREPARED BY:** Brad Shearer, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction, Elementary  
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**APPROVED BY:** Susan Holliday, Associate Superintendent, Education Services



# Capistrano Unified School District

*Distance Learning Update*  
*April 29, 2020*



# Presentation Objectives

- Distance Learning Update
  - Teacher expectations
  - Attendance
  - Promotions
  - Graduations



# Distance Learning Program - Teacher Expectations

Our teachers and staff have worked tirelessly to transform classroom instruction to our new distance learning environment:

Our new standards for distance learning regarding daily instruction includes the following:

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- Secondary: Clearly defined plan of lesson(s) to be implemented by teachers and completed by students on at least a weekly basis. Communication of such plans and office hours/small group support hours via Virtual Classroom Platforms...Suggested daily activities or learning objectives will be stated in the weekly plan.

Our new standards for distance learning regarding office hours includes:

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- Secondary: create a schedule of daily “office hours” for each prep where students can get help with assignments, ask questions, etc. This shall be a minimum of 90 minutes total per day....
- 1:1 or Small Group Support shall be provided for struggling students and can be included in schedule office hours.

# Distance Learning Program

## Attendance Tracking---

- As a result of Governor Newsom's Executive Order on March 13, 2020, Districts will not be penalized for not offering regular school days as result of closure due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) situation.
- Schools closed due to COVID-19 will not receive instructional day and minute penalties for COVID-19 closures. Average Daily Attendance will be based on full school months only from July 1 to February 29 for the 2019-20 academic year.
- While Districts should not record regular daily attendance on school closure days for apportionment purposes, Districts are encouraged to track engagement in Distance Learning while schools are closed.
- Every site has a tracking system to report engagement weekly by grade level and/or subject. Principals are reporting the number of disengaged students to Education Services weekly.

# Distance Learning Program

## Promotions

- 5th Grade
  - Principals are working with staff and families to determine plans
  - Approaches being considered
    - Car Caravans, Yard Signs, Virtual Promotion ceremonies, 5th grade Videos, Distributing free T-shirts or Yearbooks to 5th graders
- 8th Grade
  - Each principal will work collaboratively with PTA leadership and local community to identify best approach to recognize 8th graders
  - Attempt to preserve school traditions
  - “Honk-outs,” t-shirts, yard signs, and video presentations

# Distance Learning Program

## Graduations

- Timing and conditions of our release from the health restrictions still remain uncertain today.
- School-site administrators normally are responsible for planning graduation events, but in these times, the district and public health authorities will also be providing guidance and support.
- Met with ASB presidents on April 1, 2020. The ASB representatives expressed wanting some form of live graduation at some point in the coming summer or fall.
- Principals shared ideas and feedback.
- Principals agreed that a uniform and consistent ceremony should be followed at each of the comprehensive high schools and to hear more from students.
- Staff sent Seniors and their Parents a survey on April 13, 2020 to get input.
- Results of this survey will be used to inform our recommendation at the April 29, 2020 Board meeting.
- We will continue to watch the course of the crisis and communicate with our Senior Class across the District as we learn more.

# Distance Learning Program

## Graduations - Survey Results

- What students want:
  - 75% of students want to postpone commencement ceremonies until later in the summer
  - 4% of students were interesting in having a video presentation
- What parents want:
  - 68% of parents want to postpone commencement ceremonies until later in the summer
  - 13% of parents were interested in having a video presentation

# Distance Learning Program

## Graduations

- Principal feedback
  - June 4, 2020 should be commemorated
  - Social distancing restrictions must be considered
  - Anything after the week of July 20, 2020 would be difficult to plan and carry out with preparing for next school year.

# Distance Learning Program

## Graduations

### Staff Recommendation

- If the restrictions that are in place on May 13, 2020, will accommodate a large group gathering, proceed to hold commencement ceremonies on June 4, 2020. Staff feels this is highly unlikely.
- If social distancing restrictions prevent a ceremony on June 4, 2020, commemorate June 4, 2020 with a video presentation recognizing the accomplishments of the class of 2020.
- If commencement ceremonies cannot occur on June 4, 2020, postpone them until July 23, 2020. A postponed ceremony on July 23, 2020, would have to adhere to the social distancing restrictions that may allow for larger gatherings in one place at one time.
- If social distancing restrictions require smaller groups participate in the ceremony, allow for the flexibility during the week of July 20, 2020, to July 24, 2020, to spread the ceremony over one day or multiple days if necessary.