



Preparing Career Ready Graduates

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Message from Superintendent Nelson

March 27, 2020

Good afternoon Fresno Unified family!

Today marks the end of week two of school closures and our first full week of sheltering in place. Despite the challenges this new reality brings, we are making things happen on behalf of our students and our greater community – including providing hundreds of thousands of meals, learning resources for all grades and soon, laptops and tablets to all students. I am extremely grateful for the amazing employees of Fresno Unified who continue to step up during this unforeseen time.

This was a big week in our district! Many teachers and administrators were finding creative ways to connect and engage with students – from personal videos and virtual teleconferences to teacher car parades. Our food service team prepared and served nearly 40,000 daily meals. We added an additional meal distribution location at Birney Elementary. Our payroll team pulled off a huge feat by getting our payroll completed remotely, making sure all staff in paid status will receive their checks on time. Our print shop and warehouse team generated and delivered more than 500,000 pages of instructional packets today to our 19 food distribution sites, ensuring students without online access have every opportunity to stay academically engaged. Work also began to further expand our LCD program, providing even more students with needed technology.

Technology has been a major focus of our district for years. We've been fortunate to have a Board of Education that has wisely invested in our LCD Initiative and in laptops for our middle and high school students. We've been deploying our tablets through the LCD Initiative to every single student that requested one, which has added up to about 20,000 tablets distributed in less than 18 months. We've been utilizing our laptops in the classroom with our students and planning a phased approach over the next few years to move our system to a true "1 to 1 model" – meaning one device to every one student for both classroom and home use.

Truly, over these last two weeks we have had to do a complete 180 on our instructional system, moving quickly to a learning model that does not require us to congregate in groups. We're planning with an eye to the expediency of the moment and the longevity of the right technology for our classrooms when we're back together again. However, under the current conditions, we know there are a number of families who need these devices now more than ever. To meet that need, our team has worked tirelessly to turn that multi-year phased plan to one that can and will be implemented starting immediately.

Right now, we have laptops in stock that we are preparing with the right software to get to all of our middle and high school students over the next few weeks.

Following that, we'll be doing the same and preparing laptops for all of our fourth through sixth grade students. That might take us a little longer – especially if we need to order more laptops at a time when the supply is scarce and delivery is taking 10-12 weeks. Know that we are moving as quickly and effectively as possible.

For our pre-K through third grade students, we will deploy a tablet to every student with our third graders also getting a keyboard with their tablet to start building typing skills. We currently have 15,000 tablets out to our elementary students and we have another 9,000 in stock. We will prioritize our students without a device first in all scenarios.

With this bold move shifting to a full 1-to-1 model, it means that every single fourth through 12th grade student will have the opportunity to obtain a district provided laptop, and every single one of our pre-K through third grade students will have a tablet. I cannot overstate what a herculean task this has been and the courage that it took for our technology team to make this happen for our students.

Over the next few weeks, your school site will be reaching out directly to prioritize need and schedule time to distribute your devices. Please be patient with your school site staff as they navigate this process with urgency and with respect to keeping you, your loved ones, and our staff safe and healthy.

Next week on April 1, I will join our Board of Education in our first-ever virtual board meeting. In our ongoing effort to model social distancing and reduce the spread of COVID-19, we will discuss the possibility of extending our current school closure date from April 14 to May 3. Knowing the impact on our students, staff and community, we do not take this decision lightly. Our Board of Education and I believe this is an important item to discuss publicly, with the opportunity for our community to comment and share their voice. Please take a look at the [agenda here](#) for more information on submitting your public comments.

For the latest updates around school closures, meal sites, instructional resources and next week's Board of Education meeting, I encourage you to continue to visit www.fresnounified.org. Thank you for your ongoing support of our district through this unprecedented time. Be safe and stay healthy!