

April 8, 2020

Dear SMUSD Community,

I trust this nontraditional Spring Break time is bringing you continued health, safety and precious time with your loved ones. Should you be in need of ideas for travel, albeit virtually, don't forget to access our Staycation [Spring Break #StayAtHome Activities](#). We're hopeful they will help to keep that pesky cabin fever at bay.

Our hard-working CNS teams continue to provide nutritious [meals](#). Please join me in thanking them for their tireless efforts during these past four weeks.

To date, we have not received an Executive Order that has officially closed our schools for the remainder of the school year. We continue to work closely with the San Diego County Office of Education and state and local public health officials. All decisions about reopening our schools will be made in conjunction with health officials who will be able to determine if it is safe to return. Our buildings might be physically closed but school is back in session via our new virtual mode!

As we prepare to fully launch our Distance Learning model beginning April 13, it is important to remind you of key aspects of our [Distance Learning Plan](#). The hours of instruction will occur Tuesday-Friday from 8:30am-11:30am. Instruction will include a combination of face-to-face virtual class sessions, pre-recorded videos, independent work, small group activities, and direct instruction, among others. Students will continue to work on assignments outside of the official hours of instruction. Teachers will be holding office hours for additional student support and/or interventions and will communicate these hours to our students and families. On Mondays, elementary students will be afforded opportunities to continue their arts experiences through *Start with the Arts*. Elementary Physical Education teachers will also provide additional opportunities during the week. Mondays will be devoted to teacher professional development, planning, collaboration, and staff meetings.

Our Distance Learning plan relies on every student having access to their own device. To meet this need, our schools have been issuing devices to students the past three weeks. If your child still does not have access to their own device, it is imperative that you contact the school. In addition, this [Parent Resources website](#) can assist students and families navigating Google Classroom, Clever, the SMUSD Cloud, in addition to other platforms.

Our district has finalized our approach to grading ***with the lens of equity and with the primary goal of first doing no harm to students***. We gathered input from various staff and also took into consideration guidance from the California Department of Education. Our *SMUSD Hold Harmless* approach includes the following: student grades will not be negatively impacted as a result of the school closures and the implementation of our Distance Learning Model. Student grades at the time of the school closures will not be lowered but can be improved upon. Teachers will continue to monitor and support student progress toward mastery of grade level skills and standards. Participating in virtual classes and completing assignments and activities will prepare students with the key skills they will need in preparation for next school year, allow them to raise their final semester grade and may influence placement in next year's courses.

Elementary End-of-Year Report Cards

The end-of-year report card will consist of a teacher-developed narrative summary of students' progress on distance learning activities including proficiency levels on ELA/ELD and Mathematics year-long standards. Formal district assessments will not be administered during Semester 2. Students' proficiency levels will be monitored via: engagement in meaningful learning activities around reading, writing, listening and speaking and mathematics; participation in distance learning lessons in ELA and Math; performance in ongoing teacher created assignment and activities; and informal assessments.

Secondary (Middle/High School) Grade Guidelines

In order to communicate a baseline grade to students and parents, secondary students will receive a Progress Report 2 grade reflecting performance on assignments due on or before March 13th. Teachers may include late work submitted by students after March 13th in the progress report grade as long as the work was due on or before March 13th and does not lower an existing grade.

Student grades will NOT drop below those issued during the second progress report. Semester grades will build upon Progress Report 2 grades with *multiple opportunities* for students to improve their grade throughout the remaining weeks of the semester. Teachers will provide students with *multiple opportunities* to demonstrate their progress toward mastery of grade level and/or content area standards. As was the case prior to school closures, the lessons that teachers select to guide student learning and the classroom assignments/assessments used to determine student grades will be at the discretion of the teacher and will include a combination of exposure to new grade level content, enrichment, practice, and intervention.

Teachers will finalize semester grades for all students enrolled in their classes based on the grade selection options of A, B, C, Pass or Fail. The distinction between these grades is as follows:

- Grades of **A, B** and **C** indicate that the student has fulfilled the requirements of the course, based on the grading scale determined by the teacher.
- A grade of **‘Pass’** indicates that the student has fulfilled the minimum requirements expected to complete the course but a grade of A, B or C has not been earned either at Progress Report 2 or via improvement options available from April 14-June 10.
- A grade of **‘Fail’** indicates that the student failed to meet minimum course expectations before the Progress Report 2 and did not improve enough over the period of time from April 14-June 10 to earn a grade of A, B, C or Pass.
- Students with disabilities will also be graded using the above options while taking into account their individualized educational programs (IEPs).

We believe that providing a combination of traditional grades and Pass/Fail is the most equitable for all students. It affords them a far wider set of opportunities to use the April 14- June 10 time period to engage in distance learning, practice and learn new skills and improve their grades. It also does not place our students at a disadvantage when considering post-secondary options.

- It honors students who have worked hard prior to school closures by maintaining their A grade.
- Any student with a grade less than an A at Progress Report 2 can use April 14-June 10 to work toward a higher grade.
- By issuing letter grades of A, B, and C, we ensure that current high school students will have an opportunity to contribute to their GPA for CSU, UC, and other university admission purposes, as was true prior to school closures.
- By issuing a ‘Pass’ grade instead of a ‘D’ we ensure that our students are not disadvantaged in the admissions process and it is comparable to students from other Districts who select a Pass/Fail model.

Please access this infographic that describes our [Distance Learning Grading Guidelines](#).

We appreciate your patience, support, flexibility and understanding as we embark on this new journey together. We often ask our students to take risks, be resilient, and persevere. We now find ourselves modeling those same traits for our students. Our sustained partnership will be key in ensuring our ultimate goal—that our students continue to learn and thrive! We cannot wait to welcome our students back to ‘school’ next week. We have missed them tremendously!

Enjoy the rest of your Staycation! On Monday, we got this!

My best,
Carmen