



Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Top Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
Edition #19 – Week of August 17, 2020

Questions are quoted as I received them directly from our community

1. Santa Cruz County was just recently taken off the COVID 19 watch list. What does that mean for our school district? Would we still be doing Distance Learning until January?

Due to the lack of testing availability and required infrastructure, individual schools and school districts in Santa Cruz County are still not able to apply for a waiver. At this time, all schools throughout the county will continue with distance learning. For PVUSD, in an effort to provide some form of stability and allow families and staff to make the appropriate plans, we have determined that we will remain on distance learning until January regardless of our County's status on the watch list.

2. We just got removed off the State Watchlist. I would encourage the school district to remain teaching online the remainder of the semester and work out the many processes that will need to be implemented before having students back in school. What is your stance? I don't like the idea of having to go back and forth if we get placed back on the list and kids having to adapt again and us as parents' jobs are not as flexible as we think for taking time off so often.

Yes, PVUSD plans to maintain distance learning throughout the entire first semester.

3. What percentage of students: elementary, junior high and high school are enrolled in Distance Learning and in Virtual Academy? Do you have a sense for the percentage of students who have left the district to pursue other academic options.

All PVUSD students are enrolled in either distance learning for the fall semester or are enrolled in the PVUSD Virtual Academy. We currently have 393 students enrolled in the PVUSD Virtual Academy which represents approximately 2% of our students. We have had 11 students leave to private schools or home school which represents .0005% of our students.

4. My daughter needs to change classes in the 11th grade at Watsonville High School. How can she change her class? It has been impossible to communicate with a counselor.

Students requesting a class change from Watsonville High School need to visit the school site's web page, go to the "Academics" tab, then click on "Guidance" where students will be asked to click on "Classroom Correction Form 20-21." After the form is submitted, the assigned counselor will reach out to the student/parent. This information has been shared with our families/students via email, and voicemail along with social media outlets. If you are not receiving this information, please confirm we have your accurate contact information on Synergy.

5. Is the Virtual Academy WASC accredited?

Yes, the PVUSD Virtual Academy will be WASC accredited. Mrs. Jennifer Ponzio, the new Principal of the PVUSD Virtual Academy, has successfully led the WASC accreditation

process at other high schools. The school will begin the WASC accreditation process with the required self-study followed by the site visit.

6. My school doesn't have enough hotspots. My family got one by T-Mobile that was very slow last year. My neighbor needs one but the school says there aren't enough.

The hotspots that we are deploying have new technology with higher speed connections and Unlimited Data. T-Mobile has recently upgraded their cellular infrastructure in our area as well which has increased the speed of the hotspots that we are providing students. But it is true that all cellular hotspots do not have the bandwidth speeds of home Wi-Fi.

7. We have under 100 hotspots for our school. We've already confirmed that more than 100 families need them and we are still trying to contact many families. Additionally, two colleagues given T-Mobile hotspots say they are insufficient with even just one user. They've been informed that Verizon hotspots work better in this area. Why would we provide poor quality hotspots and why don't we have enough for students? They do not live in isolated, rural areas.

We continue to provide hotspots to students that do not have home Wi-Fi. We are still giving them out at our drive-through support sites- Aptos Jr. and Rolling Hills Middle School on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 9am-12pm every week. We also continue to provide them to schools as they run out. School site staff are still providing them to students that do not have Internet access at home.

8. When will speech and OT services start at Duncan Holbert? I haven't received any information.

Duncan Holbert Pre School started on August 17. The teachers contacted parents and went over expectations and support with getting students online. Teachers and parents met virtually for orientations with service providers, including speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists (OT) and instructional assistant/behavior technicians to learn how to support preschoolers in circle time and instructional groups. These meetings have gone very well and 95% of our families have been engaging with the teachers. The OT and Speech services will officially start the week of August 24, with various schedules as their services are shared among many classrooms. If for any reason you have not been contacted or if you need more information about how to support your child you can contact Nichole Salles-Cunha Principal of Duncan Holbert at 786-6066, or Heather Gorman SELPA Director for Special Services at 786-2130.

9. Are students required to have their cameras on during class time if they do not feel comfortable? Will their grades be affected for not showing their face during class time?

It is highly beneficial for the students to have their cameras on, especially for the foundational literacy time for elementary level students, so that teachers can provide a higher level of corrective feedback. However, students are not required to have their classroom cameras on during the synchronous learning time and it will not affect their grade.

10. This is not working to learn anything. I cannot see the presentations, I keep getting disconnected, the apps are not set-up properly from PVUSD. How will this get better?

We have both a technology hotline at 831-786-2493 and the drive-through technology support at both Aptos Jr. and Rolling Hills Middle School on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 9am-12pm every week to assist. The site and district technicians can help you troubleshoot the issues on your Chromebook that you are having so you can connect with the applications and see the presentations.