



# Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Top Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)  
Edition #21 – Week of August 31, 2020

*Questions are quoted as I received them directly from our community*

**1. Why are we having students take the NWEA MAP tests? Is this really necessary? My teenage children are already overwhelmed not to mention their teachers. Can't this wait until they return to in person instruction? Will the scores even be valid?**

The return of students to school is an opportunity to provide them new paths for learning, focusing on their strengths and their individual learning needs. Clear goals, informed by data, help students stay engaged in the classroom and to persist when they face challenges. Goals for growth need to be connected to tangible next steps so students know which steps they must take to achieve success. Given the possible negative impacts to student progress resulting from the spring closures, it becomes even more crucial to know where students' learning stands today and what learning gaps may stand in the way of future learning progress.

Last spring, over 400,000 successful remote MAP Growth tests were completed nationwide, providing NWEA with valid and actionable data. Educators need data to guide curriculum and instruction in support of students, especially to target resources, time, and attention. With fall MAP Growth data, the district, specifically teachers, will have the following:

- a benchmark needed to identify where each student's learning should be focused
- the ability to identify specific gaps in learning and facilitate academic progress
- the ability to determine strategies in how this formative data can support meaningful goal setting conversations with students
- insights into analyzing how achievement is being impacted by COVID-related disruptions

**2. Students are feeling overwhelmed when their internet connection drops. Maybe they miss important instructions from teachers while they are trying to reconnect. What can we do?**

We encourage teachers to post all critical instructions in Google classroom so that if students miss anything, they can always refer back to the written lesson plan. When teachers' lessons include large amounts of complex procedures they can use district purchased resources like Screencastify to record their voice along with each step of the process demonstrated on the screen. Teachers can also post YouTube videos for other instructional procedures that are not completed on a screen. Videos and screencasts posted in Google classroom are a great way to ensure that students have access to clear instructions in the event that they are disconnected from a virtual class session. Additionally, if a teacher chooses to record their Google Meet sessions, they can post the lessons when they are done for students to review whenever they need to.

**3. So many of us are having Internet issues. I too work for the district as an IA and I lose internet connection during centers. I have my children on too doing their work. What do you suggest?**

There are some things that can be done to ensure that you are getting the most out of your Internet connection:

It is always a good idea for staff and students to close out every window and restart their device (not just close the lid) before connecting to their Google Meet sessions for the day. This will ensure that all device resources are dedicated to the online academic content each day.

Google Meet and other virtual meeting platforms depend heavily on upload speeds, not just download like most other Internet based content. Some Internet providers do not have high upload speeds depending on your paid service. Contact your Internet service provider to find out if they have any current promotional specials to upgrade your internet speeds. Anytime that more than one person is engaged in virtual meetings there will be more chance of disconnections based on your Internet connection/wireless speeds.

PVUSD is fortunate to have very fast wireless Internet connection across all campuses. All student Chromebooks will connect automatically to the district network at all district facilities. We recently deployed a new wireless guest network at all sites called “PV-Guest,” so that parents and community members can connect to the PVUSD high speed Internet connection when near any district facility to support PVUSD students.

In general devices receive higher speeds the closer that they are to your home router/wireless access point. There are “mesh wifi systems” that can be purchased and deployed with multiple access points around the house to increase wireless coverage. You can run a speed test in different locations around your home to find the best places for your children to attend online class sessions. Just Google “Internet Speed Test” and click the blue button. In general, you will find that the closer that your device is to your router, the faster (higher numbers) your Internet connection will be. [This document](#) shows how to check the wireless signal strength that a Chromebook is receiving while moving from place to place around your home. At times wireless signal strength can be very low depending on the specific construction materials in the walls of your home.

**4. I know PVUSD is a 1-1 district, therefore every student has a Chromebook. BUT, what if, all the old iPad's in the whole district were gathered and given to Kindergarteners? I know this would be time consuming, but I also think it is necessary for students, especially our little ones, to still get the writing practice. This would be possible with a touch screen electronic device. It is simply too hard for a child who is just learning to write, to also have to struggle with using the trackpad as a mouse and a writing utensil. I have already purchased a tablet for Valeria to use to supplement her virtual education, but also know not all parents can purchase these devices. I think sending tablets to children in the younger grades will help deliver a rich, equitable instruction to the children in our community.**

Your suggestion is a great idea, but unfortunately, the majority of the instructional online programs that students use are not iPad compatible and therefore we must use the Chromebooks. We do know the fine motor skill development of our youngest students is crucial for as they learn to write. The Learning Launch Kits given to every PVUSD student, contained age appropriate pencils, paper, whiteboard and markers. Our expectation is teachers will work with our youngest in the development of their handwriting using the tools that were provided. Additionally, PVUSD is providing computer mice for all schools to give to their younger students to help with the screen navigation.

5. **Dr. Rodriguez, you mentioned some small groups of students who may or are already attending school who do not have access to the internet. What about students who have IEPs or are not getting their classes on the computer? When will it be possible for them to attend in person?**

We successfully began the implementation of the Safe Spaces at both Pajaro Middle School and Aptos Junior High this past week. We will also begin our required in person assessment of special education students within the next week. We are now looking at the special education students and their individual goals noted on their IEPs to determine additional resources and supports needed to meet those goals which could include limited in person instruction once we are able to ensure the safety of both students, their families and our staff.

6. **Is there any place where kids can go to get help with their online school?**

Students can access office hours each afternoon with their classroom teacher for additional help. Email and phone can also be forms of communication that facilitate teachers providing more guidance on lessons or assignments. For high school students, you can reach out to your EAOP Team at the College and Career Centers for additional tutoring. Each comprehensive high school has a dedicated team of academic interns. For example PVHS students, who seek tutoring support, can sign up here: <https://calendly.com/pvhseaop> or send an email with homework questions to [pvhseaop@ucsc.edu](mailto:pvhseaop@ucsc.edu). In addition, we have several community partners that provide tutoring support such as Youth NOW. Youth NOW offers drop in homework help, tutoring in Math, Science and English and a computer lab. They are open Monday-Thursday from 1:30-5:30 at 31 Carr Street. Check out [www.youthnowcenter.com](http://www.youthnowcenter.com) for more information. If you find that these are not meeting the needs, we encourage students and families to reach out to the Principal or Academic Counselor if they need additional assistance.

7. **Can you please work with teachers on trauma informed care? I've seen you speak about the importance of social and emotional health, but too much of the time teachers seem to be oblivious to the impact their statements on google meet have on their students. Shaming young kids because they need to use the bathroom, talking about what should be private conversations or instructions with individual students to the whole class, putting pressure on kids over things they have no control of - dropped meetings, supplies not given out, not "turning in" work when the due date was still a week away. And on and on. If teachers could keep in mind that this is a huge challenge for everyone and keep individual discussions individual - that would be a huge help. Keep your expectations kind and realistic. This is not working.**

Teachers have recently received a trauma-informed professional development session. There are also plans to continue training in this area over the course of the year. The areas that you provided as examples are not within our core beliefs and we suggest that you bring these details to the attention of site administrators. Awareness by the administration will allow them to address these concerns.

8. **I have noticed schools have different rules or guidelines for their staff and community interaction. What should be the guideline? Should families be allowed on campus?**

All PVUSD sites and departments should be adhering to [CDPH Guidelines](#) and the California Department [Stronger Together](#) Guidebook for the Safe Reopening of California's Reopening of Schools which states that we should "limit nonessential visitors, volunteers and activities involving other groups at the same time". Therefore, while school sites continue to provide essential services such as Food and Nutrition Services as well as Distance Learning materials. All offices should be open and available to the community while adhering to physical distancing protocols and ensuring that everyone is using appropriate personal protection equipment (PPE).

9. **Can we take a leave of absence as a PVUSD Instructional Assistant to help with my child's distance learning?**

There has been an expansion to current FMLA leave types related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Employees who have been employed with the District for at least 30 calendar days and are unable to work due to childcare issues (for children under age 18) as a result of the school or childcare provider closure may be entitled to up to 12 work weeks of paid FMLA leave at a rate of 2/3 their regular rate. Classified employees may also apply for an unpaid leave per the Collective Bargaining Agreement, Article IX section N. Employees should contact HR with any questions related to available leaves of absence.

## **10. When is sports conditioning going to start back up again?**

Pajaro Valley Unified recognizes that athletics is an integral part of the high school experience, positively contributing to student's physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Proper training and conditioning is essential in order to provide a safe and healthy environment. In collaboration with County of [Santa Cruz Health Services Agency](#), [Santa Cruz Coast Athletic League](#) (SCCAL) and [California Interscholastic Federation \(CIF\)](#), all four PK-12 school districts have developed outdoor facility use guidelines for athletics summer conditioning in June 2020. The newly released document uses elements of the original guidelines from the [California Interscholastic Federation's Return to Physical Activity/Training Guidelines](#), and [California Department of Education Stronger Together Reopening Guide](#) as well as new guidelines we have been provided by [California Department of Health](#) on August 25, 2020. These documents have provided the guidance to allow student-athletes to condition and develop skills while following social distancing guidelines. Beginning the week of September 14, 2020, athletic conditioning/workouts will be permitted. Any component of these guidelines that is not adhered to will jeopardize ongoing summer conditioning at the school site or across the school district.

### **General Guidelines**

- Offering fall conditioning will be completely optional; no coach will be explicitly or implicitly required to offer these conditioning sessions
- This proposal allows cleared coaches and student-athletes to access school site fields, pools, and tracks for a set period of time each day outside of the instructional day for students
- In general, given the need for physical distancing and separation of cohorts, the number of students on a given school site should generally not exceed 25% of the school's enrollment size or available field capacity.
- Each school site will collaborate with administration to develop detailed Athletics Fall Plan, dependent upon each school's layout and conditioning times that are appropriate for their campus
- Document cohorts of coaches and student-athletes, conditioning times, identified main check-in area, conditioning zones, and pod restrooms
- Given the layout of each high school, cohorts may use the same field given cohorts can maintain separation and adequate physical distancing by assigning each cohort a section of the field/space.
- Recommended conditioning times: 90 minute sessions with 15 minutes of transition time to ensure no overlapping
- Coaches will wear face coverings at all times; student-athletes should wear face coverings to and from practice and when not able to physically distance
- No sharing of equipment of any kind is allowed during workouts
- The weight room and other indoor facilities will not be available
- All students shall bring their own water bottles; water bottles or other drinking containers must not be shared. Multi-person hydration stations will not be utilized during workouts
- Hand-washing/Sanitizing stations to be used at identified areas, including centralized check-in, restrooms, and throughout outdoor spaces/zones, as necessary

## **Pre-Workout**

- All athletes must complete a waiver prior to beginning these workouts; Athletic Directors will provide coaches with a list of cleared athletes
- Students and coaches should make every attempt to utilize restroom facilities prior to arriving; in the case where use is needed during conditioning sessions, each zone will be assigned to specific restrooms to prevent overlapping of students or coaches across other pods
- Students and coaches should practice appropriate hygiene practices and thoroughly wash hands with soap and water for at least twenty seconds prior to arriving at conditioning sessions; hand washing/sanitizing stations will be available onsite
- All coaches and students will complete a Health/Temperature Check, where they will be screened for symptoms of COVID-19 and for a temperature within normal range (below 100.4°F) prior to a workout; responses will be recorded and stored for each student so that there is a record of everyone present if a positive COVID-19 case arises.
- Health and Temperature Checks will be completed by any trained district staff member, on an individual basis, to protect confidentiality; all staff are directed to strictly follow proper guidelines and the use of protective equipment
- Health/Temperature Checks will be conducted at a centralized location; pods will arrive at staggered intervals to prevent overlapping of students and coaches
- Any person with positive symptoms will not be allowed to take part in workouts, student's parents should be contacted immediately and sent home, all persons should be referred to their primary care provider or health-care professional

## **Limitations on Gatherings**

- Workouts will be designed for cohorts of no more than 14 students and no more than two supervising adults at one time per sport program. (For example, if there are 28 players, then two cohorts of students will meet at separate times.) Coaches will only be allowed to work with one cohort. They cannot work with separate cohorts. Students can only participate in one cohort at a time.
- If a student misses a workout with one cohort, they will not be allowed to join another cohort.
- Students changing cohorts must be avoided, unless a change is needed for the student's overall safety and wellness.
- There must be a minimum distance of 6 feet between each individual at all times; it is highly recommended that this distance be increased due to the potential for exercise to increase the distance droplets may travel. If this is not possible, the number of students will be decreased until proper social distancing can occur.
- Swimmers must swim in single lanes
- Runners must run in single lanes with 6 ft. distance in between
- Cohorts must enter and exit during assigned times. No gatherings will be allowed.
- Appropriate social distancing will need to be maintained on sidelines and benches during workouts. There will be zero tolerance for student-athletes or coaches who willfully violate the social distancing guidelines; violations will result in removal for duration of program
- Coaches will secure the area (fences, gates, etc.), if possible, in order to prevent any public access to workout sessions

## **Facilities Cleaning**

- Adequate cleaning schedules will be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases. Teams will first be limited to outdoor spaces only
- Hand sanitizer will be plentiful and available to all individuals participating
- Students must be encouraged to shower and wash their workout clothes immediately upon returning to home
- Bathrooms will be cleaned each morning