

COVID-19 Operations Written Report

| Local Educational Agency (LEA) Name | Contact Name and Title | Email and Phone | Date of Adoption |
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| Orange County Department of Education | Jeff Hittenberger, Ph.D., Chief Academic Officer | jhittenberger@ocde.us (714) 966-4010 | Wednesday, June 3, 2020 |

Descriptions provided should include sufficient detail yet be sufficiently succinct to promote a broader understanding of the changes your LEA has put in place. LEAs are strongly encouraged to provide descriptions that do not exceed 300 words.

Provide an overview explaining the changes to program offerings that the LEA has made in response to school closures to address the COVID-19 emergency and the major impacts of the closures on students and families.

The four school programs operated by the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) serve approximately 3,300 students daily at 52 locations countywide through a variety of academic modalities. The traditional school day for OCDE involves a combination of in-person learning, virtual classrooms, and independent study, depending on the needs of the student. When OCDE closed its schools to in-person attendance on March 17, 2020 in response to COVID-19 precautions, all OCDE school programs transitioned to a distance learning model. For some students who were accustomed to this method of study, the change was minimal, but for others who attended class each day, this new style of accessing learning was a significant shift.

OCDE responded to this change by providing all students and staff who needed a device with a laptop and/or hotspot to allow for distance learning. Through the use of video conferencing, teachers and paraeducators are able to interact with students individually and in small groups. For students for whom online options are not effective or feasible, a paper/pencil alternative is offered with packets available for pick-up and drop-off in a socially-distanced school setting.

For many OCDE students and their families, the nationwide COVID-19 measures, such as business closures and lack of essential supplies, have placed new stressors on the family unit. Therefore, supporting the social-emotional needs of students is also of paramount importance in OCDE’s distance learning model. Therapeutic staff conducts outreach to students on their caseload and continues to accept referrals from all staff on behalf of any student in need of support. School Counselors, Transition Specialists, and Tutors also reach out to students to continue guiding students on the path toward graduation and college and career readiness, and Family Community Liaisons offer families access to valuable school and community resources for food, housing, and essential supplies.

OCDE exists to serve some of the most vulnerable populations in Orange County, and for many, a return to in-person instruction will be the most beneficial educational option. Looking ahead, OCDE is in discussions with stakeholder groups to design a safe and effective process for

returning students to in-person instruction. Recommendations from a variety of sources are being considered as plans are formulated and evaluated to give each learning environment within the 52 OCDE school locations a plan to address their specific student needs.

Provide a description of how the LEA is meeting the needs of its English learners, foster youth and low-income students.

For students who are English learners (EL), foster youth, and low-income, distance learning can pose an extra set of challenges when considering language or socio-economic barriers. In addition to providing all students in need with the necessary technology to access academic curriculum via an electronic platform, OCDE is meeting the needs of English learners by providing virtual, EL-specific tutoring hours weekday mornings and extending work hours to meet the needs of court school students. The EL team also holds parent meetings to support families with technology usage, share school information, and offer Rosetta Stone accounts to assist them with their English language development while at home. Furthermore, teachers are invited to attend numerous online workshops targeted toward the needs of ELs and are emailed monthly data regarding their EL students.

For our students who are foster youth, the Foster Youth District Educational Liaison (“Liaison”) connects with each school team to ensure the foster youth in OCDE’s schools have what they need to be successful during remote learning, including connecting them to devices and hotspots as needed. In addition, the Countywide Foster Youth Services Team provided hotspots to the Orangewood Children and Family Center to give the youth in this facility additional internet connectivity. The Liaison continues to provide support between school teams and collaborative partners to assist with the coordination of services and continuity of educational programming, including school transitions, to minimize disruptions in enrollments for foster youth.

Students who are low-income may have less familiarity with the use of technology outside of the classroom. To address this need, staff and online tutorials are available to guide students through the distance learning process and offer virtual presentations on how to use various learning platforms. Phone calls, text messages, and flyers also provide low-income families with information on food resources, including food distribution events occurring at OCDE school sites. Outreach to low-income families also informs our decisions regarding essential supplies to provide to families, resulting in items such as diapers, hygiene products, and school supplies being offered to the families during distribution periods.

Provide a description of the steps that have been taken by the LEA to continue delivering high-quality distance learning opportunities.

Offering students a continuum of learning in a virtual setting goes well beyond the distribution of devices. OCDE understands that in order to establish a high-quality distance learning program, teachers must be offered ongoing support, guidance, and resources. For instructional staff whose daily teaching experience was classroom-based, the shift to distance learning placed them in an unfamiliar educational arena. A website was created by curriculum experts to share a clearinghouse of educational teacher resources ranging from technology tutorials to strategies for engaging the distance learner. Virtual mentors are also available daily to guide teachers in new practices and answer questions. In addition,

instructional staff are given many opportunities to connect with their peers and administrator through video conferencing to debrief, share ideas, and plan lessons.

Students and their families are likewise supported in distance learning through regular outreach by support staff who assess how effectively the students are managing their learning and obtaining academic goals. For students who need additional guidance, staff are available by phone or video conference to explain the use of technology and online tutorials are provided to demonstrate how to access various learning platforms. Families are also encouraged to use the resources so they may participate in their child's virtual education.

Supplemental programs such as the individualized tutoring provided by Title I and Title III also now operate on a distance learning support model to provide students with additional educational guidance outside of class time. Virtual tutoring rooms are open on a regular set schedule to provide targeted assistance to identified students, and teachers are encouraged to refer students for tutoring services. Similarly, the individualized mental health needs of students also remain a priority, and clinical staff continue their outreach to students on their caseload and students in need of support and resources during this challenging and unfamiliar time. Restorative Circles, a popular in-class practice, are also conducted virtually to provide students a monitored outlet for problem-solving, group discussions, and an opportunity to connect with their peers.

Provide a description of the steps that have been taken by the LEA to provide school meals while maintaining social distancing practices.

OCDE has partnered with community-based agencies, nonprofit organizations, and faith-based groups to provide direct food assistance to families as well as information about food pantries, regular distribution sites, and grocery give-away events in the county. The Eagle's Catch Food Panty, located at Skyview School, provides fresh produce, bakery items, dry goods, and other fresh and frozen foods to families three days a week during distance learning. Operated through a partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank, the pantry is staffed by volunteers and coordinated by school staff. Families may access the pantry by appointment during pantry hours, Wednesday through Friday. To ensure social distancing and "no-touch" pick up, families line up alongside the school building six feet apart, and then pick up pre-assembled bags of groceries that are set out on tables. In addition to groceries, families may receive hygiene products and personal care items on request based on availability. All pantry volunteers and school staff are trained in food safety regulations and follow recommended protocols by wearing masks and gloves while working in the school pantry.

Through a partnership with a local church, OCDE also coordinates drive-through grocery distribution events at school and community sites throughout Orange County. Originally planned to provide for up to 80 families per distribution event, supplies were increased to provide for up to 200 families per distribution event when the need for additional food became apparent. Grocery distributions are currently take place on a rotating weekly schedule to cover all regions of the county. The LEA provides information about these distributions, along with additional food resources, through School Messenger calls, text messages, and electronic postings. Title I Family Community Liaisons also reach out to families personally to assure that all families are connected to available resources in the county. Families of students who are eligible for the Free or Reduced-Priced Meal Program are also provided information about meals that are available for pick up at any local public school distribution site in their area.

Provide a description of the steps that have been taken by the LEA to arrange for supervision of students during ordinary school hours.

Together, the staff, students, and families of OCDE form a community that extends beyond the classroom, and OCDE recognizes the impact a school closure has on students and their families. Although almost 86% of the students enrolled in an OCDE school are age 13 and above, and do not necessarily require the same level of supervision as younger children, the need for childcare for still exists for some of our families. To support families with this need, a resource webpage was created for families specific to this time of distance learning and business closures. (<https://sites.google.com/myocde.us/tutorial-101-parents/home>)

The webpage contains bilingual information from the Orange County Superintendent of Schools, online tutorials for educational platforms, and links to groceries, childcare, and mental health resources throughout the county. OCDE works with community, county, and state agencies to offer families reliable childcare options, and Family Community Liaisons are available to assist families with the registration process. Posters with QR codes linking families to the resource webpage are also posted at food distribution events and texts message with the link are sent to parents.

Activity kits are also being created for use in the home by students that will engage them mentally, kinesthetically, and artistically during this time of distance learning. By offering students an opportunity for enjoyable, family-friendly activities, OCDE seeks to support the family dynamic and encourage positive interactions in the home.