

**BUSD Distance Learning Plan
For BUSD Student and Families**

March 26, 2020



Dear BUSD Students and Families,

During this indefinite period of school closures, Berkeley Unified School District is committed to supporting students to continue their learning, and to reducing the negative impact of school closures on our students' educational progress. These efforts cannot possibly replicate the rich variety of experiences that we offer on our campuses, and many aspects of the BUSD experience will be lost during these closures.

In addition, distance learning in a time of global health uncertainty will be impacted by a variety of factors, including:

- Families' access to technology devices and the internet
- Caregivers' ongoing ability to provide guidance, supervision, and support to students, and especially to young students
- That prolonged use of technology by young students (age 4-8) is developmentally inappropriate, and can be challenging for all people, including students and staff
- The health of students, families, teachers and support staff, given some health experts state that 60% of California residents are expected to become ill from COVID-19 in the coming months
- Restrictions on in-person support for students due to Shelter-in-Place orders from state and local health officials, and social distancing and self-quarantine expectations during this pandemic
- Limitations in access to physical and mental health resources, given the developing shortage of access to the healthcare system

This plan, based on feedback from dozens of educators and based on survey information from hundreds of BUSD teachers, is meant to describe the foundational level of support that students and families will experience in the coming period of time. We will depend on feedback from teachers, students, Instructional Assistants, and parents to get better at providing distance learning opportunities to students.

BUSD is grateful to our professionals and the Berkeley community for its ongoing recognition that together we are in exceptionally difficult circumstances, and that our shared goal of caring for our young people will require cooperation, goodwill, and patience.

Brent Stephens
Superintendent

BUSD Distance Learning Plan, March 2020

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Our Current Circumstances

Last week, using a survey conducted jointly by BUSD and the Berkeley Federation of Teachers, the district made significant progress in understanding the current outreach efforts of our teachers, the barriers that will impact their ability to teach remotely, their technology and training needs, and their thinking about a district-wide distance learning plan. The survey was sent to all teachers, counselors, and Teachers on Special Assignment, including Pre-K and TK teachers, Adult Education teachers, TSA's and counselors. By Friday, March 20, we had over 600 BFT members respond - an immensely helpful set of data about teachers' thinking about distance learning. We have also engaged all our school administrators to understand the challenges they face in this challenging new Shelter-in-Place environment.

Here are a few district-level highlights that are relevant to our planning:

- 90% of teachers have been in contact with their colleagues
- Almost 70% of teachers report that they offered learning opportunities to their students during the first week of school closures.
- About 75% of teachers report that they have checked in with their students, with email and Google Classroom the most common methods for this contact

Barriers and Opportunities for Development

- In the first week of the school closure, about 60% of teachers report that they had limited or no access to planning materials from home.
- 40% of teachers report having caregiving duties that affect their work availability.
- In the first week of the school closure, about 8% of teachers report that they had limited or no access to the internet from home
- A majority of teachers asked for further professional development to be able to make best use of tools such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and Google Hangout.
- K-12 teachers felt that they could best serve students by receiving resources from the district that they can distribute to families by Google Classroom, coupled with weekly email check-ins, along with guidance for students in using the online resources on the BUSD website.

Technology Access for Students

The BUSD Instructional Technology (IT) team scheduled the following Chromebook distribution dates, with priority for low-income students (those who qualify for free/reduced price lunch). BUSD is working to resolve challenges in reaching families and in assuring internet availability.

High School (BHS, BTA, BIS)	March 16 - March 27
Middle School	March 23 - March 27
Elementary School	April 6 - April 17

Elements of BUSD's Distance Learning Supports

The following three elements form the core of BUSD's district-wide approach to supporting students' academic progress through distance learning:

1. Weekly Distance Learning Activity Sets

Distance Learning Teacher Leaders will “curate” (selectively recommend) weekly sets of grade-level educational activities for Pre-K and elementary students, with course-specific content for students in Grades 6-12. These teams review standards and objectives for the week, create a learning plan for the week that can be followed by families and students, with resources including online reading, digital worksheets, guidance about the use of online applications, and other at-home activities.

At the Pre-K and elementary level, weekly Distance Learning Activity Sets may include:

- Key **learning objectives** that are accessible to students and caregivers
- Recommendations about a **weekly schedule** for Distance Learning
- Suggestions to students and parents about **online learning activities** available at berkeleyschools.net
- **Lessons about reading**, to be practiced with books in your home or that are accessible online
- **Specific lessons in Math, Language Arts, History/Social Studies, and Science** - with reading and writing materials
- **Short, screencast videos** from teachers with instructions, objectives, and teaching points
- **Projects** that can be completed, photographed and sent back to your teacher
- **Activities** that may be possible at home, like simple experiments using common household products, cooking and measuring, observing springtime growth in your neighborhood, and moderate physical exercise
- Ideas for **arts and music supplements**

These weekly Distance Learning Activity Sets will consist of approximately:

- 4-6 hours per week for students in PK and TK
- 10 hours per week for students in K-1
- 12-15 hours per week for students in Grades 2-3
- 15 hours per week for students in Grades 4-5

Throughout this period of school closure, we recognize that students will have different abilities to engage in online learning, and that for younger students especially (Ages 3-8), exposure to screen time should be limited and broken up by interactions with adults and siblings, games, independent activity, and free time.

In Grades 6-8, weekly activity sets may include:

- **Lessons** for each of four subject areas: **Math, English Language Arts, History/Social Studies, & Science**
- Specific **recommended assignments**, with supporting materials
- Additional assignments for courses like **World Languages, Physical Education, and the Arts**
- **Projects** to be completed individually or with other students via phone, Zoom, or Hangout

These weekly Distance Learning Activity Sets will consist of approximately:

- 3-4 hours per week per class

At the high school levels, teacher leader teams will produce weekly Distance Learning Activity Sets for courses taken by large numbers of students, such as Math 1, English Language Arts, Spanish 1, etc. At the secondary level, workload may vary depending on an individual student's course schedule.

Particularly in the initial stages of the implementation of this plan, teachers are asked to be sensitive that students' tolerance for online learning may vary, as will each student's home setting. The district recommends that teachers approach this new style of work gradually, taking into account the needs of students as we all learn more about distance learning.

2. Weekly Assignments from Each Student's Teacher(s)

In addition to sharing the Weekly Distance Learning Activity Set with their students, teachers may include their own additional guidance about how to approach the weekly activities, and teachers may opt to include other Distance Learning resources, such as:

- **Additional supplemental recommendations** for reading, writing, or projects
- The teacher's own **recorded videos or screencasts** with tips, suggestions, & encouragement
- **Feedback** to the class, to small groups, or to individuals
- Live streamed **Whole Class Meetings** or Lessons
- Facilitated approaches to encouraging virtual **student interaction** through Chats on Classroom or via Zoom
- TWI teachers at Sylvia Mendez and Longfellow may also supplement these weekly resources with **additional materials in Spanish** to support students ongoing development in Spanish.

In addition, teachers will be expected to **monitor students' participation in distance learning** and will report this participation to school administrators once per week. Reporting on students' engagement in home learning will permit each school administrative team to try to resolve, if possible, any issues that prevent students from participating in distance learning.

At the secondary level, if a course does not have an activity set, individual teachers will be responsible for course content.

3. Two 90-minute “Office Hours” on Zoom per Week

In addition, each teacher will offer two 90-minute office hours per week to their students for the purpose of supporting student learning and maintaining some level of class camaraderie. Activities during these “office hours” will be determined by the teacher, and may consist of updates from the teacher, questions from students about the course content, online group activities designed by the teacher, individual or group student support, reflections or stories from the week, and other topics at the teacher’s discretion. These office hours should be communicated with students ahead of time and as standard as possible.

Supplemental Distance Learning Supports

A. English Language Development

ELD teachers at all three levels will attempt to continue English Language Development classes though either live online teaching to small groups, or by recommending online resources to students to support their ongoing growth in English. ELD teachers will be responsible for maintaining ongoing contact with their caseload of EL students, and will maintain an electronic log of their interactions with students.

B. Special Education

Similarly, Special Education teachers will attempt to provide supplemental support to students on their caseloads, in keeping with the goals described in each student’s Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

On March 23, 2020, the US Office of Special Education Program shared, “Where technology itself imposes a barrier to access or where educational materials simply are not available in an accessible format, educators may still meet their legal obligations by providing children with disabilities equally effective alternate access to the curriculum or services provided to other students. Consider practices such as distance instruction, teletherapy and tele-intervention, meetings held on digital platforms, online options for data tracking, and documentation. In addition, there are low-tech strategies that can provide for an exchange of curriculum-based resources, instructional packets, projects, and written assignments.”

Because IEPs goals and services are by nature individualized and take into account the services that are available at the time of the plan’s writing, some elements of a student’s IEP may be impossible to achieve in the current public health crisis. To the extent possible, Special Education teachers and case managers should attempt to modify IEP documents, with parent consent, to reflect the current conditions and their impact on the availability of services.

The Role of Special Education Teachers

Special Education teachers will provide supplemental support to students on their caseloads. This may consist of the following:

- Additional **support through Google Classroom**
- Electronic chats with individual students or small groups through **Google Hangout**
- **Emails or phone calls** to parents or guardians with ideas for supporting student learning
- Live online instruction through **Zoom or Google Meet**
- **Other instructional strategies** determined to be supportive of student learning in these circumstances

Case Managers will strive to track students' engagement in home learning activities, similar to tracking services during the school year. Case managers and special education teachers have an important role to play in supporting the coordination of contracts for related services as well. The BUSD Special Education Department will continue to review and follow guidance from state and Federal officials about Special Education in a distance learning setting and communicate with families as to this guidance.

a. Mental Health Counseling

The current period of the COVID-19, shelter-in-place orders, and mass school closures will create stress for many students. Educationally Related Mental Health Services (ERMHS) will continue as defined in the IEP via teletherapy or telephone.

b. Instructional Aides

At the time of this writing, BUSD continues to work on plans for Special Education Instructional Aides.

c. School Psychologists

School psychologists will continue as much of their current work as possible, while also complying with all local and county health directives related to shelter-in-place and distancing. This can include:

- Reporting writing
- Assessments that do not require in-person contact (see above); this can include the completion of some tasks associated with initial assessment, although SB117 now holds the timeline requirements for initial assessments in abeyance.

d. Learning Center Drop Ins for Special Education Support

In the event that Shelter-in-Place orders are lifted for Alameda County and the City of Berkeley and health officials determine that some limited use of school facilities is permissible, BUSD will explore opening "Learning Centers" at select BUSD schools to offer optional small-group supplemental support to students in person. BUSD staff would take care to ensure that the physical set-up of these Learning Centers conforms to "social distancing" protocols.

C. Reading Intervention

In some cases, RTI teachers and Literacy Coaches may be able to provide additional supplemental instruction through an online delivery model that is differentiated for learners and level and provide additional guidance on level-appropriate resources that are available online.

D. Office of Family Engagement and Equity (OFEE)

Family liaisons from OFEE will provide additional support to families who qualify under the McKinney-Vento Act for additional support, as well as focal students and their families who may require additional support during this period. Families in this group are experiencing housing instability or homelessness and may need focused assistance as they experience difficulties with accessing online learning.

E. Academic and Intervention Counseling

Counselors may email, as well as text and call some of our students. Counselors should also respond to student questions, share information about community resources, and provide emotional well-being counseling.

Specific tasks such as course requests, small school lottery at BHS, scheduling classes for 2020-21, as well as senior transitions to graduation and college should continue uninterrupted. This will require that counselors organize with their school administrators and others, using teleconferencing technology, to track progress on these tasks.

Monitoring Student Participation

As of this writing, the state of California has not specified that districts must take attendance. During the period of school closure, BUSD will track student participation in learning activities as a matter of equity to focus resources to help students experiencing limited access to distance learning. This tracking will take place in the following way:

Teachers will use Illuminate to mark participation in office hours (twice per week) check-ins and on distance learning assignments, through a data entry log created by the Berkeley Research Evaluation and Assessment (BREA) Department.

The student participation monitoring log allows teachers to enter four pieces of information each week:

- a. Number of online sessions attended by students on a scale of 0-4
- b. Whether students are participating in distance learning
- c. If a contact should be made to the student's home
- d. Optional comments

Ongoing Feedback from Educators

During the first two weeks of the distance learning plan, the BREA department will work with the Berkeley Federation of Teachers (BFT) to collect feedback from teachers on distance learning and student participation monitoring tools.

Grading, For-Credit Assignments, and Graduation

During the period of school closures, equity issues already present in society will be exacerbated by a number of factors, including access to Chromebooks, the internet, family members' work hours, access to health care and stable income, and housing insecurity. For this reason, the district is closely considering options for grading.

Third Quarter Grading

For students in grades 6-12, we are adjusting our 3rd quarter grading period as follows:

	Old Date	New Date
End of Q3	3/27, Friday	4/10, Friday

Students can still complete work that was assigned before school closure on 3/13, and submit the work to their teacher electronically. This is offered as a way to support students that needed time before the quarter ended to improve grades, make up work, and so on. Some teachers have offered supplemental learning after the 3/13 closure; this work will not be graded.

Fourth Quarter and Second Semester Grades

At this time, we understand that additional guidance from the California State Department of Education may offer recommendations about grading. BUSD is considering that the fourth quarter, and perhaps the second semester, may be marked as "Pass/No Pass", so that students may continue to earn credit during the period of school closure.

Graduation

BUSD continues to wait for guidance from the state of California and institutes of higher education such as the University of California about graduation requirements for seniors. BUSD is committed to ensuring that all students are able to continue with their post-graduation plans and are not adversely affected by the school closures.

Distance Learning: Roles in BUSD

Classroom Teachers	School Site Administrators	Distance Learning Teacher Leaders and Central Office
<p>Initiate communication interactions with students and families , including but not limited to phone calls, video messages or e-mail</p> <p>Deliver instruction to students by Google Classroom</p> <p>Send to students the Weekly Distance Learning Activity Sets, along with guidance, suggestions, videos, and supports.</p> <p>Conduct two 90-minute “Office Hours” per week. This can include Zoom lessons, guidance about pre-recorded videos, small group support, and other elements.</p> <p>Directly support students and families, including providing support to the distance learning environment.</p> <p>Participate in webinars on distance learning, and access other online professional development resources about communication technology</p> <p>Interact with school and department colleagues about best practices in distance learning</p> <p>Participate in school staff meetings using Zoom or Google Hangouts</p> <p>Track student participation in distance learning, and the rough percentage of assignments that each student completes.</p>	<p>Support teacher teams at school with technology access, collaboration, and problem solving.</p> <p>Conduct and facilitate professional development and staff meetings using Zoom or Google Hangouts</p> <p>Participate in webinars on distance learning, and access other online professional development resources about communication technology</p> <p>Monitor students’ participation in distance learning, and organize school teams to respond to challenges as they arise</p> <p>Communicate regularly with families regarding distance learning successes, concerns and needs</p> <p>Convene teams of teachers as needed to identify PD needs and share promising practices, troubleshoot and brainstorm the distance learning landscape.</p>	<p>Each week, provide online curriculum resources to create weekly Distance Learning Activity Sets that are distributed to all grade-levels and course-alike instructors</p> <p>Provide ongoing updates to teachers about changes taking place at the state and local levels with respect to COVID-19</p> <p>Solicit and monitor communication with families and staff for promising practices</p> <p>Create sample schedules by grade spans and content areas to offer support to administrators and teachers</p> <p>Develop and lead professional development for teachers and administrators, including webinars on distance learning, online resources related to technology tools, office hours, and individual teacher coaching.</p> <p>Monitor and report on overall student participation in distance learning</p> <p>Refine practice recommendations and policy as it relates to grading, special education, support for English Learners, and other topics - in keeping with ongoing guidance from state and federal authorities</p>

Employee Illness During This Public Health Crisis

According to most public health experts, a large proportion of Americans will be infected with the COVID-19 virus. Many will not develop symptoms, and many will experience only mild or moderate symptoms. A smaller percentage of the population will fall ill from the coronavirus, and may need medical attention. Even moderately ill employees may need to self-quarantine.

All of these factors will impact teachers' ongoing ability to provide distance learning support to students, and currently no substitute teachers are available to step in during this period. Students and families should expect that at some point during the school closure period, or during the COVID-19 outbreak, that their teacher may not be able to continue with distance learning.

Independent Study

The California Department of Education describes Independent Study as “an alternative to classroom instruction consistent with a school district’s course of study and is not an alternative curriculum. Independent study is voluntary. Independent study is available to students from kindergarten through high school, designed to respond to the student’s specific educational needs, interests, aptitudes, and abilities within the confines of the school board policy. In BUSD, independent study is offered at the Berkeley Independent Studies (BIS) program.

BIS has only limited capacity to offer the supervision of independent study contracts. With all BUSD schools closed for an indefinite period of time, it is not currently possible to transfer from a BUSD school to BIS.

Professional Development for Teachers

Teachers' ongoing professional learning is a critical element to the success of any instructional program. During the school closure crisis, teachers will be offered a variety of online professional development opportunities, and can seek small group or individual support from BUSD's Educational Services team. Educational Services offers the following menu of options:

1. Webinar: Overview of Distance Learning technologies and principals
2. Recommended Resources for Educators
3. Technology Office Hours with live online learning sessions for teachers
4. Technology Coaching from the BUSD Digitech Team (5 Teachers on Special Assignment)

Important Notes about Distance Learning During This Public Health Crisis

These home learning resources focus first on learning in Language Arts, Math, Science, and History/Social Studies. As time goes on, we hope to offer additional learning experience in other courses and electives as well.

This plan is not meant to replicate the full set of learning experiences that our schools can offer when they are in session. Parents will need to provide supervision for their students while they are completing school work or engaged in online activities.

We also recognize that online learning may be better suited for older students who are more capable of independent work, and can tolerate longer periods of engagement on the computer.

Some courses will naturally lend themselves more to online learning, due in part to the availability of online resources and lessons, and the extent to which curriculum publishers make our current materials available online. For example, students in Advanced Placement classes will have access to the full set of online materials published by The College Board, as well as supplemental study aides that the company is developing. Not all courses will include this level of online materials.

References

[Special Education Guidance for COVID-19 - Health Services & School Nursing \(CA Dept of Education\)](#)
CDE, March 23, 2020

[Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities](#), US Dept of Education, March 21, 2020

[Notification of Enforcement Discretion for Telehealth Remote Communications During the COVID-19 Nationwide Public Health Emergency](#), March 14, 2020, Health and Human Services Department