April 17, 2020

Dear Parents and Community Members,

On behalf of the Board of Trustees and all our staff (teachers, counselors, office staff, instructional assistants, support staff, site and district administrators) we want to share how much we miss the students. We would all prefer to be at our work sites and have students in our classrooms. However, it is impressive to see the dedication, commitment, and flexibility demonstrated by our staff to get the Distance Learning Plan prepared for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. Upon return from the prescheduled Spring Break, Phase III of our Distance Learning program will begin and we believe you will be surprised at how quickly our students will adapt. Our staff is here to support students and parents and although we are learning to completely rely on technology, we will and can do this together! Communication will continue through regular updates. You are also encouraged to visit the District’s website and follow our Facebook and Instagram social media sites for the latest information.

A Message to the Parents and Class of 2020

Please know that our seniors are not forgotten during these unprecedented circumstances! We cannot imagine the disappointment our Class of 2020 and parents must be experiencing. We understand there are so many questions such as, what would a virtual or postponed graduation ceremony look like, how will grades be posted, and how will community colleges and universities handle enrollment?

Please be assured that staff at the state, county and local levels are collaboratively discussing these questions just like us every day. As answers to these questions become known, they will be shared through Parent Updates. Conversations will begin soon with Principal Garcia to identify ways to recognize and celebrate the successes of our Class of 2020. We are all working together to ensure our seniors are recognized for all their hard work!

Getting Connected

When using Distance Learning, students work online at home while their teacher assigns work and checks the assignments via the internet. Teachers are already reaching out to their students via their Google accounts and we encourage everyone to get connected.

If you do not have Internet Access, please visit https://www.spectrum.com/wifi-hotspots.html or https://wifi.xfinity.com/ for information about locations in Santa Paula that offer free WiFi for public use. Parents may also call Spectrum for free in-home Internet access for 60 days at 844-488-8395.

With the distribution of Chromebooks to students, our district’s Technology Services Department is available to troubleshoot device issues and to assist via telephone or email. The help desk is available through the remainder of the distance learning period from 8 a.m. – 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. on regular school days. To reach the help desk, please call (805) 933-8980 or email helpdesk@spunifiedsd.org. For password assistance, please contact your child’s teacher directly.
**Distance Learning**
April 20 will begin Phase III of our Distance Learning Plan. During this phase, students will be expected to complete tasks and projects assigned by their teachers. We will continue to offer online and packet-based options for students in grades TK-8. High school students will engage in distance learning through online opportunities. Hot spots will be provided to families who have indicated that they do not have internet access at home. SPHS and RHS will also work with families who need an alternative option. Students/Guardians will be contacted by their teachers during the week of April 20 to review specific details for their class. Each teacher will post assignments in Google Classrooms each Monday morning by 9:00 a.m. Staff will identify office hours to support parents with any questions. Parents can also leave messages for teachers and we will do our best to provide a follow up communication within 24 hours.

We acknowledge that distance learning cannot substitute for daily in-person instructional time and will require adjustment to the scope and sequence of our instructional program. The daily time commitments for grade level spans are outlined below. These times reflect the maximum number of hours/minutes per day or period that teachers will plan for instruction.

- Grades TK-1 1.5 hours per day maximum.
- Grades 2-3 2 hours per day maximum.
- Grades 4-5 2.5 hours per day maximum.
- Grades 6-8 30 minutes per class per day maximum (2.5 hour project per week)
- Grades 9-12 45 minutes per class, per day maximum (3.75 hour project per week)

We have also created a middle and high school virtual block schedule that will serve as a plan for students/parents to structure learning throughout the day. It will provide teachers a timeframe for when students are working on the assignments for each class period. Please see the “For Parents” tab on our District website for more information.

All elementary sites will begin 2nd – 5th grade Chromebook distribution for families who do not have a device at home. At this time, we will allocate one device per family. Site principals will send messages to parents regarding specific times and dates for each school. Parents will need to sign a necessary agreement to checkout a device which will need to be returned at the end of the distance learning period. Parents will also receive information regarding their child’s Google login and password information. If parents have a device and need login and password information, please reach out to your child’s teacher.

**Grading - "Do No Harm" Philosophy**
Guidance from the California Department of Education states that the decision of whether or not to require graded work from students is a local one. There are a variety of factors that we must weigh as we review our grading policies during the transition to distance learning.

We will move forward with a lens of equity and with the primary goal of first, doing no harm to students; meaning our policy will not penalize students. Grading policies will take all students into account, including English Learners, students with disabilities, homeless and foster youth, and those with differing access to digital learning and other tools or materials.
For students in grades 6-12, final grades shall be no lower than posted 3rd quarter grades. Students will be expected to complete assignments to the best of their ability and shall be provided with opportunities through distance learning to raise their final grade.

For students in grades TK-5, second trimester grades will be used for final report cards. Teachers will provide narrative feedback on the final report card regarding current level or performance and progress made during distance learning.

**Mental Health Matters…Caring for our Children**
Being mentally healthy is important for everyone, and is especially important for children who have already experienced depression or anxiety. As conversations around COVID-19 increase, children may worry about themselves, their family, and friends getting ill. Parents, family members, school staff, and other trusted adults can play an important role in helping children make sense of what they hear in a way that is honest, accurate, and minimizes anxiety or fear. Here are several resources to help you talk with your children about this pandemic.

- [Helping Children Cope with Change from COVID-19](#)
- [Talking with Children about COVID-19](#)
- [COVIBOOK Supporting and reassuring children around the world](#)
- [Coronavirus Q&As: Answers to 7 questions your kids may have about the pandemic](#)

Our school counselors and mental health counselors are also here to help if you feel your student is presenting different behaviors as a result of the current “stay at home” guidelines. School counselors are available via their district e-mail, by contacting the school site, or contacting the district office.

**Feeding Our Community**
During our facility closures, we have been able to offer the USDA Summer Food Service Program for children ages 1-18. Each child has been provided a breakfast and lunch Monday through Friday. All meals include fruits, vegetables, milk, protein and whole grain items based on the Program’s meal pattern federal regulations. Santa Paula Unified School District’s Child Nutrition Workers have been working tirelessly to ensure as many children as possible have been fed. On average, 1,800 children are being fed daily and a total of **89,410 meals have been served since March 16, 2020**. We will continue to do our best to provide healthy meals to the children of Santa Paula. Meals will be served on Mondays between 10:30 to 12:30 at Glen City Elementary and Barbara Webster Elementary schools.
Communication
There are several ways we are connecting through social media and sharing information about the district with our school community. Below is a short list of ways the public can stay informed:

- Board meetings - All Board meetings are being streamed live and can be viewed at KADYTV.net. Also, you can log onto http://www.kadytv.net/ and explore other recorded events.
- Facebook - https://www.facebook.com/santapaulaunified
- Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/santapaulausd/

Supporting Students and their Families
Ventura College continues to be committed to the educational opportunities and will support the needs of students and families in Santa Paula. While the college is not visible on our high school campus or in the community, staff at the college are an email or phone call away. Students and parents can click on this link to access information regarding the Steps to Enrollment and Student Support Programs. The college is a great community resource and we support their efforts to provide a local opportunity for higher education.

Final thoughts
As we continue traveling down this ever-changing path, together we will provide our students the best distance learning program possible. Please be safe and follow the guidance from local health officials in the midst of this pandemic. Our personal health, and our family members, needs to be at the center of our lives!

Our best wishes for you and your family to stay safe, happy and healthy.

Dr. Ed Cora
Superintendent