COVID-19 Operations Written Report for Ventura County Office of Education

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Descriptions provided should include sufficient detail yet be sufficiently succinct to promote a broader understanding of the changes your LEA has put in place.

The Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) operates schools and programs in support of 20 local school districts. These programs serve students at: Gateway Community School, Providence Court School and Special Education schools including Phoenix School and Triton Academy, which have fully accredited high school diploma track programs. This Operations Written Report will serve to detail how VCOE is working to address the COVID-19 emergency and the major impacts of the closures on the students and families in court and community schools and special education programs.

Since the start of the coronavirus crisis, the Ventura County Office of Education has been the primary source of information about the impacts on local public schools. VCOE has coordinated with all Ventura County school districts to provide consistent, unified messaging for parents, students, educators and other community members.

The Ventura County Office of Education is committed to providing a quality education for all students and has created and continues to expand the VCOE website at www.vcoe.org/coronavirus that serves as a countywide hub for information about coronavirus and public schools. The website provides information about: school closures, distance learning, meal service, childcare, social services, state and college testing, graduation, and coronavirus news. The following sections in this Operations Written Report detail:
• changes to program offerings made in response to school closures to address the COVID-19 emergency and the major impacts of the closures on students and families,
• how VCOE is meeting the needs of its English learners, foster youth and low-income students,
• the steps that have been taken by VCOE to continue delivering high-quality distance learning opportunities,
• the steps that VCOE has taken to provide information on school meals while maintaining social distancing practices,
• the steps that VCOE has taken to provide information on the supervision of students during ordinary school hours, as well as
• the communication/stakeholder engagement efforts that have been taken by VCOE to keep all stakeholders informed.

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 Ventura County Office of Education is committed to providing a quality education for all students. Beginning on March 13, 2020, all VCOE Schools and Programs staff began working on student and family needs: health, nutrition, emotional support, child care, medical, family well-being, and technology to ensure that all students have equitable access.

The following is an overview explaining the changes to program offerings that VCOE has made in response to school closures to address the COVID-19 emergency and the major impacts of the closures on students and families:

• All program offerings are being offered remotely via a hybrid model which is inclusive of packets being disseminated weekly and instruction being offered via video conference options such as Zoom and Google Classroom.
• Additionally, Special Education students are accessing the Unique Learning System.
• Teacher created YouTube videos are used to facilitate instruction to meet individual student needs.

At the onset of the crisis, the VCOE Technology Services immediately expanded upon and leveraged existing systems to meet the needs of all distance-learning for staff, students and families. Additionally, TS offers multiple methods of providing customer support for students, families, and staff.

• VCOE Court and Community schools have expanded resources to meet the learning needs of students in our Court programs. Specifically, probation officers are able to facilitate the learning with the teachers via online-systems and devices.
• The VCOE Technology Services team created individualized Technology Packages to ensure equitable access to curriculum and instruction which included either a Google Chromebook or Ipad, a Mifi device, along with a user-friendly “how to” guide in English and Spanish to ensure successful connectivity. Each Technology Package included personalized login information to ensure privacy and security.
• VCOE is committed to ensuring the success of our students and have implemented a grading policy to adapt to the COVID-19 crisis. A grading rubric was created to provide students opportunities to improve their grades and to ensure “No Harm” grading.
• To ensure that graduating seniors receive the recognition they deserve as they conclude their high school journey under these most unusual circumstances, the following are examples of how they will be celebrated. VCOE’s Focus on Education publication will feature profiles of graduating seniors with notable achievements and remarkable stories from throughout Ventura County. These profiles will explore how the graduates have been impacted by the response to the COVID-19. VCOE is also working with Spectrum
News 1 in Los Angeles, which is producing a TV special about high school graduates from throughout Southern California. We are helping them identify students to feature in their program.

The impacts on students and families were immediate and may have long lasting implications.

Please visit our website for information about: school closures, distance learning, meal service, childcare, social services, state and college testing, graduation, and coronavirus news, www.vcoe.org/coronavirus.

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

Ventura County Office of Education serves 680 students of which 17.21% are English language learners, 2.79% are Foster, and 51.03% are considered low-income. VCOE staff make on-going personal phone calls to all students/families to ensure appropriate supports are in place. Steps that have been taken by VCOE to continue to meet the needs of its English learners, foster youth and low-income students deliver and support high-quality distance learning opportunities for VCOE schools and programs includes but is not limited to the following:

ENGLISH LEARNERS

- VCOE is committed to continuing to meet the needs of English learner students during the COVID-19 crisis. We value the input and participation of our English learner families and wanted to ensure that previously scheduled Reclassification, DELAC/ELAC, and EL Master Plan meetings in which our families participate were not cancelled. Extensive outreach efforts were made to ensure participants had the technology necessary to engage in meaningful virtual meetings. Additionally, outreach included phone calls with parents to provide “How to Use Zoom” training.
- Zoom meetings have been hosted with English learner families to promote stakeholder engagement, translation and written documentation were provided for all of the above meetings.
- During all Zoom meetings for the parents of English learners, VCOE sought input and feedback, answered questions and addressed concerns related to the instruction/support of EL students.
- VCOE established a Social Justice Task Force to reach out to and meet the needs of English learner families who may need extra support. The Social Justice Task Force has created and distributed a bilingual community resources flyer and arranged multiple interviews on Spanish language radio stations highlighting community resources. Areas of focus have include health, nutrition, education, employment, and emotional support.
- Translation services are provided at all meetings, sessions, and IEPs. This includes either written or oral translation based on family need.
- All communications, including signal kit, are translated to ensure access to all information/resources.
- Professional development opportunities on providing English Language Development instruction via distance learning have been made available to staff.
- The CDE Weekly COVID-19 Updates are shared with staff so that they may participate in opportunities through CDE and share resources provided by the English Learner Support Division with their communities.

FOSTER YOUTH
The VCOE Foster Youth Services Coordinating Program (FYSCP) maintains contact with the Foster Youth Liaisons for the districts in Ventura County, offering ongoing and as-needed support and technical assistance. The Executive Advisory Committee has met virtually and resources, such as tutoring, housing for transitional-aged youth, computer hardware, and food distribution as well as a presentation on engagement in distance learning for Resource Parents were shared amongst the group. Several non-profit partners participated in the meeting including Raising Hope, CASA, and Interface, and shared their specific resources and contributions with the group.

The FYSCP continues to provide training to Resource (Foster) Parents virtually on the educational rights and resources of foster youth in the educational system. COVID19-related resources are also being provided to the parents in addition to the regular materials.

The FYSCP continues to work with the Education Department at CSUCI, providing virtual training to pre-credential, master’s level, and special education credential candidates on the educational needs and characteristics of foster students.

The FYSCP has worked closely with several non-profit partners in the county, including James Storehouse and Raising Hope, to provide foster students who do not have access to hardware, software, and internet resources with the required supplies. Students moving into our county and out of our county are often unable to access district resources and rely on outside organizations for these needs.

An initial survey focusing on educational, health, nutrition, social-emotional needs was conducted by classroom teachers to assess unique needs of each student. The data from the surveys was used to determine the customized communication each administrator engaged in with each family. In addition to services being provided via our centralized website for Foster Youth and Low-income students, all site administrators connect with their families to share information flyers such as 211 or other services in conjunction with local partnerships/agencies.

Ongoing efforts to keep foster students enrolled in their schools of origin continue. Students who move into or out of our county now have the ability to remain enrolled in their school of origin despite whatever physical distance separates them. Providing as much stability as possible during this time of crisis for our foster students is a priority and has been possible through the efforts of FYSCP working with local and distant Foster Youth Liaisons to assist in keeping youth enrolled in their school of origin after placement moves.

Communication with site administrators regarding foster students’ needs and services available to address these needs.

LOW-INCOME STUDENTS

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, cascading communication was a priority. The VCOE SCOE Special Populations (Homeless Education Program) coordinator participated in CDE, county agencies, and local partnership meetings/conferences/trainings/webinars. Time-sensitive information related to health/academic/nutrition/social-emotional/technology was gathered and disseminated internally to ensure our families and students had access to pertinent resources.

Through the partnerships with Interface and My Stuff Bags organizations, the VCOE Special Populations (Homeless Education Program) continues to coordinate efforts to support the needs of Homeless and Low-income students. During the COVID 19 crisis the consistent communication between VCOE and partner organizations has informed immediate next steps such as the Special Populations Coordinator delivering 20 supply bags containing items such as toiletries, school supplies, and blankets to low-income/homeless students at the Local Youth Shelter.

VCOE Special Populations (Homeless Education Program) coordinator collaborated with all school/program administrators to ensure accurate identification of low-income/homeless students who in turn worked with site teachers. Since teachers are connecting with students directly, teachers provided information on specific needs of their students. As a result additional outreach was made to 20
identified families through a mailed care card which included contact information for direct support from the Special Populations office along with a gift card.

In addition to the aforementioned, the following details how Gateway Community School and Providence Court School are meeting the needs of English learners, foster youth and low-income students:

Gateway Community School: All students (including ELs, foster youth, and low income students) participate in remote learning 5 days a week through the Google Classroom on-line platform. In addition, video lessons/conferencing takes place for one hour a week for every subject in which each student is enrolled (ELA, math, social studies, science, English Language development etc.). Teachers have office hours throughout the instructional day and students can contact them via Google Classroom or phone to seek assistance. To ensure that all students have access to the Google Classroom on-line platform, VCOE provides a Chromebook and a hot spot for all students in need.

Providence Court School: All students (including ELs, foster youth, and low income students) work on individualized work packets five days a week. These packets include a standards-based curriculum in ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies, English Language Development, Physical Education, and electives. Teachers have office hours throughout the instructional day and students can contact them via Google Voice at any time. All students have access to video conferencing with teachers for one hour a day, five days a week.

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

The Ventura County Office of Education continues to support and expand distance learning opportunities for all students. Steps that have been taken by VCOE to continue to deliver and support high-quality distance learning opportunities for VCOE schools and programs are inclusive of but not limited to the following:

- It was important to the VCOE team to ensure our staff was prepared before embarking on distance learning with students and families hence a professional learning/training plan was created and implemented to ensure all staff were equipped with safely utilizing technology (i.e., Zoom, Google Classroom, Unique Learning System, APEX) to meet student and family needs as well as learning how to facilitate IEPs via Zoom.
- All curriculum and resources were vetted by the VCOE Technology team to ensure compliance with student safety and privacy.
- Vetted learning resources centralized on the VCOE website, https://www.vcoe.org/distance, by VCOE’s Curriculum and Instruction Department in a variety of subjects in English and Spanish. Links to learning resources include Arts and Physical Education, Dual Language/World Languages, Early Childhood, Economics, English Language Arts, History/Social Studies, Mathematics, Multi-Subject, Science and Social Emotional Health. Additionally fun Learning & Discovery Activities are available for parents/guardians to do with their child at home.
- VCOE has vetted and prepared a list of learning resources centralized on the VCOE website specifically for students with special needs in English and Spanish for students in VCOE – operated schools and programs. These resources are being shared directly with parents and guardians by VCOE’s special education and court and community schools.
- Vetted learning resources centralized on the VCOE website specifically for English learner students.
- Links to the Distance Learning web pages are also available for all families to access for their respective district of residence of the 20 Ventura County school districts.
Supporting the transition to high-quality distance learning for all stakeholders is a top priority for VCOE, hence, a series of videos and tip sheets about learning and working from home for students, parents, teachers and administrators. Areas of support include the following:

- **Tips for Admin – Success in an Online Environment** accessible via https://youtu.be/OE4MYR_A32E
- **Tips for Parents – Success in an Online Environment** accessible via https://youtu.be/AS6mC99IrEy
- **Tips for Students – Learning from Home** accessible via https://youtu.be/N7P9efVxAmk
- **Tips for Teacher and Counselors – Success in an Online Environment** accessible via https://youtu.be/bKYfVBU3Loo

In collaboration with the California Department of Education, Target Solutions, VCOE Educational Services Team, Professional Organizations, and Local Partnerships, on-going professional learning on Standards based curriculum and instruction, social-emotional learning, legal compliance, federal and state compliance continues to be provided through distance learning for all staff.

- In an effort to maintain social-distancing and to meet the federal guidelines for IEPs, VCOE created a Digital Signatures feature within the SIRAS IEP program.

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

The Ventura County Office of Education serves students from 20 districts and is committed to providing access to school meals in their home community while maintaining social distancing practices. The Ventura County Office of Education continues to connect meal service for students while the State of California stay home order is in effect.

- An initial survey which included nutritional needs was conducted by classroom teachers to assess unique needs of each student. The data from the surveys was used to determine the customized communication each administrator engaged in with each family.
- Families are provided information individually via Signal Kit, individual phone calls, surveys, and social media.
- Communication is continuously shared as a reminder and is updated when new information is available.

Centralized on the VCOE website is a list of meal pickup locations and times throughout Ventura County which is available at www.vcoe.org/meals or www.vcoe.org/comida.

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

The Ventura County Office of Education is committed to supporting families who may need child care during the COVID-19 crisis. Steps the Ventura County Office of Education has taken to arrange for supervision of students during ordinary school hours include centralizing resources on the VCOE website and communicating availability of programs that are open and serving children of parents/caregivers that are deemed "essential workers" in Ventura County. Families are guided/encouraged to connect directly with the provider/Child Development Resources/MyChildCare Project to determine availability and cost. Information on current supervision providers is shared with staff and families through team meetings and via Signal Kit and can be accessed by visiting the following website: https://www.venturalpc.org/Emergency-Child-Care

VCOE is committed to cascading information with all stakeholders and has also made the following resources/information accessible to all stakeholders:
The Ventura County Office of Education is committed to cascading communication with all stakeholders during the COVID-19 crisis. Steps the Ventura County Office of Education has taken to enhance communication/stakeholder engagement include the use of social media, news media and public forums, and internal communications:

SOCIAL MEDIA

VCOE posts updates and links to resources daily on the VCOE Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Social media views are up as much as eight times normal. The most-viewed tweet was about campus closures through the end of the school year. It had 17,000 views on April 2.

NEWS MEDIA & PUBLIC FORUMS

Through a variety of news media appearances and participation in community forums, VCOE personnel are sharing important coronavirus-related information with our community. These include:

- Weekly ten-minute radio interviews in English on KVTA 1590 AM
- Spanish language radio interviews on La “M” 103.7 FM and KOXR 102.1 FM
- An op-ed by Superintendent Stan Mantooth was published in the Ventura County Star on Sunday, April 5
- Superintendent Mantooth and Associate Superintendent Dr. Cesar Morales participated in virtual town hall meetings in English and Spanish with Assembly member Jacqui Irwin and State Senator Henry Stern on April 3
- Superintendent Mantooth presented an education update at the Ventura County coronavirus news conference on April 13
- Superintendent Mantooth and Trustee Mike Teasdale participated in an online community forum presented by the Chalice Unitarian Universalist Fellowship on April 17
- Communications Director Dave Schermer provides a weekly report on K-12 and higher education on the Ventura County Office of Emergency Services coronavirus conference call
- Communications Director Dave Schermer participates in a weekly coronavirus conference call for county Public Information Officers
- An archive of all media coverage is available at www.vcoe.org/coronavirus/media-coverage

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS
VCOE keeps employees informed about workplace safety, working from home and technology security with regular all-staff emails, notifications via text and phone, and posted flyers. VCOE updates parents of students at VCOE-operated schools via phone, text and email with our parent notification system. Topics include school closures, meal service, distance learning and Zoom video conferencing.

VCOE is committed to delivering high-quality distance learning opportunities and providing services for all students in VCOE schools and programs and values stakeholders’ feedback to address needs during the COVID-19 crisis. Opportunities for stakeholder engagement with the VCOE Operations Report included the following: DELAC Zoom Meetings, EL Parent Engagement Meetings, Social Justice Task Force Meetings, Administrators’ Zoom Meetings, and Curriculum & Instruction Zoom Meetings.