

March 19, 2020

Good morning. As we have more information to share, we will send updates, not necessarily on Mondays as usual. Hopefully you are all doing well, practicing social distancing, and trying to stay calm. These are definitely trying times, stressful in so many ways, and it's important that we are here to support each other and take care of ourselves, our families, and our students. Please reach out to CVTA if there's anything you need that we haven't yet shared.

CVTA has been in discussions with both the District and with CTA about what teachers need to do to best serve our students at this time. We've discussed the needs of our high school seniors, specifically their needs to complete graduation requirements. We've discussed the needs of our students working on credit recovery, and how to best support them in continuing their work. We've discussed the needs of all of our students in order to make sure they are still getting prepared for the next grade level.

I'm sure you have a lot of questions and concerns about your students. There are a lot of unknowns, and things keep changing from day to day. You may have heard the Governor say it's possible schools won't open again during this school year. Schools are to implement Distance Learning. What does that mean, and what does that look like? We don't know yet. Governor Newsom stated they were going to release guidelines, but they haven't done that yet.

CVUSD has been using Google Classroom for a while now, but we haven't been trained to use it for distance learning. In discussions with Ed Services, they may be looking at providing a training for us to participate in from home regarding distance learning. There may be some connectivity issues with our members at home, so it's possible if needed for you to go into your classroom to use the District internet.

Also, if you want to go to your classroom to get the materials needed to provide distance learning, contact your site admin. The schools aren't "open", but there are people there and you can get access to your classroom with permission. The schools are being thoroughly sanitized by our dedicated custodial staff. One teacher reported that he went to his room, and has never seen it cleaner than it is now. It is safe to go in to get materials, as long as you follow the guidelines and have permission first.

There are some concerns with what our students have access to at home and what they can do for distance learning. We know that some don't have devices at home other than a cell phone. Some may not have internet access. We've discussed other options as well, but until we know the Governor's expectations, and student access, it is difficult to know for sure what to do. In the meantime, the District is working to get another set

of packets printed for our students. Yes, we know this isn't adequate for the long haul, but it is something we can provide for now. The District is also conducting a survey of families to determine their accessibility needs.

You've seen the email from Dr. Gandera with the expectations the District has of us right now. This would be a great time to begin looking at how you may be able to provide instruction for your students. There are a lot of ideas out there. We've posted many of them on our Facebook page (remember, it's a public page and can be accessed without a Facebook account). I have a teacher friend in San Diego who created a YouTube page for her class, and posts videos and mini-lessons daily for her students (she is a Kinder teacher). Webex offers a free account to host virtual meetings with up to 100 attendees. CTA has created a Facebook page for teachers to share thoughts and ideas with each other, and so many great things are being shared! In fact, there is a webinar today about distance learning. See the link to the CTA information page for details.

CTA is constantly updating us with information as it becomes available. Please take the time to open it and read it. Once the District does put out the expectation for us to begin providing lessons to our students, we need to be prepared. Please take the time we have now to begin getting yourself ready.

Remember, the situation is fluid, and changes come out almost daily. The most important thing is to take care of yourselves and your loved ones, but we need to also check in with our students. Just watching my own son and the uncertainty and fear he is feeling right now, I can only imagine what our students are feeling, too. We want to be sure we provide them adequate opportunities to learn, but also not overburden them with unrealistic expectations during this time. It matters that we take the time to do this the right way.

Thank you for reading this, getting yourself prepared for distance learning (as much as we can right now), and for your patience. This isn't an easy transition for any of us. Be kind to each other, and reach out if we can help.

Carissa Carrera

President, Coachella Valley Teachers Association  
(760)619-9236