

LBUSD English Language Learners & COVID-19

Email Interview with Chris Eftychiou, Public Information Director,
Long Beach Unified School District
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How has the district kept in contact with ELL students and parents during this pandemic? Teachers are using district applications such as Google Classroom, Meet, and Hangouts, email, telephone calls, and other internal applications to reach out to students and parents. Each school site has published an alternate telephone number to be used when a school site is physically closed. The district has launched a comprehensive Home Learning Opportunities web site with videos and contact information in both Spanish and English for parents to help them support their students with our distance learning program. Sites are also reaching out to our central bank of translators who are making telephone calls to connect students, parents, and school staff. There is a Spanish-speaking newcomer programs coordinator who is working with our newcomer families (both telephone contact and home visits) to ensure they are included in the distance learning program.

What measures has the district taken to ensure ELL students are learning from home in a quality manner? In the past three weeks, the district has launched an aggressive effort to provide Chromebooks and hot spots to all students who need a device and/or internet access to participate in the distance learning program. Those efforts continue with school staff reaching out to students whom teachers are identifying as not participating regularly in the online instruction with personal contact to identify what support(s) the students need. Additionally, teachers are participating in professional development training to learn how to better use instructional technology to address the needs of all students. Curriculum specialists, including English learner and English language development specialists, have provided virtual office hours, training, and modeled lessons for teachers. They have also created Google Classrooms with resources for English learners and are adding daily to those Classrooms so that teachers have multiple resources to provide high-quality instruction to our most vulnerable students for whom language proficiency is an additional challenge.

Is ELL learning a factor taken into consideration with regard to grades this semester?

The district, in recognition of the unprecedented current environment and acknowledgement that distance learning is not the same as providing a full range of student support services in a 'brick and mortar' building, has moved to a credit/no credit or pass/fail grading system for the final grading period of the school year for all students. Students whose grades prior to the school closures in mid-March will be provided multiple opportunities and support to improve their standing should they not be meeting expectations for credit or pass.

Are ELL students to receive their homework translated from English to their native language or is the expectation that ELL students are to translate assignments themselves? The same supports with respect to translation, are available within the distance learning program. Any student, parent, or teacher may request the assistance of a district translator for assignment translation, as needed. Many of the online platforms recommended for supplemental support such as Khan Academy are available in Spanish.

As students are expected to complete assignments from home. What resources are currently available for ELL students? English learner students have access to a variety of supplemental applications (e.g. Khan Academy, Lexia Core5) available via the district's portal. Also, the district maintains an afternoon homework help line. Classroom teachers regularly offer virtual office hours during which students can join a teacher for individual help or small group tutoring.

How are ELL students being made aware of these resources? The district and individual school sites and teachers are using all available resources to reach out to students and their families, including telephone calls, home visits, email, announcements on the district web page with multiple links for parent resources, information and homework packets available at all meal distribution sites.

Is the district aware of any other challenges ELL students may be facing? We recognize that simultaneously acquiring English language proficiency and content knowledge (e.g., math, history, etc.) is an added challenge to academic achievement for our EL students. We also recognize that all of us are confronting and responding to this serious health crisis individually and together, but with varying levels of support

available to us. The district is committed to providing meals to our students with food insecurity, distributed at 33 school sites, Monday-Friday. Any student who needs a Chromebook and did not pick one up from a meal distribution site in the last three weeks may call their school site to make an appointment to secure one. Families may also contact their school site to request a hot spot. Spanish-speaking personnel are available to assist parents in requesting resources. Our counselors and other mental health and support staff are reaching out to students most at risk, those who have not connected to our distance learning program. We are working closely with our community partners and agencies to connect our families with support available from the community, in partnership with our schools.