



# Ask Dr. Rodriguez



Top Ten Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)  
Edition #24 – Week of September 21, 2020

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

- 1. Teachers (and parents) still need clarification on attendance. It does not seem equitable that some students (excluding students with clearly communicated technology issues) can log in to 2 minutes of class or join for the Morning Meeting but not come to any academic content areas, while others are on the computer for 4 hours actually participating in class and both are marked "present." I understand that there is a new "participation" requirement for teachers to be marking to help mitigate this. However, I also do not see it as feasible for teachers to be making notes/marketing each students participation in class every single day. We were not required to mark daily participation to this extent in the classroom. It feels like more "busy work" for teachers who are already overwhelmingly busy with planning online lessons/activities, testing, grading, and contacting families of students not participating. What is your stance on these issues?**

Whether in distance learning or in person learning, all school districts are required to have a minimum number of instructional minutes, minimum number of instructional days as well as an attendance reporting system. In a normal school year, the school bell schedules and calendars would be used for the instructional minutes reporting to the state and the student information system, Synergy, would be used to report in class attendance. In distance learning, we still must have a system to monitor the daily instructional minutes, which is comprised of both synchronous and asynchronous work, for each student as well as their attendance. Synergy will continue to be used for daily attendance and just as with in-person instruction. A student who appears in class, cannot be marked absent. In addition, each student's daily participation, needs to be documented to ensure that students are receiving their minimum number of instructional minutes per day. As teachers make the daily schedules, including small group instruction, and assign the asynchronous work to students, teachers are the ones who ensure that students are receiving their minimum number of instructional minutes as required by the California Department of Education. For elementary, the marking of daily participation is not busy work, but an assurance that each student had the daily minimum number of instructional minutes per day and the documentation is whether the student fully participated in the day. For secondary, this daily participation is documented in Synergy for both attendance and the grading of assignments.

- 2. When do you plan to add ventilation to the nurse isolation rooms?**

Each school site has an assigned school nurse as well as a full-time health care assistant (HCA). The district has 10.5 school nurse positions and will soon have 11.5 nurses. At the beginning of the school year, principals were asked to find an "isolation room" for any sick employees that had to wait for a ride home. The principal would watch the employee in case they become sicker. Now that students are on site for Safe Spaces and special education assessments, if they become ill, students would wait for their parents to pick them up in the isolation

room. The health care assistant would supervise them in the isolation room wearing necessary PPE and maintaining 6 feet distance. However, HCAs would have the PPE on in case they needed to be close to the sick student. The site school nurses all have cell phones and take calls every day for the health offices.

When students return to campus, the health offices will move to a larger space, and several have started this process. Two opaque screens, 6' by 8' have been ordered for each health office to provide a confidential space for ill students. The screens will be positioned so that for safety, the HCA can see the student from their desk. There will be an area for first aid that is physically distant from other areas. Students who need to take medication at school will only have to enter into the front of the health offices. The waiting area will be outside the health office with 6 feet markers. The HCAs desk will be front and center to control students coming safely into the space. The principals will arrange for coverage of the health offices during the HCA breaks and lunch, and the site nurse will train the covering employees. The Facilities and Operations Director has been communicating with the designated COVID nurse regarding COVID issues. An engineer has been hired, MADI Architects to assess the need for ventilation within school spaces. At a minimum, health offices will have doors and windows open and the portable HEPA air filters to ensure proper air quality.

- 3. I am aware of meal distribution at sites throughout our schools. As I'm teaching, I have noticed that a few of my students are home alone with older siblings, who themselves are doing distant learning. I also have students who are doing distant learning with a caretaker. For many of our families, there is no way for them to make it to the nearest school to pick up a meal for the children. We live in a walking community where many of our parents do not drive or have a mode of transportation. I am concerned that many of our students are lacking proper nutrition at this time. Is there a way we can make meal distribution more accessible to our families? A mobile service of some kind that can reach neighborhoods, perhaps?**

The school meal distribution program provides essential nourishment to support learning and well being for students. It is important to continue providing meals to students even during distance learning. Back in the Spring, we had a large percentage of families coming to pick up food at school sites. However, we saw this number drop as we began the new school year, as did many districts across the state and nation. The Food & Nutrition Services Department has started a committee to look into challenges that families may be facing to try and connect more students with meals. Two weeks ago, in addition to 15 school locations and 7 childcare program locations, we started food distribution at a local housing community which is helping to connect more students to meals. A group of community partners and PVUSD members are also partnering with Food & Nutrition Services to further identify and resolve food access barriers for our students. Any families facing challenges that want to share their stories can contact the Director of Food & Nutrition, Linda Liu, at 831-786-2325.

- 4. I'm a teacher and my home internet will not support both my kids and myself at the same time. I cannot come into my classroom as there is a high-risk person in our household. Can teachers get hotspots?**

Two weeks ago, the PVUSD Board of Trustees approved the agreement to provide certificated staff with a \$300 stipend to support the cost of high-speed internet between August and December within teachers' homes. Home internet is more reliable than what can be accomplished with a

hotspot. If this is not possible for a teacher to get home internet, they can request a hot spot from the Technology Department at 786-TECH. We do have a limited number of hot spots left from the 4,000 hot spots that we have to distribute.

5. **I've noticed that my child's teacher does not show their face during distance learning. Isn't this a key component to establishing a community of learners and breaking down barriers? Students will model teacher behavior and may think "Well if my teacher is not showing their face, then why should I?" What is the protocol for this?**

All staff working with students, both certificated and classified staff, should have on their cameras during instructional time. If that is not occurring, please first reach out to the teacher and then the site administrator to get resolution.

6. **Some middle schools are only having live instruction Tue-Fri. Why can't this be mandated across all schools in the district? Many students, teachers, and parents are feeling very overwhelmed by Distance Learning. We could all benefit from Mondays being used for check ins, office hours, Site Wellness Team meetings. I teach at an elementary school, and when this was brought up to our administrator, they expressed that they had no control over this issue. Why does one principal get to make that decision for their site, but not another? If anything, elementary students are the ones who could benefit the most from less screen time as compared to middle/HS students. Your thoughts?**

The Reopening Planning Contingency Team, as well as the PVFT elementary negotiating team, decided upon the 5 days of instruction for elementary students. The decision was based on knowing that foundational learning works best with consistency and repetition. For our younger students, the more opportunities they have to practice foundational skills, the quicker the knowledge will be retained. Many students in elementary school are still learning to read, while older students are reading to learn. The teams also felt the daily social interaction between students and their teacher was very important and necessary as elementary students are less independent. For screen time, there is a difference between the synchronous screen time and asynchronous screen time. The five days of synchronous learning each week allows for daily interaction and engagement with others. The asynchronous work is generally the student completing learning assignments and tasks on or off the computer. Regardless of day, students have a daily minimum number of instructional minutes that must be met for state compliance. The number of asynchronous minutes required increases as the synchronous minutes decreases.

7. **My son is in Kindergarten and it's been a real struggle to get him to class. He's been marked tardy and absent. Which eventually will make him truant. What can we do to avoid truancy? I know it's easy to say to get him to class but it's an everyday fight. He does his work (packet, Lexia and Seesaw) but refuses to sit for class meetings. Any information would be greatly appreciated!**

It is a challenge for some kindergarten students even when we have in person classes. One strategy that you may consider is to begin with a small amount of time in the class meetings and grow it over time. For example, he begins with knowing that he needs to be in class for only ten minutes and then each day the number of minutes increases until he is in class the entire required time. Other strategies and solutions can also be developed with the Site Wellness Team. You can access the support of this solution-oriented group through the site administrator.

- 8. I realized from your last newsletter that some parents don't want their students to return to in-person classes for the rest of the school year. But what about the rest of us? When in-person learning returns, why not let those parents "opt out" for their students and continue with virtual learning, and let the rest of us return to class?**

We have committed to remaining in distance learning for all students until January 2021. When it is determined that the current health conditions will allow us to return back to school after the first semester, there will be an option for parents who want their children to continue with distance learning while the other students and their families return to a hybrid in-person learning approach.

- 9. How can I suggest to the teacher to explain more about my children's homework. It is very difficult to help them with their homework because the teachers do not put sufficient information about the homework and when we send them emails they take a long time to respond or do not respond. What can I do?**

I encourage you to engage with the teachers over the phone during their office hours so you can have the opportunity to have a true discussion with the teachers on what you need and the supportive role that you can take. If you have already had the discussion with your children's teachers, you should engage with the site administrators for support.

- 10. Is there cheer this year?**

Each comprehensive high school is working with their Cheer Advisor to plan on a team when we are able to be back on campus physically. Some sites already held Zoom try-outs in the Spring and will hold in person try-outs whenever possible. Some of the Cheer and Dance teams are formulating their plans to start athletic conditioning cohorts. Please reach out to your high school Cheer Advisor or Athletic Director for more information.