

# COVID-19 Operations Written Report for Sierra Unified School District

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Name	Contact Name and Title	Email and Phone	Date of Adoption
Sierra Unified School District	Dr. Alan Harris Superintendent	aharris@sierrausd.org (559) 855-3662 107	June 29, 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.

Communication began on March 4, 2020 utilizing our Student Information System, Aeries Parent Portal. These communications were linked to Sierra Unified School District's webpage (sierrausd.org) where additional documents and notices could be found in regards to school closure. Sierra Unified School District closed its school campuses on March 13, 2020. This closure had a significant impact on our families as many adults commute for work a distance of 30 miles or more, and are employed by essential services. Adults who were furloughed or laid off were impacted by loss of income. This group, along with those working from home, had greater distances to travel for childcare, social and health services in a time of crisis.

In the 3-weeks between school closure on March 13 and Spring Break, April 3, 2020 the district leadership executed a plan to continue to deliver meals, provide an @Home Education curriculum and maintain communications with all of our families in such a way as to make access available to all.

We began with weekly suggested learning activities for each grade level TK-5 and by subject area in grades 6-12 delivered to each home by U.S. Mail and posted to the district's website page. These suggested learning activities extended practice of skills and maintained academic engagement that would take students and staff to the originally scheduled Spring Break. Families were surveyed to determine their needs in regard to technology at home, Internet connectivity, and assistance with school supplies and food. Teachers and support staff made personal phone calls to the homes and surveyed each family. Findings were reported to the district office where district leadership made plans with stakeholder input for the week beginning April 13, 2020. From the survey we found that many of our families were without Internet access and devices. Provisions were made with Ponderosa Telephone Company to put Internet in the homes of our families at no cost. The district is 1:1 with technology in the classroom, and deployed chromebooks to families as needed through a pick-up system in a central location. Hot spots were ordered to support the few families not served by Ponderosa Telephone.

Delivery of meals to our families Monday through Friday began March 17 utilizing our bus drivers and support staff for this task.

To ensure equity of academic service and social-emotional support, our administration and teaching staff were re-structured to provide an efficient student accountability system. We divided our grade-levels into 4 bands; each band was assigned to a site administrator. Teachers were assigned students to contact weekly. We utilized a tiered-system of intervention to reach the child and family after 2 non-contact attempts in a week. On April 24, 2020 we sent out to parents a Google Survey to gain feedback on how distance learning was working or not working for their family situations. We learned that 34.7% of surveyed families were very satisfied in the curriculum meeting the needs of their child(ren) compared to 4.1 % that indicated they were very unsatisfied. The two major factors with the unsatisfied group was the lack of

access or knowledge of the technology and the challenges to support young children while parent/guardian is working. Our staff worked to offer some solutions such as increasing parent/guardian contact, using a variety of instructional modes (pencil/paper, virtual "I do, we do, you do", support video lessons live and recorded, office hours for 1:1 support).

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

All students received instruction and academic guidance from a classroom teacher. Those who fell into the following groups, English Learners, Foster Youth and Low-Income continue to be served by their designated program coordinators and counselors.

#### English Learners

The English Learner (EL) Coordinator supports K-12 grade students directly and provides resources to the classroom teacher by co-teaching through each teacher's Google Classroom. This gave the EL Coordinator access to the curriculum the students were accountable for and allowed for tracking the students' participation and work completion. She then provided direct academic support on a weekly basis to each student and their family via video conferencing or phone calls.

#### Foster Youth

Families in need of materials, food or basic living supplies were able to seek support from our Director of Alternative Education. We monitored the families in several ways, through direct contact each morning at meal delivery checkpoints, phone calls, through an assigned district case manager (usually a teacher the student has a strong rapport with) and home visits. Our Director of Alternative Education acted upon any reports of needed supplies by outreach to community services including Mountain Wear (clothing, toiletries, diapers), Community Food Bank/Student Pantry, meal delivery, and local foundations which provide support with backpacks and basic school supplies. School Psychologists served as case managers at our elementary, junior high/high school and alternative campuses to coordinate services between the teacher, social worker, All 4 Youth, parents, and off-campus services for the student. Classroom teachers worked with the school psychologists, parents, administration and students to provide opportunity and access to available services on a case-by-case basis. Communication was achieved through direct contact by a student's social worker or our district administrator overseeing services. Classroom-level teachers received necessary information directly from school psychologists or school counselors and any other support staff that directly supports the student. Routine check-ins were performed dependent on student need by the school psychologist or school counselor with the teacher and parent to evaluate the on-going well-being of the student's social and emotional health. Assistance is readily available to the student and the parent when needed. If behaviors escalated or began to develop, a Student Study Team (SST) met to put more in-depth supports, such as daily behavior charts and increased check-in times, together to deploy.

#### Socio-Economically Disadvantaged

These students make up the largest population of students in our student groups. Students were provided, if needed, access to Internet and chromebooks in their homes at no cost. Staff members and administrators committed to 3 contacts a week with each student and when unable to make that contact in 2 attempts a tiered-intervention response was set up and administration worked on contact which may have

included a home visit. Many of these students had been taking part in our meal delivery program that started on March 17, 2020 and continued to receive a breakfast and lunch meal Monday-Friday delivered to their bus stop. In addition, basic school supplies were collected and sent to their homes as needed. Where a greater need is found for these students and their families, our Director of Alternative Education provided contacts with resources and services with community and county-based programs for further assistance.

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

March 16-April 3, 2020 teachers developed at home activities for students and families to participate in and keep academic engagement available in all homes. To achieve this, Pre School-Grade 12 plans were mailed to each home weekly over the course of the 3-week period. High school students enrolled in Advanced Placement, Credit Recovery or Dual Enrollment courses during this time were instructed to continue to work as assigned by their instructors. Students who receive specialized services such as speech, special education, emotional/behavioral therapies continued to receive specialized care and instruction with their case managers.

A needs survey was conducted, with each family to provide us with knowledge of need for access to an "at home" learning experience. Based on outcomes, we sought low-cost solutions to Internet providers and distributed Chromebook devices. Distribution began with families based on need as a priority, but opened to all that have come to our door. A challenge, due to our geography, was access to connectivity, but we were able to provide no-cost solutions to any family in need. Due to the limited area served, and our rural nature, several families could not be connected through Ponderosa Telephone and were unable to connect to major network providers so hotspots, with universal connections that are not provider specific, were made available. The school district covered the cost of the device and 3 months of service to keep access equitable to all families.

Sierra Unified developed and delivered a unified at home education plan for all students TK-12 grades. We utilized Google Classroom to deliver our current digital curricular platforms in our core and elective subjects. Our art, PE, music and drama programs at the elementary, junior high and high school levels all continued to have weekly expectations and engagement of their students, in addition, elementary students in the Response to Extension and Intervention were also served alongside their regular academic courses. The district purchased teacher licenses for SnagIt!, a screen capturing system for 6-12 grade teachers to assist with the visualization of their curriculum in the virtual classroom setting. For teachers needing time to implement and learn some of the tools, professional development was provided internally by knowledgeable staff members. Curriculum providers sent out help pages and tutorials for teachers and students, and these were shared. Supplemental programs like IXL, Happy Numbers and Reading Theory continued to be used by teachers as they found them necessary and useful in filling gaps by providing more practice to meet the student at their level of need.

Special Education students on IEPs have an Emergency Distance Learning Plan in place. The document provides families with how services, accommodations and goals have been adjusted for the period of the school closure. Students continue to access Google Classroom and tools, Zoom and phone calls as other students in the district, and engaged with a case manager anywhere from 1 time per week to 60 plus minutes a day depending on their plan for services. All special education assessments were suspended until in-person testing is allowed, classroom-level participation and grading at the child's learning level was monitored by the case manager for appropriateness and goal achievement with the students' teacher(s). Progress reporting to the parents occurred weekly.

So as not to overwhelm students and families with the task of educating children at home, or overlap instruction time between teachers and classes, some guidelines were put in place for all teachers; limit live video lessons to less than 3 hours per week and grade books updated

with 2 scored assignments per week. A schedule of live meetings was posted to our district website and emailed/texted to families via Aeries Communications.

In grading, students were to be held harmless from March 13 and growth from all of our students was encouraged. At the end of the semester, teachers were provided the option to assign a letter grade A-C or a Credit/No Credit. Information of school site grading policies were communicated on April 28, 2020 after guidance was received and clarified by the State Department of Education and lead teachers provided input.

Students taking part in accelerated classes such as Advanced Placement and college dual enrollment courses, continued to work and prepare for their exams in May and to complete their college course work. Students assigned credit recovery utilized a program called Edgenuity, and maintained access to this program to work toward their credits and promotion or graduation.

Restructuring of our administration to ensure equity of service and provide an accountability system for our students resulted in dividing our grade-levels into 4 grade-level bands; TK-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12. Each band is assigned an administrator and every teacher is assigned a number of students to make 3 contacts with each week. If contact is not made after 2 attempts, a tiered-system of intervention was in place to follow up with any needs or assistance that the district could provide. As of April 23, 2020, Sierra Unified had made contact with 100% of its students and worked to stay connected over the course of this closure.

A family survey to get feedback on our @ Home Education program was sent April 28-May 2. We learned that 34.7% of surveyed families were very satisfied in the curriculum meeting the needs of their child(ren) compared to 4.1 % that indicated they were very unsatisfied. The two major factors with the unsatisfied group was the lack of access or knowledge of the technology and the challenges to support young children while parent/guardian is working. Our staff worked to offer some solutions such as increasing parent/guardian contact, using a variety of instructional modes such as pencil/paper, virtual "I do, we do, you do", support video lessons; live and recorded, and office hours for 1:1 support.

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

Sierra Unified School District is 2,100 square miles in size, located in the rural, foothill area of eastern Fresno County serving 1,251 students. Meal pickup at school and areas of congregation for meal distribution were not practical ideas for our community. Many of our students utilize school buses as a form of transportation out of necessity and travel an average of 30 minutes 1-way to get to and from school. Many of our neediest families don't have transportation, and would be unable to pick up meals for their children if they had to come to school daily to get the meals themselves. Because of this recognized need for school transportation we utilized our bus drivers and support staff to deliver meals.

Beginning March 17, 2020, a breakfast and lunch meal were delivered to our families. Meals were delivered to anyone in our boundaries between the ages of 1 and 18 using existing bus routes and bus stops. Families were asked to be at their bus stop at a designated time, communicated on our website and through Aeries Communication, to receive their meals. Meal delivery was made available Monday-Friday. Following Spring Break, April 14, meal delivery continued with an amended schedule, providing meals for 5 days, delivered Monday-Thursday to minimize exposure of our drivers and families while maximizing our time and efficiency at keeping everyone safe. Approximately 610 meals were prepared and delivered each day, which is a 140% increase in service compared to our daily, on-site meal preparation.

Meal delivery has been instrumental in helping our staff to stay in communication with our most vulnerable populations of students assessing need and providing encouragement to keep doing what needs to be done. The majority of our bus drivers took their regularly assigned bus routes for meal delivery and continued to be socially connected with "their kids" each day to maintain relationships and connection.

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

In compliance with the Governor's Stay-At-Home order, Sierra Unified closed all district facilities including Eagles' Nest before and after-school care and Sierra Co-op Preschool on March 13, 2020. This was communicated to our families through the use of our Aeries Communications system connecting to the Parent Portal. There were no requests to supervise students during school hours. It was recognized that lack of childcare, especially for infant/toddler-aged children, in our area impacted many of our families. We followed the Stay-At-Home orders for the entirety of our facilities.

Sierra Unified families were notified by Aeries Communication that beginning June 8, 2020, Eagle's Nest would open for service during the hours of 6:30 am to 6:30 pm with 20 available student slots utilizing 2 rooms at the Foothill Elementary School campus. Registration was required via phone call or email to the site director. A deep sanitation of the facility was conducted to ensure a clean environment prior to occupancy. All social distancing protocols were followed as outlined by the Phase 2 opening of childcare facilities. Prior to entry into the building, children will be scanned with a thermal thermometer to read temperature. Individually-labeled cubbies for each child were provided to hold their personal items, school supplies (crayons, scissors, papers and such) and chosen toys for the day. Meals were not provided by the District.