Last to Know: Families Crave Information about School Decisions during COVID-19
California State PTA Listens to Family Voices - A 2020 Pandemic Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The California State PTA has been supporting children and families for more than 120 years. Parent and family engagement is a key organizational priority.

In May 2020 the California State PTA partnered with the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE) to provide professional learning network services by offering three listening sessions to our primary stakeholders: parents/guardians, PTA leaders and educators. This report details what we heard from families regarding their experiences during the first months of the pandemic and their concerns going forward.

Engagement of our stakeholders throughout each listening session was very high and the conversations were intense. Parents especially had a lot to say. They clearly needed an outlet where they could share their worries, ask questions, and find compassion. While distance learning and school reopening were the topics of greatest concern, common themes emerged through each session: communication and family engagement; social emotional health and well-being; and care for our most vulnerable children. Our stakeholders' voices, captured throughout this report, make clear how difficult the last few months have been for families and how vital it is that families are included in decisions about their children's education.

This report identifies available resources that address the needs and concerns of parents, and it offers recommendations on how to support parents and families as schools navigate decision-making during this challenging time.

Communities Represented at Listening Sessions

- Alta Loma
- Bakersfield
- Beaumont
- Berkeley
- Burbank
- Carmel
- Chico
- Chula Vista
- Cypress
- Davis
- Escondido
- Fairfield
- Fresno
- Imperial Beach
- Irvine
- La Habra
- Lawndale
- Long Beach
- Los Angeles
- Manhattan Beach
- Modesto
- National City
- Newhall
- Oakland
- Orange County
- Oxnard
- Palmdale
- Palo Alto
- Palos Verdes
- Paramount
- Poway
- Redondo Beach
- Ridgewood
- Riverside
- Sacramento
- San Diego
- San Dimas
- San Francisco
- San Gabriel Valley
- San Fernando
- San Jose
- San Marino
- San Ramon
- Santa Clara
- Santa Clarita Valley
- Santa Rosa
- Saratoga
- Stockton
- Torrance
- Upland
- Vacaville
KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Communicate with families regularly. Offer opportunities for two-way communication and consider parent/guardian input while making or changing plans.

2. Require science-based decisions on reopening of schools including: cleaning, distancing, mask use, and other practices.

3. Offer strategies to school districts to meet students’ special needs and to safeguard the health and safety of students in vulnerable populations.

4. Ensure that during distance learning every student is provided effective access to the internet and appropriate devices.

5. Develop a parent-friendly and widely accessible guide that addresses what high-quality distance learning looks like.

6. Provide suggestions for educators about how to work effectively with community-based organizations, such as PTAs, other parents or community groups and booster clubs.

7. Distribute accessible information that equips parents to advocate constructively for what is best for their children and their family.

BACKGROUND

California State PTA is a 501(c) 3 organization that represents nearly 700,000 volunteer members across the state of California. California State PTA provides approximately 3,600 units, 170 councils and 27 districts with leadership training, representation at statewide meetings of agencies and commissions, representation in Sacramento through legislative advocacy and various programs and services, including School Smarts. Since the founding of PTA in 1897, inclusivity has been a priority. Today we are working harder than ever before to promote, practice, and embrace diversity, equity and inclusion.

California State PTA is a leader in providing parents, schools and districts with tools to engage in meaningful partnership and decision-making to improve outcomes for all children. A Board of Directors and Board of Managers govern California State PTA. The Board of Directors consists of elected and appointed officers and meets monthly to conduct the business of the organization. The Board of Managers consists of 110 members, including 27 district presidents who together represent the entire state. The Board of Managers meets four times a year to coordinate California State PTA’s statewide programs as well as conduct the business of the organization.

Parents are children’s first teachers and we believe that parent involvement is essential throughout a child’s educational experience. We believe that family is the basic unit of society responsible for the support and nurturing of all children, and we recognize that “the family” may be defined in many ways. We believe our responsibility includes advocating for the safety and welfare of all children and the opportunity for a quality public education for each child.
California State PTA has always been a bridge between the parent community and both the professionals who run our school systems and the governmental authorities who make budgetary and regulatory decisions. This role for PTA has been particularly crucial during the 2020 pandemic, with schools closing suddenly in March and education transitioning to distance learning, supervised by individual families all over our state and our nation. California State PTA has stayed in touch with our thousands of members, and heard particularly from hundreds of them during listening sessions held in May and June 2020.

ACTIVITIES

Funding from CCEE supported the development and facilitation of three video-based zoom conferences, hosted by President-Elect Carol Green. Held in May and June 2020, more than 570 people joined the networking/listening sessions.

The first session focused on distance learning during the pandemic: how families were doing; what was working well; and what was not working. The second session was geared towards PTA leaders: how were they communicating with schools; and how they were doing during these challenging times. The third session’s focus was on the family and school partnership: how families and schools could partner to help children including distance learning and school reopening; and best practices for working together for the benefit of children, families and schools.

Expert panelists made up of California State PTA Board of Directors as well as external stakeholders took part in every session. Below are the details for each session including the session title, date and time held, the intended audience, how many people attended, and the expert panelists who supported the session. Each session’s Power Point presentation has been included and is bookmarked to the titles in this grid:

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<th>Session Title</th>
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<td>Thursday, May 28</td>
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<td>Lea Darrah, Vice President for Education, Deborah Johnson, Vice President for Family Engagement</td>
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<td>How to lead and how to support schools and families during these challenging times</td>
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<td>Lisa Borrego, Director of Family Engagement, San Juan USD, Marin Trujillo, Community Engagement Coordinator, West Contra Costa USD</td>
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WHAT WE HEARD

Throughout the three sessions, there was universal concern about health and safety. Attendees questioned the effectiveness of distance learning and complained about inconsistencies in practices over the past three to four months. While parents reported a great variety of experiences and feelings about distance learning, they shared anxiety about school reopening. An analysis of all the verbal and written comments produced three main themes that our session attendees came back to repeatedly.

Communication and Authentic Engagement
- There were 79 mentions of the importance of engagement.
- The critical nature of supporting families’ needs was mentioned 80 times, especially as it pertains to supporting children’s education and distance learning.
- The need for encouraging parent advocacy and lifting up the voices of families was mentioned 72 times.
- The importance of home-school communication -- and the resulting frustration when that was not happening -- was mentioned 74 times.

Social emotional health and well-being of children, school staff and families
- Parents shared deep concerns about how children’s education or lack thereof is affecting their overall well-being.
- Participants shared worries about their own economic and career insecurities.
- There was much discussion about children’s feelings of isolation, frustration, fear, anxiety and uncertainty.
- Mental health and social emotional needs were mentioned 78 times.

Our most vulnerable
- Participants had specific concerns about children with learning disabilities and/or special needs.
- There were frequent and substantial concerns about potential equity issues including the digital divide, socioeconomically disadvantaged families, food insecure families, homeless families, and children in unsafe environments.
- Issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion were prevalent throughout the discussions.
Communication, or a lack thereof, was the most frequently mentioned concern throughout every session. There was a clear frustration and anxiety around lack of information and a lack of authentic family engagement. Families want to know what is going on, what to expect from the school and distance learning and what will happen when schools reopen. Some participants felt that if they were consulted, it seemed to be just to “check a box” that school leaders had consulted the community. “They [the school] include us but don’t actually listen. We are only there so that they can “check” a box. It’s a waste of our time.”

“Personally, I’m great but I’m completely disconnected from the school community. The school is not telling us anything and we hear different things on the news. Is it safe, not safe, will schools open, change the schedule, require masks? Just tell us what is going on.”

“Depending on the district, parents are either considered partners or the problem.”

“When the only communication is one survey…from the school and district…it is disheartening and it continues to give parents the feeling of being lost.”

It is evident that in light of COVID-19 and distance learning, communication is more important to families than ever before. Because of the uncertainty in the current environment, families want transparency and in our conversations highlighted that good two-way communication is critical for effective family and school partnerships.

Participants said they felt disconnected, were hearing conflicting messages and didn’t know what to believe or how to get accurate information. Several PTA leaders expressed concerns about not being part of any school discussions. “We have not been included in school board or district meetings. Normally we would be invited to the office, but since the meetings have been virtual we have not received invitations.”

Participants were tremendously concerned about the social emotional and health impacts of shelter-in-place and distance learning. Parents are worried, frustrated, anxious and dealing with their children’s education and their own economic and career insecurities as well as their children’s feelings of isolation, frustration, fear, anxiety and uncertainty. Concerns ranged from children not getting exercise, to too much screen time, to angst about the pandemic and anxiety about schools reopening to missing friends and social interaction. “I wish there was more support for parents through this.”

“It’s hard to hear my kids crying. They miss their teachers and friends. They are afraid and don’t know what is going on. They want to know what to expect and I don’t know what to tell them.”

Parents talked about tantrums and meltdowns, worries about too much screen time and no way to turn off the news. All were concerned about mental health especially as their children return to school. “We need more content that is useful for families. Mental health resources, food pantry resources, tips for parents new to teaching.” Parents want to know if there will there be extra counsellors, nurses, or other staff to address the social emotional and health needs of students.
Parents shared concerns about children with learning disabilities and/or special needs and were also deeply concerned about equity issues including the digital divide, socioeconomically disadvantaged families, food insecure families, homeless families and children in unsafe environments. “I’d like to see us advocate for social workers - most of them are very restricted right now and no one is checking in with kids that are in abusive homes.”

In terms of distance learning, there was a wide variety of experiences reported and not simply different levels of engagement and interaction across the state, but vast differences even within the same school. There were issues with technology and platforms and having enough bandwidth. Some families embraced distance learning, while others felt their child was left out or not engaged.

“The pandemic has really put a spotlight on the problems in our society and schools.”

“My biggest concern about distance learning is the equity gap and how it will possibly make it bigger.”

Social Emotional Health – Of Grave Concern

“I have good days and bad days. But the social emotional aspect is the hardest - my son is missing his friends and he has to stay home with me all day.”

“My kids don’t want to leave the house. This could be because of concerns around the virus and not being allowed into places or just getting used to being home. This will be an especially tough issue when kids need to go back to school.”

“My 8th grader is sad that 8th grade has ended this way - she has become somewhat introverted and quiet.”

“My girls seem okay. They act okay. But technology is [a] struggle. They want to talk to their friends 24/7. They aren’t afraid of going outside but they are indoors so much they need to get out more (we don’t have a yard to hang out in). The balance is hard.”

“Lots of outbursts from my kids.”

“I miss having our school counselor available for emotional issues.”

“I am concerned about my kids’ level of physical activity, and they can’t really communicate how they are affected mentally.”
**FOR SOME IT WORKS**

“Distance learning has given some time for differentiated instruction (from me) which has been great.”

“Rocking it. WE LOVE distance learning and have really gotten a chance to be involved and are seeing the gaps in education.”

“My son’s school is using Google classroom for all assignments. It is easy to check to make sure everything is submitted. They also have an every other day schedule with two to three meetings per day, which I find is an adequate amount for middle school. Fridays have no scheduled meetings, but is used for catch up. The school only communicates with parents when things don’t work (I’m getting a lot of emails for my other kids that is for them, not for me). I love that he can be so independent!”

“Students who were bullied at school were doing better some of the triggers of seeing the bullies were eliminated.”

“My son was struggling in school and did much better distance-learning at home. My daughter would like to go back to school.”

“No real challenges here. As an educator and a parent who has home-schooled her students before, the transition has been quite easy. I have been able to “fill in the gaps” left by instruction where needed. My children are very motivated and focused, which is a blessing; and their teachers are very engaged.”

“My twins are going into middle school. Having this time to help them develop good habits has been amazing.”

“Life skills are always important! Excellent opportunity to mix the two. For example, going grocery shopping - the process, preparing a list, shopping, budgeting…”

“One school had a Zoom recess to help their kids feel connected—I thought that was a brilliant idea!”

“My older son (5th grade) did an amazing job. The teachers were organized, responsive and supportive.”

“Building in family time is key as well. We usually take a family camping trip during Memorial Day and the kids were sad we couldn’t go. So we let them “camp out” in the living room all weekend long instead. They loved it. We going to do it periodically throughout the summer now!”

“My daughter who is in the IPAD academy in high school and very smooth transition from in class to distance learning.”

“My fourth grade daughter believes her teacher was really paying attention to her and her classmates during Distance Learning, and most did really work hard, and she was asking about other teachers, but since I was helping other grade teachers to contact parents, I learned how many others were engaged and it really worked for us.”

“As a teacher I noticed some of the students really missed their friends, other students seemed like they appreciated the quietness of being at home and not having the usual conflicts with other children.”

**FOR SOME IT DOES NOT WORK**

“Kids aren’t challenged, done in like 2 hours and the rest of day is up in the air.”

“Distance Learning has been a challenge for our house—my husband is a teacher and my daughter is in 7th grade. Our life has drastically changed, but we have been able to eat lunch and dinner together daily which has been really nice!”

“It’s hard getting my junior high and high school girls engaged in learning right now.”

“Concerned with very little standards of best practice among teachers. Pandemic Pedagogy!”

“Doing fine now but worried about the increase in screen time as we go forward and getting kids hooked to tech too early.”

“We are in a Spanish immersion class and it’s hard for some none Spanish speaking parents. It has been hard.”

“My students often feel as if there are 6 different classes they are taking because each teacher is (mostly) able to do things in their own way. The focus for kids has been on stability, continuity, and closure. The focus has not been on rigor or content. That is appropriate. However, this model is not sustainable. I would like to see greater emphasis placed on sustainable practices, aligned to the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, in case this is a long term thing.”

“Concerned about disparity of teaching with technology. Some students are getting very little instructions / face time with their teachers. Unequal across our district, and maybe similar in other districts.”

“Distance learning for special education students (moderate/severe programs) is not working.”

“It’s challenging because I still have to work 40+ hours a week plus teach, entertain and take care of my child.”

“The teachers didn’t know how to fully use the technology—-emails getting lost, zoom codes wrong, how different platforms worked etc.”

“Teachers were not required (via the MOU) to have meetings with the kids so we had distance homework for 9 weeks rather than distance learning.”

“My biggest challenge is creating structure again. The kids fell into a routine during distance learning, but now they are done and needing me to create structure. I noticed the structure helps with anxiety and moods. I work from home need to keep them occupied while I work. I am trying to keep them off the tablet and TV as much as possible.”

“Consistent communication is needed. We experienced the teachers checking in on different days and at different times and the kids felt like they had to check in every hour to see if the teacher had posted.”

“One concern I have is that distance learning needs to accommodate towards developmental capacities and that is very difficult. I worry that the focus in putting up a system in such a miraculously fast way has been on technology rather than on best practices for kids at various ages.”

“It’s a range. Some kids are just trying to survive and are frustrated that there isn’t enough support. Some kids are frustrated because they are looking for college admission and don’t have grades (some are just credit/no credit) or leadership on how to navigate what’s going on with college admission.”
Students with special needs and young children are struggling with distance learning. Families are struggling with finding a balance, establishing routines and students finding motivation. Comments about distance learning ranged from excitement to see children exhibiting independence to students not being challenged at all to teachers not understanding the technology and concerns about screen time. Most participants wanted consistency, standards and communication in distance learning. They want to know what to expect from the school and what is expected of them.

While distance learning is of concern, there is even great apprehension surrounding the topic of school reopening. “I want my kids to go back to school, but not if it isn’t safe.” The overwhelming theme in the back to school discussion was not knowing what to expect and what is going on. There were lots of questions and concerns about wearing Personal Protective Equipment, schedules, temperature checks, distancing in the classroom, lack of social interaction, and the missing of special events like Prom, sports assemblies and field trips.

“Concerned over what school will look like in fall and how prepared we’ll all be.”

“How can we advocate for the fall? Funding? Enrollment vs attendance? And waiving the minutes required? A lot of parents wanted distance learning for the fall.”

“I am just concerned about several parents asking about how to go back to the physical buildings if the pandemic isn’t under control yet?”

“[PTA] Members [are] worried about going back to school. Being forced to send kids when families don’t feel safe.”

“Many parents are still nervous and tense about the second wave of the pandemic.”

RESOURCES FOR PARENTS

Since schools shut down in mid-March because of the Covid-19 pandemic, it has become much clearer that the family and school partnership is vital for our children. Probably unlike any other time in recent history, parents are raising their voices and asking for more engagement with their children’s schools. Parents need information that is clear and jargon-free so that they can support their children’s well-being and learning progress, understand and share in the decisions schools are making, and act as advocates to ensure all children have access to the resources and services public schools are obligated to provide.
In the process of supporting our members – and conducting our Distance Learning Listening Sessions – California State PTA has gathered numerous parent resources that address concerns about children’s well-being and progress. In general, the resources fit into four broad categories, as follows.

<table>
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<th>Health information</th>
<th>Equity and access</th>
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<td>and guidance related to Covid-19 and impacts of the quarantine, including mental health.</td>
<td>related to families’ access to broadband and internet tools.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Support for children’s distance learning</th>
<th>At-home learning activities, which are widely varied and extremely numerous.</th>
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<td>that provides tips for parents regarding such things as schedules and helping children cope, plus some help for stressed out parents.</td>
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The California State PTA website has a resource page for parents devoted to these types of things: [https://capta.org/news-publications/covid-19/covid-19-resources-for-parents-and-families/](https://capta.org/news-publications/covid-19/covid-19-resources-for-parents-and-families/). This website from Education Reimagined also provides a rich mix of these: [https://education-reimagined.org/distance-learning-resource-center/](https://education-reimagined.org/distance-learning-resource-center/).

During our listening sessions, parents told us about their desire to understand and share in school decisions. They also varied tremendously in the experiences they have had in recent months. Their needs and concerns fell into three general categories (as described above), including:

- **Improve Quality and Quantity**
- **Social Emotional Health**
- **Provide Support**
- **Ensure Equity**
- **Communication/Engagement**
- **Vulnerable Families**
- **At-home learning activities**, which are widely varied and extremely numerous.
The state really needs to think about resources in these areas of concern from the standpoint of how local educators can and should communicate with their families. The Playbooks for both Distance and Hybrid Learning models, at https://k12playbook.ccee-ca.org/, have strong sections about communications and should continue to be shared with educators. Those communication sections might also be useful to be pulled out separately and made available to families and to local parent organization leaders.

Beyond that, we know that meaningful, two-way family engagement is something that many educators struggle to do well. California State PTA, in conjunction with our national organization and drawn from research, has developed National Standards for Family-School Partnerships -- http://downloads.capta.org/edu/e-school-finance/NationalStandardsAssessmentGuide-CAPTA_Assssment%20Guide.pdf. Educators and community leaders are the audience for this resource, which provides a framework and rich examples of communication standards.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Health & Safety
The health and safety of students is naturally THE leading consideration when families consider in-person instruction. California State PTA expects science-based decisions on reopening of schools and on the cleaning, distancing, mask use, and other practices to be put in place for successfully conducting in-person schooling during COVID-19. Some parents and caregivers in our session would not feel secure unless an effective vaccine is in widespread use. School employees express concern for their high-risk colleagues. Other families were more concerned about the social emotional health of their children from months of isolation.

Special Populations
Concern about the educational, social, and physical wellbeing of students with special needs and students experiencing homelessness, poverty, and other challenges has been growing since school sites closed in March. School districts need strategies for meeting students’ special needs and for safeguarding the health and safety of students in vulnerable populations. Delivery of student meals during the pandemic has been one bright spot in this effort, but the special equipment, services of instructional aides, and other sorts of interventions needed for many students to access their education are very difficult to transfer to a distance learning model. Parents and caregivers are significantly concerned about their special needs children’s educational and developmental progress. The difficulty of even reaching students and families experiencing homelessness is particularly worrying. Collection and dissemination of best practices in this area would be a first step toward addressing this complex challenge.

Connectivity
If distance learning is implemented, all students must have the opportunity to participate meaningfully. Internet connectivity and appropriate devices are essential so all students can access online lessons and have interactive, synchronous learning. Parents reported that direct contact with teachers and virtual group or class sessions keep their children more motivated and reduce isolation, but significant numbers of students do not have reliable internet connection and devices to make use of it. Even for students with connectivity, experiences varied substantially in how much contact was scheduled with the teacher, leaving some students
with very unstructured days and little motivating human contact. A distance learning model can only be considered effective if every student has access and that access is used effectively.

**Distance Learning For Parents**

An area where parents need information is in their role as advocates, both for their own children and their communities. To advocate effectively they need to understand better what high quality learning looks like. There is substantial guidance related to effective distance learning but most of it is targeted to educators not parents, even though it generally includes some admonitions regarding the need to communicate with parents. **It would be a service to local educators and to families if the state were to create a parent friendly and widely accessible guide that addresses what high quality distance learning looks like.** Some school districts or county offices have already done this work.

**Community Groups**

As tensions around reopening decisions increase, and it becomes clear that the immediate future is highly unpredictable in most communities, trust between school leaders and their communities will be vital. **California State PTA believes that educators would benefit from suggestions about how to work more effectively with community-based organizations, such as PTAs, booster clubs and other parent or community groups.** These established community groups can help strengthen ties among families and in the process build positive support for local schools.

**Parent Centered Guidance**

The California Department of Education’s *Stronger Together* reopening guidance – along with a plethora of other educator focused resources – attempt to help school district and school officials navigate these tumultuous times. As state directives continue to shift, the emphasis has been – again – on talking to educators. There is, however, much less attention being paid to the information needs of parents. **To be effective partners in local decision-making, as Learning Continuity and Attendance Plans are developed for example, parents need accessible information that equips them to advocate in a way that is constructive but also supportive of what is best for their children and families.** Included in an addendum are excerpts from *Stronger Together* that could provide grist for such guidance.

**Lasting Principles**

Successfully implementing any model of schooling during COVID-19 is a daunting challenge for each school and school district in our state. Moreover, knowledge of the virus, medical advice, and the level of infection will change and evolve over time. **Nevertheless, certain basic principles and priorities are important to keep in mind: consistent, two-way communication with parents and caregivers; reliable access to meaningful instruction for all; science-based decisions on the model of instruction and other health practices and decisions; and specific strategies for children with special needs and other vulnerable populations.** The proverbial elephant in the room regarding these priorities is school funding. Will it rise to a level required to accommodate these priorities and keep all our children safe and learning?
ADDENDUM

Our listening sessions made it clear that school districts need to make parent communication, and genuine two-way engagement, a higher priority than ever. There is considerable information for educators regarding family engagement but the implementation is sorely lacking. Our belief is that, amid the huge pressures currently on school leaders, one important strategy for addressing the communication challenges is to empower parents as well as educators.

Below are excerpts from *Stronger Together* that might provide grist for a parents and families guidance document with information regarding distance learning specifically and advocacy generally. There are also likely some local school districts and county offices that have such tools. California State PTA has found that structuring such guidance around questions parents can ask is particularly effective.

**Excerpt from Stronger Together/Health and Safety – PAGE 11**

Communication with Students, Parents, Employees, Public Health Officials, and the Community

a) School leaders should engage stakeholders, including families, staff, and labor partners in the school community, to formulate and implement the plans in this checklist.

b) Communicate to staff, students, and parents about new, COVID-19-related protocols, including:
   i) Proper use of PPE/EPG.
   ii) Cleanliness and disinfection.
   iii) Transmission prevention.
   iv) Guidelines for families about when to keep students home from school.
   v) Systems for self-reporting symptoms.
   vi) Criteria and plan to close schools again for physical attendance of students.

c) Target communication for vulnerable members of the school community.

d) Create a communications plan for if a school has a positive COVID-19 case.
   i) Address the school’s role in documenting, reporting, tracking, and tracing infections in coordination with public health officials.
   ii) Notify staff and families immediately of any possible cases of COVID-19. Review legal responsibilities and privacy rights for communicating about cases of the virus.
   iii) Provide guidance to parents, teachers, and staff reminding them of the importance of community physical distancing measures while a school is closed, including discouraging students or staff from gathering elsewhere.
   iv) Provide information to parents regarding labor laws, Disability Insurance, Paid Family Leave, and Unemployment Insurance.
   v) Advise sick staff members and children not to return until they have met CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation.
   vi) Inform those who have had close contact with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms and to follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop. If a person does not have symptoms follow appropriate CDC guidance for home isolation.
Essential Planning Questions/Action Steps for LEAs

• How will the LEA engage with their education partners and staff in collaboratively making the decision of choosing an instructional schedule model?

• How will the LEA create a process for evaluating and adapting models throughout the year with all educational partners and staff?

• As an LEA is contemplating different instructional schedule models, a review of the LEA’s infrastructure and resources should be considered in the decision-making process. For example: 
  o What technology access and resources are available for students and families?
  o What technology support resources are available for students and families?

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

• What technology policies are in place to protect private and sensitive student information? Are policies current and compliant with California data privacy laws?

• How does a survey of physical buildings and space inform the instructional schedule model decision?

• How will the LEA survey needs of staff and provide aligned professional learning?

• How will all students’ needs be addressed within the instructional schedule model?

• What instructional and social-emotional supports will students and families need?

• How will you measure success and effectiveness of the model?

• What model are other schools in the area choosing to help with consistent and coherent approaches to support families?

• Conduct a survey or review on current teacher/staff, student, and family needs. Review data and determine LEA strengths, barriers, and capacity to support identified needs.

• What is the communication plan for reopening with a new instructional schedule model?

• LEAs should consider communication for different audiences and critical messages, including how messages will be delivered and how to improve the efficacy of communication by identifying and addressing potential language barriers, cultural barriers, and disability accommodations or supports necessary for communicating to families and other audiences.

• Before school starts, how will the LEA engage with families and provide activities to help families feel comfortable on the school campus?

Excerpt from Stronger Together/Community Engagement

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As schools begin to plan for reopening, they must actively and authentically engage parents and caregivers, families, and students in the decision-making process in order to build trust and credibility for any plans that are implemented. Effective community engagement will:

• Clearly communicate the organization’s objectives.

• Ensure stakeholders understand the ask and their role in the process.

• Specify how and when feedback will be used in the decision-making process.

• Reflect back to stakeholders the feedback received to demonstrate the organization has listened.
• Close the loop and strengthen credibility by communicating how feedback was acted upon.
• Examples of effective community engagement strategies include:
  o Qualitative and quantitative surveys.
  o Focus groups and listening sessions with target stakeholders.
  o Previews of draft plans with representative stakeholders to build early understanding and solicit real-time feedback.
  o Appointment of representative stakeholders—administrators, students, educators, parents and caregivers, health officers, etc.—to steering committees and task forces charged with developing plans.
Distance Learning: Connecting with Families

California State PTA

every child. one voice.
How are you doing?

- Emotionally
- Physically
- Mentally
How are your children/child doing?

- Emotionally
- Physically
- Mentally
What are your biggest challenges?

- Technology
- Space
- Balance
- Communication
- Structure
What do you need?
What is working well?
What will help transition back to physical school?
How do you feel about the timing of school starting?
Resources

- https://covid19.ca.gov
- https://www.cde.ca.gov
- https://www.cdph.ca.gov
- https://capta.org
- https://capta.org/resource-library/
- https://capta.org/distance-learning-resources/
- https://ccee-ca.org/distance-learning.asp#Main
Share Best Practices

Contact us California State PTA:

Celia Jaffe, President
cjaffe@capta.org

Carol Green, President Elect
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Lea Darrah, Vice President for Education
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Deb Johnson, Vice President for Family Engagement
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Sherry Griffith, Executive Director
sgriffith@capta.org
Join Us:

**California State PTA Association Meeting**
June 9-11, 2020 7:00-9:00

Coming in June:

*Distance Learning: Connecting with PTA Leaders*

*Distance Learning: Connecting to Schools Family Engagement*
Distance Learning: Connecting with PTA Leaders
How are you doing?

- Emotionally
- Physically
- Mentally
How are your members doing?

- Emotionally
- Physically
- Mentally
What are Members saying about distance learning?

Improved?

Positive?

Technology?

How could PTA help?
What are your biggest challenges?
What do you need?
What is working well?
How are you working with school staff to transition back to physical school?
How is your school communicating with PTA?
Resources

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Sherry Griffith, Executive Director
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Join Us:

Distance Learning: Family Engagement—Supporting families and schools during challenging times.
Thursday, June 25, 2020 4:30-5:30.
Family Engagement: Supporting Families in Teaching and Learning During Challenging Times
Guest Panelists:

Lisa Borrego
Director, Family Engagement and Partnership Development
San Juan Unified School District

Marín Trujillo
Community Engagement Coordinator
West Contra Costa USD
Traditional to Transitional

- Changes to program offerings
- Meeting the needs of all students
- Delivering high-quality distance learning
- Providing school meals
- Maintaining family/student connections
Family Supports

- Safe curbside meal distribution
- Technology distribution
- Distance learning resources
- Social emotional support
- Family engagement support
- Community outreach and translation support
Parent HUB

🌟 Parent HUB was a webpage created on SJUSD COVID-19 website

🌟 Information included community resources, mental health resources, health services, and local food bank information

🌟 Resources for distance learning such as technology, internet access, tips for families and family training
Family Training

- Families Matter Workshops
- Parent Voices - impact of distance learning
- Positive Behavior Support Video
- Student Voices - impact of distance learning
- Family Education Series - Spanish
- Community partner educational videos
WCCUSD Family Efforts During Sitance Learning
Family/Parent Guides

TK/K/1st Grade Distance Learning Parent Guide

Welcome to the Distance Learning Program, an opportunity for us, the WCCUSD family, to partner, learn and work toward the success of all students during this unexpected crisis. This is our opportunity to live the WCCUSD motto of “Whole Child, Whole Community” and ensure we are supporting students in the ways that best meet their needs. Together, we will learn every day and work to refine our program with simple, consistent, timely and relevant work. Thank you. - Matthew Duffy, Superintendent

Weekly Student Learning Schedule

- **Reading:** 30 minutes daily and complete reading log. Younger readers may be read to or engage with audio books. 
- **Writing:** independently on their own. Younger writers may draw.
- **PE:** daily physical activity on their own.

Ways to Connect: TK, K and 1st grade students will engage in distance learning through different formats and platforms. Teachers will determine the platform after assessing family resources and student needs. Teachers and school leaders will communicate directly with families. Teachers may use SeeSaw, Google Classroom, or other digital platforms to provide distance learning.

Daily Student Checklist

- Be ready to learn each day and follow your teacher’s schedule (every teacher will communicate the learning schedule with parents)
- Set up a quiet space for learning
- Review schedule provided by teacher and click here for a schedule template that you can use to organize your day
- Login to the digital platforms provided by your child’s teacher to check for assignments
- Read independently or listen to audio books (Storyline Online, Epic! Books, Oxford(Oak)) for 30 minutes
- Complete reading log (teacher will provide instructions on where to find the log)
- Ideally, finish the day by 4 PM and check in with your child to plan for the next day. Suggested questions:
  - What did you learn about the day?
  - What was the best part of the day today?
  - What do you want to study/learn about tomorrow?
  - What was too hard today?

Students with Special Needs

Please consult this document for more information on the plan to ensure students with Special Needs get the support they need. Students with IEP’s should also consult their child’s Case Manager for additional support and related services. Here is a list of common accommodations that students with an IEP and 504 may receive during this Distance Learning Instruction delivery. Visit Special Education Website for more information.

English Learner Students

English language development (ELD) will be delivered through online teaching in small groups, or through teacher recommended online resources using the ELD/Visual Guide. Parents remember that giving your kids an opportunity to read, write, and practice speaking English will keep them learning.
Parent Guides
Key Sections

This section outlines what your child will be taught during distance learning.

This section lists what we would like parents to do daily to support distance learning.

This is how teachers will teach your child.

This section provides information on what we are doing to support special education students and English learners.
This section provides some tips on how to help your child cope during COVID-19.

The County has also provided us with resources to support learning at home.

We have linked the most important resources here.
How to Find the Parent Guides

Grade Level Distance Learning Guides
Guías de Padres sobre Aprendizaje a Distancia

www.wccusd.net/dlguides
https://sites.google.com/wccusd.net/wcc-elearning/home
Centering the voice of parents

- Meets weekly with Superintendent
- District staff part of the meeting
- Teachers’ Union Staff are present
- Agendas co-created

“This is like the Superintendent’s Coffee Chat”
What is your school district doing to reach out to families?

- What is effective?
- Do you feel engaged in the process?
How Can Families Support Learning?
How do you want schools to connect to you?
Are you seeing learning gaps or learning loss?
What are best practices for families to succeed in balancing it all?
What will help transition back to physical school?
What Recommendations do you have?

- Blended learning to education
- Distance learning recommendations
Take the LCAP Assessment Survey

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/H7LVX23
Resources

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