

Back-to-School 2020 Vision & Framework

July 20, 2020

Under the continuing threat from the COVID-19 pandemic, creating and maintaining a healthy and safe learning environment for students and staff is our highest priority. We want schools to be open. We need for schools to be open. But we must do that safely for all students and employees.

Our primary goal is – Safe Schools. Safe Spaces.

Leaders in the West Contra Costa Unified School District are asking all stakeholders to appreciate that we are opening school for the 2020-21 school year under very difficult and challenging circumstances. The COVID-19 spread creates a continually changing landscape. Many factors are out of our control as we make decisions about how, when, and if we can open schools safely.

Back-to-School 2020 Framework

West Contra Costa USD has put forth the Back-to-School 2020 Framework which will continue a distance learning approach beginning on August 17, the first day of school. Students will not be in classrooms until we are certain that the conditions in the community and schools are safe. When it is healthy to do so, we will start to gradually phase-in in-person instruction and support. Returning to in-classroom instruction is not a risk worth taking right now.

Equity is an equally important imperative in WCCUSD’s planning. This Framework envisions creating Student Support Hubs to ensure equal access to meaningful instruction for the highest needs students who may not be well-served through distance learning alone. Our intent is to ensure that all students have the resources and supports they need to thrive during the pandemic.

The WCCUSD Framework is designed to be:

Flexible enough to address the unique needs of schools and high-need students,

Adaptable enough to adjust to changing circumstances and conditions, and

Nimble enough to pivot to back fully online distance learning quickly if necessary without jeopardizing equity and accessibility for all students.

Core Values & Guiding Principles

We will make decisions that serve to:

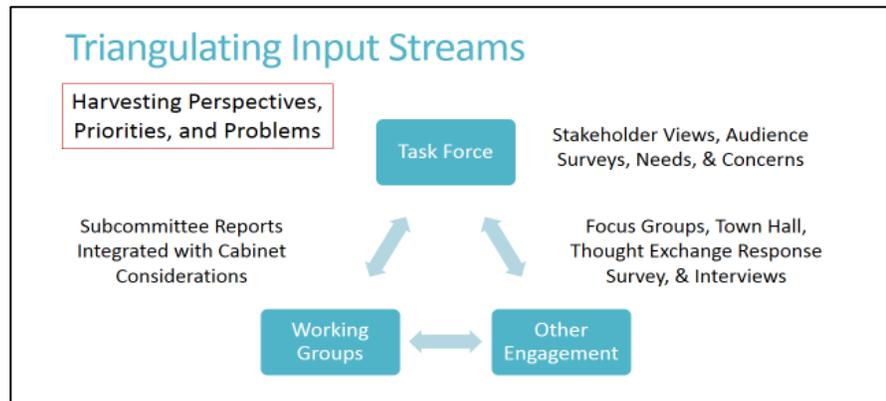
- Support safety of students and staff in a healthy learning/teaching environment
- Strengthen the social emotional health and well-being of students and staff
- Promote equity and achieve equality of education opportunity
- Overcome the digital divide for disadvantaged families
- Adequately feed our students nutritious meals
- Create a culture of connectivity and collaboration in a new school environment
- Provide families with educational options to meet their unique needs
- Inform and engage stakeholders with timely, reliable and accurate information
- Provide professional development to staff and parents on distance learning

Strategically listening to the needs of our diverse stakeholders

To help leaders make informed decisions about reopening schools, we have sought out diverse perspectives from all stakeholder interests in our educational community. A 53-member Re-Entry Task Force met several times over the past month to discuss options and review the needs, concerns, and ideas from students, parents, teachers from all grade levels and instructional areas, support staff, principals and administrators, and community-based organizations.

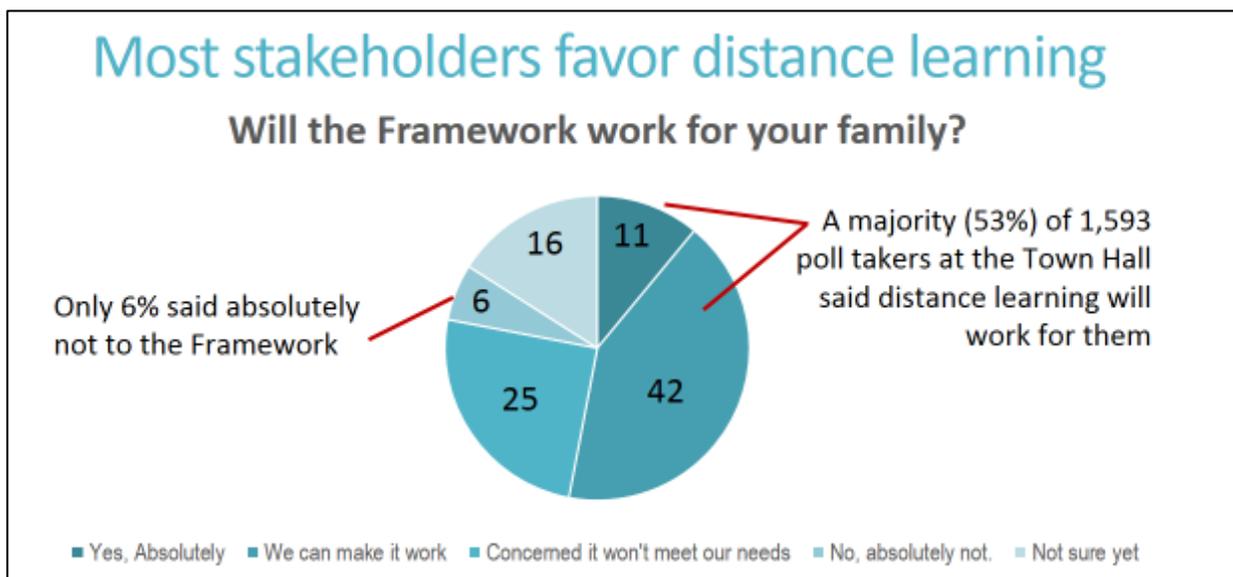
Focus groups were conducted involving 94 participants to harvest input from various perspectives.

Surveys were conducted with responses from 3,300 students, 7,197 parents, and 957 teachers.



On Friday, July 10, a virtual Town Hall was conducted. More than 3,000 people participated in the event, which was conducted through a Zoom Webinar and streamed on Facebook Live. Additionally, there were 1,657 responses to a Thought Exchange survey conducted during the Town Hall.

Using the Thought Exchange engagement tool, we surveyed the attendees and they gave us valuable feedback on whether the Framework we were proposing would work for them. A majority said that distance learning for the time being would work for them. fourth quarter said that they had concerns about whether it would work for them and 16% said they were unsure and needed more information and specifics. Only six percent said they were opposed to continuing distance learning.



The Planning Process Continues

Balancing Health and Safety with Access and Equity for High Need Students

Our Key Question: Can we create a model of online instruction (synchronous & asynchronous teaching and student learning) to accommodate stay-at-home learners while eventually offering some in-school instructional support that can serve high-needs students and families?

Shifting from Input Phase to Implementation Phase

We plan to sunset the Task Force the week of July 20, and convert the role of its subcommittees to Implementation Teams with streamlined membership.

Implementation Teams will help operationalize a Re-Opening Plan by drilling down into the key components of the Framework.

Each Implementation Team will have a cabinet level administrator and a Team Lead to coordinate the work of select representatives of labor unions, parent organizations, and students.

The four Implementation Teams are:

- Learning & Instruction
- Health & Safety
- Logistics & Operations
- Communications & Engagement

These four teams will develop the specifics of “How, What and When” our reopening plan will be phased in.

The Draft Reopening Plan will be presented to the Board of Education upon completion of negotiations with our labor partners.

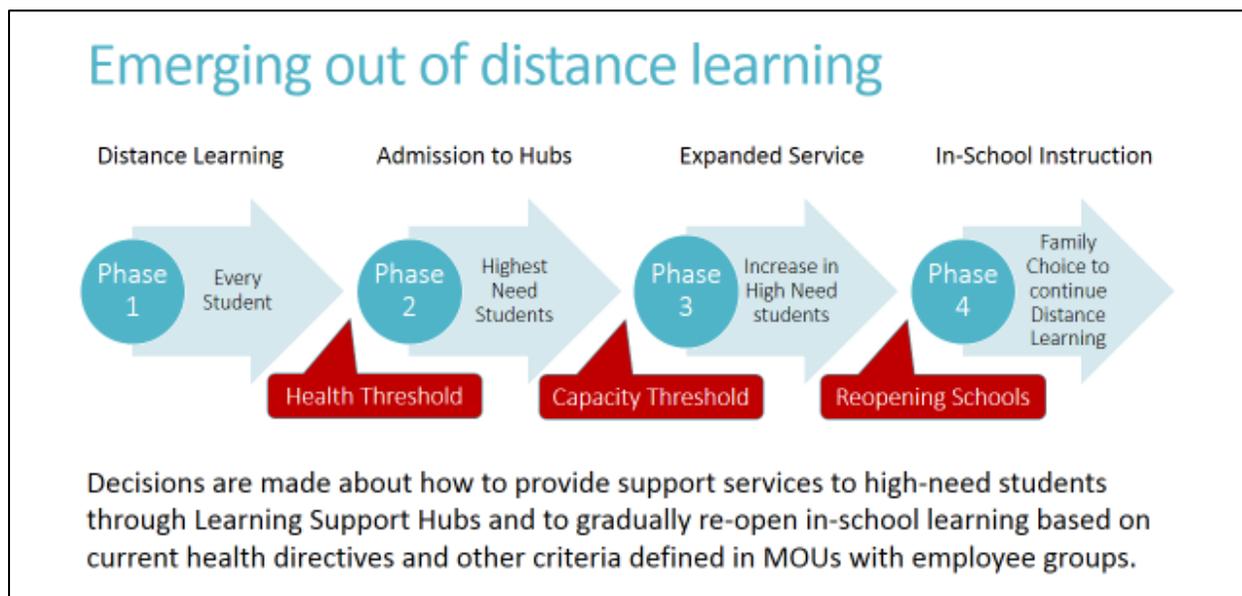
During this period, we will engage in negotiations and conversations with labor organizations. We hope to have in place Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) by August 1.

Because those operationalized components impact the working conditions of employees, negotiations over these MOUs will focus on defining what an optimal instructional day and week will look like for teachers, staff, students and parents.

Summary of Town Hall & Focus Group Key Concerns

- Safety First
- Focus on Equity
- Avoid Student Learning Loss
- Be consistent, predictable, and proactive in communication/ programming
- Be consistent in applying and describing the instructional model
- Focus on Social Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Grading/Assessment should have options for P/NP and A-F
- Relevant Curriculum and PD focused on Anti-Racism, culturally responsive pedagogy, and relevancy in classes
- Special Education/ELL working groups to create optimal distance learning components
- Uniformity in technology platforms with flexibility on learning apps to suit teaching needs Training and Professional Development tailored to the needs of parents and teachers
- Willingness to make it work

The key to Phase 1 of this Framework is to make distance learning work well. The key to Phase 2 is to enable in-person support and learning for students with the highest needs under the safe and supportive setting of a Student Support Hub. Eventually, we will create a safe pathway to gradually expanding the number of students receiving in-person instruction and support.



We are working collaboratively in negotiations with the district’s labor unions to reach consensus and to resolve staffing and workload issues for this phased emergence out of distance learning.

Phase 1 will be a distance learning model for all. We will slowly add more in-person options as part of Phase 2 until we are again in a position to provide a full-service program, hopefully later in the school year. We plan to revisit our programs with the goal of moving to a full school model as the safety conditions allow. This analysis will happen along the natural reporting periods throughout the coming school year. The deciding factors on moving from Phase 1 to Phase 2 will be Health and Safety clearance from appropriate state, county and federal agencies and the district’s ability to implement proper safety protocols.

We listened to the feedback from parents, students, teachers, classified, and our administrative team and have identified the key components of daily focus for students. These will include the following in our distance learning environment that we will be negotiating with the bargaining units:

- **Direct Instruction daily** - a combination of asynchronous and synchronous models to teach academic content and social emotional development (Homeroom/Advisory)
- **Professional learning** - time for teacher staff development
 - Ideally at set ongoing times while in Distance Learning such as:
 - Race and Equity Learning (District)
 - Instruction, Technology and Content Learning (District/Site)
- **Daily Planning time** - for teachers to support lesson design
 - Ideally at a set ongoing time daily to allow for teachers to collaborate

- **Office hours** - daily office hours for teachers to interact 1:1 with students to ensure understanding of content and maintain a SEL connection
- **Limiting the number of classes** that students take in a normal day at secondary level
- All **assignments will be linked from a common platform** with the ability to use multiple apps for instruction
- Opportunities for **student-to-student interaction** in virtual forums weekly
 - Ideally could be set up to coincide with teacher planning time and run by other staff members
- The first couple of weeks will be focused on student interaction, SEL, and determining where students are academically.

In addition, we will be looking for options that will be included in our virtual model for additional student interaction:

- Social Opportunities such as **clubs, student forums**, and other connections within the school day
- Office hours and ability to have **individual connections with counselors**
- **Outside Athletics** in a social distancing environment with potential live streaming of games when conditions allow
- **Training for Parents** to support students in distance learning prior to the opening of school and through ongoing asynchronous supports

Logistics that we will continue to work on that may require negotiations, but are not finalized as part of Phase 1:

- Grading protocols
- Attendance
- Assessments
- Teacher Expectations-Best Practices
- Tech Tools and Platforms

Finally, the District will be moving forward with options to provide **in-person options for students in Phase 2**. First, however, we will need to identify the conditions to be able to safely open which will be done in collaboration with our labor partners. These will be defined in the coming weeks to offer these options in a phased manner once we begin the school year including options for:

- students to attend in person and receive instruction at the site (even virtual)
- enhanced athletics and VAPA
- in-person support for SEL and Academic Intervention

Shared concerns and shared accountability

Here are the overarching challenges facing the Implementation Teams and the labor negotiations

- Making distance learning highly effective

- Making in-school instruction as safe as possible
- Serving underserved students who cannot access distance learning
- Recapturing low attendance students
- Creating a robust staff professional development program for employees and parents that enables maximizes the effectiveness of distance learning for teachers and learners alike.

How our Framework’s Student Support Hubs Work

The Student Support Hub is like a study hall where students that are unable to access distance learning effectively at home can receive coaching, assistance and facilitation.

All instruction is delivered in a distance learning approach. The “classroom” is with the teacher. Teachers can either be at home or in a classroom with limited high-need students to deliver instruction.

Students are admitted to Student Support Hubs at schools with social distancing standards in place, in small cohorts.

Coordinated intervention resources and personnel for high need students will be provided.

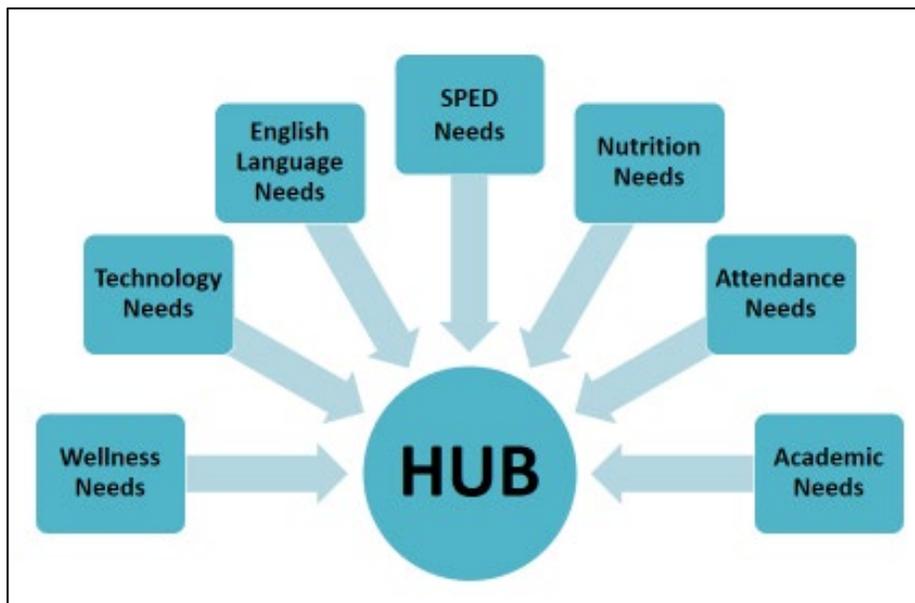
Hubs will be staffed with qualified facilitators and support personnel to work with small cohorts of students.

Minimum Standards for Distance Learning

We need to do these things to decide on shifting to Phase II admission of high-need students to the Student Support Hubs:

- Confirm and provide technology for all students
- Content aligned to grade level standards, and quality and intellectual challenge equivalent to in-classroom instruction
- Supports for students performing below grade level, English learner students, students with disabilities, foster youth, and homeless youth
- Accommodations to ensure individualized education places can be executed
- For English learner students, continue assessments in English language proficiency and ability to reclassify as English proficient
- Daily live interaction with teachers and classmates

Personnel supporting students in the Hubs could be teachers, instructional aides, staff with child care permits, and/or screened before/after school workers, as well as other employees. These could be done using community-based partners and agencies.



Assignment to Student Support Hubs is done according to student-centered needs up to capacity and workforce demands.

We are working with our Implementation Teams to identify the criteria and process for placing students in these Hubs as a means to access distance learning most effectively.

CONCLUSION

Our goal is to make distance learning highly effective for all students. We are working with labor partners, parents and students to design a model that is consistent in the virtual world and flexible enough to adapt to the individual needs of students and changing conditions. Our second goal in this framework is to strive to ensure equity for the highest needs students who may have difficulty accessing and being successful in a fully distance learning environment. We will focus energies on assisting families to support their students during this time. We will incorporate both small group and 1:1 time for students with teachers within the schedule as well as the opportunity for parents to also meet with teachers during the school day through a family outreach schedule.

The West Contra Costa Unified School District has worked to design an efficient and effective Phase 1 implementation of Distance learning that will begin for 100% of students on August 17, 2020. As the conditions allow, we will move to Phase 2 with additional in-person supports, but our current operational assumption is that the timing of Phase 2 could be somewhat farther in the future. Our initial focus will be to provide the necessary supports, staff development, and planning time to implement a more robust distance learning program as part of Phase 1.