



Questions and Answers –Distance Learning 08-18-20

On July 17, in response to spikes in COVID-19 cases throughout the state, Governor Newsom announced that California public schools must start the school year in a Distance Learning mode – a pivot from the site-based instruction model schools in the County had been driving towards. North Monterey County Unified School District’s administrative staff recognizes the many challenges associated with distance learning. Our team has worked all summer on crafting a back-to-school plan that takes the needs of students, parents and staff into consideration, while adhering to changing guidance from State and County health officials who we meet with regularly. The District is not building its plan on its own.

Using guidance the District has recently been given from the County, we have created a Distance Learning plan and will be releasing a Hybrid Learning plan shortly. We have reached out to EVERY family in the District via phone to track each student’s needs – from special/additional resources, transportation, before/after school care, meals, Chromebooks and Wi-Fi services, as well as any mental/social health needs. This information is guiding us in developing site instruction and support plans, and necessary transportation and essential child care services that meet the needs of all families in the District.

Later this week we will make our Family Reopening Handbook available to everyone in the District, along with any community member who is interested. The document will include information about every aspect of the upcoming school year, along with links to additional information or guidance. We have also begun a series of videos around important topics like safety, cleaning, additional services, infection prevention and reporting and tracing processes. We have secured state-of-the-art disinfecting equipment, sufficient PPE supplies for ALL students and staff, including washing machines and dryers to launder each mask every night. Additional Chromebooks/tablets and Wi-Fi hotspots are being delivered to ensure each student has the equipment they need, along with technical support for those who need it. Our school parking lots now have free Wi-Fi access for school issued accounts.

We have asked our teachers to help identify additional needs they or their students have and help direct parents to their school principal for any questions they cannot answer. While guidance continues to change, we will do our best to keep everyone apprised of changes.

These are unprecedented times. For all of us. Our biggest focus right now must be on our students. That’s why we are attacking this pandemic response as a united team. The principals at each school site have been working closely with district administration on back-to-school planning. Given their close connections with students, parents, and staff, they have been designated the first point of contact for any questions you may have.

We have been continually updating our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), which we began posting on our website on June 29. The below represents our most recent responses to questions from parents and staff:

What is the official start day of synchronous Distance Learning?

Distance Learning began August 12. Distance Learning is a form of education in which the teacher and students are physically separate during instruction and use various technologies and instructional materials and activities to facilitate learning. Synchronous learning is defined as a group of students engaged in learning at the same time that can be working online or in a classroom. Live instruction occurs when there is two-way communication between teachers and student(s) during the school day. We have designated a minimum number of instructional hours per week and daily for synchronous learning and school student instructional schedules reflect that, including mandatory homeroom advisory class for each student scheduled on Mondays. During these instructional “blocks of time”, teachers or a certificated employee will provide “live” or synchronous instruction.

Is the start of school August 12? Will all students in the District be starting online/synchronous Distance Learning the same day?

The first day of school was August 12th and students received instructional packets for the first three days of school, along with their registration forms. On August 17th, students returned their registration forms and their completed work to their teacher. In addition, the August 17th instructional packet provides lessons for students on Social Emotional Learning and Digital Citizenship, both required for on-boarding students. Teachers were asked to have two-way communications with students by hosting a “Zoom meeting” for the class and/or by calling each student and communicating with them about their instructional packet, as well as information about their specific classroom schedule. Teachers have from Aug. 12-21 to set up their online classroom structures, support their students in returning the required forms, determining if students have, or need, a computer device and whether or not they have adequate internet. At the same time, they will be providing information about how to best communicate with another.

What if my child doesn’t have a computer/device or internet to participate in Distance Learning? Will each grade level be getting full access to technology if the family doesn’t have internet already?

New law(s) require schools to provide Distance Learning, which can take place in a variety of formats, including Zoom presentations and breakout room activities, Google classroom activities, videos of instruction by the teacher (flip the classroom), and instructional packets in hard copy.

Because live instruction requires a two-way interaction for learning to take place, all returning students in grades 4-12 who did not previously check out a chrome book will be provided a device.

- High Schools provided scheduled opportunities before school, and have added two new dates for device pick up on Aug. 22 and 25.
- Our Middle School has scheduled dates on Aug. 17, 18, and 26

- Elementary Schools have scheduled Aug. 26 and/or 27 for grades 3-6 and Aug. 27^h for grades K-2.
- Incoming TK and K parents will be provided a tablet when they arrive for their diagnostic assessment appointment.
- AT&T hotspots are expected to arrive by August 25th and will be distributed to identified students. [Letter from Supervisor Phillip's regarding internet connectivity for NMCUSD.](#)
- Additional Chrome books were ordered along with Chrome book tablets for grades K-3 for families. Unfortunately, the tablets are held up to due issues with necessary parts from a company outside of the US. We will keep you posted on delivery. We are not able to identify enough Chrome books to issue to students before September 1.

As are superintendents across the nation, our Superintendent has been working diligently with the CA Department of Education to obtain grant funding and discounted rates for equipment, along with local officials (Supervisor Phillips, County Superintendent of Schools, and Congressman Panetta's office) helping connect us to internet providers and eliminate product delays. With our rural community, we recognize there are many that lack adequate infrastructure for broadband internet. In NMCUSD, any student who does not have a safe place with the internet to fully participate in live instruction will be offered the opportunity to participate, supervised, on their school campus.

I heard a rumor that technology for our 1st and 2nd graders won't arrive until October because they are on back order in China. I also heard that a teacher told a 4th grade parent that technology for her student is on backorder when the parent said she needed a chrome book for her child.

First, It is important to remember to contact your school principal if you are not clear on any aspect of our education plan, to ensure you get an accurate response.

As noted above, every student will have the technology necessary to be successful in class. Currently, there are some backlogs for laptops and devices due to the worldwide pandemic and the needs of not just students around the world, but workers in other industries needing to work/participate remotely. In NMCUSD:

- 4th grade students do have devices to checkout
- Whether our solution for reliable internet is sufficient is unknown until students and families begin to fully participate per our instructional schedule.
- Beginning, September 1, if we are not able to resolve connectivity issues, students may be accommodated on campus with internet access if no other means is available.
- Teachers will be checking in with students daily and will monitor whether access is an issue, working collaboratively with the school site team to provide options.

What if all the students in a class don't have needed technology? How will that be handled?

Each teacher is responsible for providing live synchronous instruction daily per the approved schedule. If a student is unable to attend the online session, the teacher will follow up with a two-way conference call.

Can teachers start synchronous Distance Learning even if their Distance Learning form has not been turned in? How will teachers know who has turned the forms?

The process to ensure forms are turned in will be monitored by the classroom teacher (advisory for middle/high school) who will also support students in making sure all their required forms are complete, and keep a list of those forms still missing. If forms are incomplete, teachers will update the student and parent on what is missing and assist, as possible, following school site procedures.

Students who had an approved Distance Learning form on file from the spring can participate via Zoom or Google Classroom during the first month of school, until the updated form is returned. Currently, students under 13 years of age are not issued a district email account until a form and parent approval is provided, something that will be addressed in September. Site principals have the list of returning students who turned in their forms from last spring.

As a parent, I worry I'm not teaching my children correctly. I'm a working parent and I'm not sure how to help my child with his/her schoolwork. Is there any support for us?

Every Monday, parent resources will be sent home within each instructional packet. We have also posted resources and parenting tips on the District's website under Parent Resources. This link has also been provided to all employees, with a request that teachers and classified staff assist and redirect parents to the website, the school principals, and/or the Family Resource Center. We also have a guide for parents regarding the use of technology and will be hosting a series of parenting workshop sessions.

For parents who are essential workers and need childcare, they should contact the Family Resource Center for support. Teachers were expected to complete training in parent engagement and communication, given they are the first point of contact in supporting parents and their student(s) with instruction. Any student who is not able to learn through a Distance Learning approach will be referred by their teacher to the school site MTSS team who will help develop an appropriate solution.

My child has an IEP. How will they be supported during Distance Learning? Will teachers be able to meet IEP requirements?

The case carrier (Resource Teacher, Special Day Class Teacher, or Speech Teacher) will work with the Special Education department and their site administrator to set up staffing meetings to review each student's IEP goals to determine the best options for delivery of instruction and support. Our Extended School Year program for Special Education was very successful this summer in supporting students in both a distance learning format and by providing some onsite services. Each solution is based upon the individual student, their parent/guardian, and teacher(s), staff and site administrator review and plan. If you have specific concerns about a student on an IEP and how to serve that student, please start by having a conversation with your site principal and their case carrier.