

April 9, 2020

Dear PUSD Families,

We are well into our first week of distance learning and I want to commend Team PUSD for preparing for and embracing this new way of teaching, along with all of the challenges that come along with it. I also want to congratulate our students and their families for taking this big step toward continuing their learning and making progress during the physical closure of our schools.

The expectation is that each and every one of our students is engaged in distance learning. Schools are closed, but learning must continue for our students.

Grading

Following Spring Break, effective April 20, we will transition into the next phase of our distance learning plan. PUSD will implement a temporary change to credit/no credit grading for all students for the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. TK-12 student work will be assessed for participation, completion, progress, and feedback purposes only, “doing no harm to students.”

This decision was reached after thoughtful discussion and collaboration with education leaders throughout the state, county, district level, and in partnership with our Poway Federation of Teachers (PFT). Students will have the opportunity to earn credit for the courses in which they are currently enrolled, yet the courses will not be included in the calculation of our students’ Grade Point Average (GPA). This change in our grading policy will only apply to Semester 2, Trimester 3, or Quarter 4 of the 2019-20 school year. Again, PUSD’s move to credit/no credit is temporary and will be discontinued when students and staff physically return to school in the Fall.

Moving to credit/no credit grading will benefit our staff and students without negative consequences for students with college aspirations. Many public and private universities across the country have made it clear that students will not be penalized for missing standardized tests such as the SAT or ACT or for posting credit/no credit transcripts for this school year. You can see the recent announcement from the University of California and California State University systems [here](#) about adjusted admissions requirements. Harvard University has also posted this [assurance online](#). Here is additional [information](#) from the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU). In addition, high-performing California school districts including San Dieguito and [Palo Alto](#) are all moving to credit/no credit grading. Our focus in our decision-making process was to ensure there would be no negative impact to our students and we believe credit/no credit will be in the best interest of all students. At the Thursday April 23rd board meeting, staff will present the background information, research, and rationale behind the decision of moving to credit/no credit grading for our students.

Online Safety

An additional challenge we are addressing related to distance learning has been concerns about online safety. In order to create engaging distance learning options for students, many PUSD teachers are utilizing Zoom to run live classroom sessions and meetings. The Poway Unified School District holds the safety of our students as our highest priority, whether they are physically present in a classroom or participating online virtually. Teachers have been provided with the recommended Zoom settings in order to ensure maximum student safety and security. Teachers also have access to detailed tutorials and live virtual professional development sessions regarding safety measures that should be taken when setting up online meetings for students. Additionally, Zoom has recently increased its default security settings for all users.

Parents and guardians, we also need your help. Remind your child that classroom codes and passwords should not be shared with others who are not part of their class. Please speak to your child about the importance of good digital citizenship and behavior when online. Any reports of inappropriate student behavior in an online classroom setting, including hacking, bullying, hate, harassment, or disruptive or obscene behavior, should be reported. Please refer to our [Student Technology Acceptable Use policy](#). Students violating this policy will be identified and an investigation will be conducted and appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken. Such measures can include and are not limited to suspension, expulsion, and will be noted in student disciplinary files (which can be accessible to higher education institutions). Our Technology and Innovation Department will continue to monitor safety and security measures that may arise and will continue to update and provide continuing professional development to teachers on this topic.

Spring Break

Next week is our Spring Break, and we want everyone to be able to focus on their well-being and families. We know this has been a stressful time, and we all need to remember to find ways to stay healthy. Please follow this simple guide to self care at home. We are also concerned about the social and emotional well-being of all of our students, staff, and families. If at any time you or a loved one needs professional assistance, contact the Mental Health Services Administration helpline at 1-800-662-HELP (4357).

During Spring Break, we have asked our Food & Nutrition Department to continue serving meals to the children of our community Monday April 13 through Friday April 17 11am to 1pm at our 12 designated school sites: Del Norte High School, Los Penasquitos Elementary School, Meadowbrook Middle School, Midland Elementary School, Mt. Carmel High School, Pomerado Elementary School, Poway High School, Rancho Bernardo High School, Twin Peak Middle School, Valley Elementary School, Westview High School, Westwood Elementary School. To date, PUSD has served over 60,000 meals during the emergency school closures! Our deepest appreciation to our Food & Nutrition staff, who make this possible, as well as the students, staff, and community members who answered my call for cloth masks with hundreds of handmade masks donated for our food service employees.

While we recognize this extended school closure poses challenges and hardship to many families in PUSD, the most effective way to slow and disrupt the transmission of this pandemic is by continuing to implement physical distancing practices. We are grateful to community members throughout PUSD for their tremendous prevention efforts during this unique and difficult time.

Senior Class of 2020 Survey

We also know that many students, especially our seniors, who we know were looking forward to celebrating promotion and graduation ceremonies, are very concerned about missing out on these momentous celebrations. Please know that district leaders will be planning how they might offer these experiences in different formats and/or at a later date. In the meantime, we invite you to participate [in this survey](#) to share ideas on how best to honor the Class of 2020.

Sincerely,

Marian Kim Phelps, Ed.D.

Superintendent