

# COVID-19 Operations Written Report

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Name	Contact Name and Title	Email and Phone	Date of Adoption
Dixon Unified School District	Nick Girimonte, Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services	<a href="mailto:ngirimonte@dixonusd.org">ngirimonte@dixonusd.org</a> 707-693-6300	18 June 2020

**Descriptions provided should include sufficient detail yet be sufficiently succinct to promote a broader understanding of the changes your LEA has put in place. LEAs are strongly encouraged to provide descriptions that do not exceed 300 words.**

Provide an overview explaining the changes to program offerings that the LEA has made in response to school closures to address the COVID-19 emergency and the major impacts of the closures on students and families.

Dixon Unified School District, along all other Solano County LEAs, closed schools on March 13, 2020. The initial closure was scheduled for two weeks, but was formally extended to the end of the school year in early April. Once the closure was announced, the District immediately moved to ensure students and parents had resources to continue learning at home and that schools were cleaned and secure.

Upon closure, Dixon Unified published a curated web site with a variety of distance learning resources for families to access. These resources were organized by grade level and subject, and included specialized resources for English Learners. Staff also recognized that many students in the District lacked computers necessary to continue learning at home, so plans were immediately enacted to distribute computers as expeditiously as possible to families. Computer distribution began the second week of the closure, and DUSD has distributed 1,190 computers to students, as well as 67 MiFi devices to provide students access to the Internet.

Once the prospect of a closure that would last the rest of the academic year became a certainty DUSD recognized the need to shift to a more structured, rigorous, and consistent approach to distance learning. To do this, staff consulted with bargaining units to draw up Memoranda of Understandings which outlined expectations for our teachers and support staff. This partnership allowed all stakeholders the time and resources necessary to effectively implement distance learning with an effective date of Monday, April 13. In order to be prepared for this new modus operandi, a number of critical steps had to be taken, including:

- Continued distribution of computers to students who needed them
- Identification and adoption of appropriate digital learning platforms
- Daily schedules for students to be able to access their teachers and appropriate support
- Professional development for all staff, but especially those for whom digital learning platforms were a new experience
- Grading and assessment policies to ensure equity and rigor in a challenging learning environment
- Social emotional supports for students receiving these services prior to closure, as well as for students newly needing these services

-A “search” for students who had not yet engaged with their teacher(s) or schools post-closure, which included outreach from teachers, parent liaisons, counselors, and administrators.

In mid-May, DUSD conducted a poll of parents to measure their impression of distance learning, access to supports like social-emotional learning, access to technology, and communication. Current data show that on the whole our community has been satisfied with our approach of continuous improvement student centered learning and, while also providing valuable feedback for future planning. Additionally, ongoing communication with staff via surveys and regular meetings with bargaining unit leadership ensures these critical stakeholder groups are heard and involved in planning next steps for the DUSD.

Provide a description of how the LEA is meeting the needs of its English learners, foster youth and low-income students.

### **English Learners**

The DUSD K-5 ELD team redesigned the existing ELD curriculum and adapted it to a distance learning format in order to continue to serve students at every English proficiency level and grade. Additionally, secondary ELD teachers coordinated with general education teachers in supporting the language demands of their courses. The District’s parent liaisons communicated with families regularly to facilitate access to online learning platforms, clarified student expectations, and supported families as needed.

### **Foster Youth and Low-Income Students**

Since so many of Dixon’s students, but particularly Foster Youth and Low-Income students, depend on the school lunch program to meet their daily nutritional needs DUSD immediately set up a school lunch pick up. This critical service was available to students and families from the first day of the closure.

It was also readily apparent that in order to effectively execute a distance learning model, DUSD had to address the technology access gap that exists in the community. As such, the District moved quickly to distribute computers to families and to provide digital resources and assistance to them as needed.

Pre-closure, DUSD had invested heavily in an Rtl reading intervention program in grades K-5. Two of the targeted student groups of this program are Foster Youth and Low-Income Students. In the design of the distance learning plan Rtl/Intervention was included so that students, all of whom are struggling readers, continued to receive support in alignment with our District’s mission and LCAP goals.

The stress of the COVID-19 closure on students and families, as we all know, has been a challenge for many, but even more so for those who come from poverty. To mitigate this as much as possible DUSD made concerted efforts to ensure students continued to have access to critical social-emotional learning and supports. Social-emotional learning lessons were pushed out via Google Classroom across the system, and the District’s mental health clinicians continued to counsel individual students and groups via online platforms. Personnel such as parent liaisons, secretaries, guidance counselors, administrators, and the PPS Coordinator were utilized to do outreach to students and families who were not

responsive to initial outreach from teachers. By doing so, schools engaged nearly all of the students enrolled in DUSD to ensure they had the necessary resources to engage in distance learning, in addition to access to other supports as needed.

Provide a description of the steps that have been taken by the LEA to continue delivering high-quality distance learning opportunities.

The first critical step to ensuring delivery of a high-quality distance learning program was to consult with the teaching staff to co-create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which delineated expectations and parameters for this unprecedented time. This collaborative effort allowed a quick transition to a model which worked for students and staff as much as was practicable for a swift midyear closure. The MOU defined the critical elements of the distance learning model, namely that students would receive instruction on the most essential standards of their courses or grade level, that tasks be assigned and completed on online/digital platforms, that all continue to be mindful of equity and access when designing learning activities, that teachers have some flexibility and professional discretion when designing learning for their students, and that teachers have access to professional development and support as needed to implement the distance learning model.

It is critical to note that prior to the closure DUSD was not a district that used instructional technology consistently. Many teachers had limited, if any, experience leveraging digital resources to deepen learning and access. In short, DUSD was particularly vulnerable to the challenges of creating a quality, equitable, and sustainable distance learning model. The efforts made by staff to learn and implement quality digital learning tools, such as Google Classroom, Class Dojo, Zoom, Clever, Screencastify, among others, was a key element of DUSD's ability to deliver quality academic content for students. Initial polling of teachers indicated that many felt unprepared for the task in front of them. In response, the Educational Services Department staff quickly organized a series of professional development sessions and made themselves available on an ongoing basis to support teachers in their learning of these platforms. Teachers fully engaged in these professional development activities, leaned on each other to learn new strategies, and showed courage in their willingness to try new techniques in a challenging situation. Subsequent polling indicated that teachers are far more confident utilizing these platforms to deliver learning; moreover, when families were polled about their experience with distance learning, the overwhelming majority report that distance learning worked for their children, despite the challenges presented by this model.

Another key element of DUSD's success was creating clear expectations for distance learning. Most important was defining that the focus of the students' learning would be on the most essential learning and standards remaining in the course. This focus allowed teachers to be mindful of providing work which was meaningful for kids, as well as most important for their success in 2020-21 and beyond. Additionally, so as not to overwhelm staff, students, or families, the District defined the appropriate amount of time students should be called upon to work on distance learning activities while under the stay at home order. This step proved fruitful. When polled, the majority of families indicated the amount of work their children were being asked to do was "Just Right", as opposed to "Too Much" or "Too Little". Additionally, the staff worked together to define how teachers would assess student achievement of standards. This was especially critical at the high school levels due to the community concern around grades and their importance for post-secondary access. These efforts required a significant amount of research and discussion, and ultimately concluded with the Governing Board adopting a Pass/No Pass grading model for all secondary students. In doing this, the District avoided a couple of potential pitfalls: (1) students who had a passing grade pre-closure could still earn a grade of No Pass should they fail to engage in any work during the closure, thereby eliminating some of the motivational issues to which secondary students are prone, and (2) it allowed teachers the space to be very focused and mindful on that which is most essential to their curricula, as opposed to trying to cram in all the work necessary to draw the nuanced distinctions between a traditional letter grade. By creating these expectations and structures, DUSD was able to mitigate some of the inevitable learning losses in the initial distance learning model.

As planning continues for the 2020-21 school year and the potential that distance learning will be required once again, DUSD staff is working to take the lessons learned during the 2019-20 closure to more effectively deliver distance learning in the future. While DUSD is proud of the work done for students in this first closure, all know the need to get better if this is to be a more sustained closure or series of closures. In particular, staff looks to:

- Create better systems around synchronous and asynchronous learning
- Adopt curricula which ensure students get full access to all standards for each grade level and/or course
- Support instructional practices which allow for effective teaching to all students, but especially those most vulnerable in the system, such as Students with Disabilities, English Learners, Low-Income, and Foster Youth Students
- Continue to provide digital access (hardware, Internet, etc.) to students who need it
- Establish assessment systems which accurately and fairly evaluate student learning, including a return to a letter grade system at secondary schools
- Remain flexible in anticipation of moving between distance learning and physical learning
- Provide relevant and meaningful professional development for staff.

Provide a description of the steps that have been taken by the LEA to provide school meals while maintaining social distancing practices.

DUSD serves daily meals at Gretchen Higgins, Anderson, and CA Jacobs schools. These schools were selected so that families from all quadrants of the community had walkable access to a food service location. At all sites any child in the community was able to get food, regardless of his/her school of attendance. Over the course of the closure DUSD served a total of 58,546 meals.

Food Services has implemented the following operational guidelines when providing meals: (1) maintain six feet distance between members of the public; (2) set-up cones or line controls to maintain six feet spacing for walk-up guests; (3) all staff wear facial coverings (masks) during meal service; (4) staff maintain six feet distance during meal preparation; (5) all surfaces, carts, and other equipment used for meal preparation and service are cleaned and sanitized at least once per hour.

Provide a description of the steps that have been taken by the LEA to arrange for supervision of students during ordinary school hours.

Supervision of students during ordinary school hours did not surface as a need in our community. No formal requests from families or other organizations were submitted during the closure. Therefore, Dixon Unified did not arrange for supervision of students during the closure. Nonetheless, DUSD remains open to providing this service in compliance with Governor's Order should it be requested by the community.