



# Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Top Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)  
Edition #22 – Week of September 7, 2020

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

**1. Why do not not use your buses for wifi for students?**

We have had some community members ask why we do not park our school buses around town to provide wifi for student use. Currently we have 3 buses with wifi systems. These systems are based on cellular connections just like the hotspots that we provide to our students who need them. We have done extensive testing with the bus wifi system and have found that students would need to be within 50 feet of the bus to get a solid connection. These systems have a daily data limit that would be met quickly with even a few students using them. The bandwidth that the bus system provides would only allow a few students to connect to Google Meet sessions. In addition, the way these systems work, the bus needs to be running as well for the Internet to be active.

Even if we were able to increase the speeds and data limits on the bus systems, parking them around the community would encourage students to congregate around the buses which would not be safe given the current COVID physical distancing requirements and the lack of supervision. Districts that are using their buses, are doing so because they do not have thousands of hotspots to provide to their students. Providing each student with the latest hotspot technology with unlimited data plans is a much better solution for our students that do not have home wifi. We are fortunate to have been proactive and secured close to 4,000 hot spots to provide to our students and their families.

**2. Are handwritten assignments going to become a thing of the past with technology being pushed more?**

During the time of distance learning and with the increase of the use of technology, students, especially in the older grades, are relying more on submitting their assignments and work through the computer. However, we still believe that handwritten assignments are important for the students' developmental process. For that reason, we provided white boards and journals for our students in the Back to School Launch Kits. As we return back to a physical setting for school, you will once again see an increase in assignments requiring students to hand write assignments.

**3. Why can't we choose our own profile picture?**

We received so many requests from teachers to import the school pictures found in Synergy pictures as significant instructional time was being used with students that were applying inappropriate pictures at schools across the district, that we decided to lock them down. We wanted to be sensitive to student concerns around bullying and encourage them to use their creativity, but also for Google Meetings teachers and fellow students need a recognizable face shot for their students' profiles especially when students turn off their cameras in meetings.

We have come up with a compromise and opened up the lock on student profile pictures in Google for 48 hours which started at 8am Tuesday morning, September 8, 2020. Students had 48 hours to upload an appropriate picture of their face as their Google profile picture. Many students chose to change their picture. We have since locked it down again. If any student submitted a picture that is not appropriate or that does not include their recognizable face, we will replace it with their Synergy/Student ID photo.

**4. Is there a possibility that the PVUSD Virtual Academy could be opened for non-PVUSD students in Santa Cruz County? Other counties in California? Multiple parents from other districts in Santa Cruz county have asked me about this.**

Yes, students from outside of PVUSD can attend our Virtual Academy. We currently have five students from outside our District already attending. The Virtual Academy will be open again for newly interested students in December 2020.

**5. Another parent asked about actual instruction time with students, the answer was supposed to be 4 hours for 4 -6 grade. Who is actually monitoring this? Last week was maybe 3 with breaks and this week is about 2 hours. Kids are just going to be so far behind with this type of instruction.**

Instructional minutes requirements are being monitored by the site administration through the weekly planners. If there is a concern, parents are encouraged to reach out first to the teacher and then the site administration. All students in grades 4-6 should be online together with synchronous learning from 9:00-9:30. Between 9:45am-12:30pm students should be engaged in a combination of synchronous whole group, synchronous small group and independent learning. Since the 9:45-12:30pm block includes small group instruction, not all students will be working with their teacher online for the entire time, they will be doing independent assignments when their group is not being seen.

**6. My question is: My child has many hours in front of the screen and they only give him a short 10 minute break for the whole class. He is in kindergarten. He starts at 8:45am until 12 noon. In reality, I do not believe it is healthy for him to have so much screen time. Sitting. I want to know what I can do to have more breaks within class time?**

The kindergarten instructional day is purposefully shorter than any of the other grade levels to allow for less screen time. We also provided SIPPS reading packets and other instructional materials in the Back to School Launch Kits to provide a break from the computer screen during independent work. Your kindergarten child should be engaged in whole group instruction between 8:45-9:15am. There is a built in 15 minute break before the first small group instruction time between 9:30-10:30am. During this second block of time, your child should be doing independent activities if they are not engaged in group work with their teacher. This independent work may or may not include being on the computer depending on their current academic needs. There is another 15 minute break before the last block of instruction from 10:45-11:45am.

**7. How can I monitor the grades of my children?**

You can find the directions on how to access your secondary student's grades on Synergy through our District Parent Website at [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OTCamKi\\_CJ-C75KyWJkuVQsjBe2\\_3T1a/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1OTCamKi_CJ-C75KyWJkuVQsjBe2_3T1a/view). Below you will also see the screenshots found from the website.

## How to access your student's grades in ParentVue

Click the "Grade Book" tab on the ParentVUE main screen to access your student's grades.

View current grades per class

You can also email teacher by clicking on the envelope

See current number of missing assignments  
Click on Class name for Assignment detail

## Grade Book- Assignment detail

Current grading period: can click to see past

Current class: Can click down arrow to see other classes

Assignment title: can click for directions and more information

Assignment score (if past due date and graded by teacher)

Upcoming assignments: Click on title for due date

### 8. How are teachers supposed to teach and stay on top of their class, when parents are not helping, or are constantly interrupting?

Our parents and community partners can provide the additional support and connection that we need, especially during distance learning. I have found that we work best together when we each have defined roles and facilitate expectations. Some possible areas where parents can direct their efforts include: monitoring of grades on Synergy, monitoring of tasks completed from the weekly planner, or communicating with the teacher during their office hours.

### 9. It seems like many counties throughout our state are having in class sessions, despite not having enough testing available for staff/students and even being on the State's watch list, why can't

**PVUSD just begin in class sessions already? Especially with the fact that we are not on the watch list anymore. If parents are not comfortable with sending their child to school, then shouldn't they sign their child up for the virtual academy? Do we as parents have any say in this? Doesn't seem like it.**

On Tuesday, September 8, Santa Cruz County moved from Widespread (purple) to the Substantial (red) level. However, our local public health authorities do anticipate our County may return to the Widespread level within the next two weeks as a result of the CZU fire evacuations ([read the full Santa Cruz County Public Health press release about this here](#)).

Now that Santa Cruz County is in the Substantial (red) level, a range of less restrictive economic activities, such as personal care services, restaurants, places of worship, movie theaters, and more will be allowed to open provided they operate in compliance with all physical distancing and cleaning requirements established by state and local authorities.

According to the governor's new Blueprint and the California Department of Public Health ([CDPH](#)), Districts and schools have 3 ways to consider offering in-person instruction. Each course of action listed below will require support from the local school superintendent and school board, adherence to guidance from State and local health authorities (such as physical distancing and wearing face coverings), increased capacity for surveillance testing and contact tracing, and consultation with labor representatives. Schools can:

1. Provide instruction to small cohorts of students within any of the County Risk Levels.
2. Request a waiver to open an elementary school within any of the County Risk Levels. However, waivers are not authorized within Santa Cruz County at this time.
3. After 14 days in the Substantial (red) level, schools can open schools to most students if the aforementioned requirements are in place and the local school district believes it is safe to do so.

Santa Cruz County public school Superintendents feel strongly that the decision to provide in-person services should be made carefully and based on a variety of local indicators including the ability to secure surveillance testing in order to prevent a surge in COVID-19 cases and keep our students, staff, and families as safe as possible. Should our county return to the Widespread (purple) level, which our local public health authorities anticipate will happen in the coming weeks, school districts would need to consider halting in-person services once again. This can be destabilizing, confusing and traumatic for students, as well as challenging for parents, teachers, and school staff to implement.

**10. At my site there are many portables with windows that are designed not to open and other older rooms with windows that can't be opened. When we return to our sites it will be important to have air flow in order to mitigate the spread of the virus. (I realize we can open doors but the best bet is to have both windows and doors that open.) Is there a plan to make it so these windows open in the time of COVID?**

New portables must meet the requirements determined by the Department of State Architects which notes that windows must meet several operational requirements: mechanism of operation, mounting height, reach range, operational method and force of operation. In this case, 11B-309.4 requires a window to be able to be opened with a maximum of 5 pounds of operational force. This cannot be accomplished with windows in our new portables. To further resolve this issue, each school site received an interagency facilities review which included an HVAC inspection, replacement of all air filters and the purchasing of compact True HEPA Air Filters for classrooms with limited air flow to ensure quality air circulation into classrooms.