

COVID-19 Operations Written Report

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Name	Contact Name and Title	Email and Phone	Date of Adoption
Stella Middle Charter Academy	Jane Han Principal	(213) 253-8900 jhan@brightstarschools.org	6/29/2020

Descriptions provided should include sufficient detail yet be sufficiently succinct to promote a broader understanding of the changes your LEA has put in place. LEAs are strongly encouraged to provide descriptions that do not exceed 300 words.

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.

In response to Covid-19 the schools educational program shifted to distance learning on March 17th. The school's initial distance learning plan was written to address short term remote learning. The plan included outlined expectations of school and instructional academic support staff during Covid-19, these expectations were shared with school staff in midMarch. The plan included expectations for teachers to create Google Classrooms for all their classes, share with students expectations for online participation and digital citizenship, create two weeks' worth of assignments with daily markers (with each class taking about 45 minutes per day), to both upload those assignments onto Google Classroom and to send a PDF for the office to prepare paper packet versions to distribute to students who did not yet have stable internet access, to provide 1 hour of virtual office hours via Zoom or Google Classroom daily, to provide feedback on work and communicate via our online Gradebook system, and to post weekly videos to make connections with students and to provide direct instruction and directions.

When it became clear that the school would likely not reopen for the remainder of the school year on April 3, Bright Star Schools (the overarching Charter Management Organization) released an updated distance learning plan called Distance Learning 2.0. The central purpose of this plan was to communicate how school's operational and academic practices would need to adjust to account for longer term remote learning. Bright Star Schools also put in place temporary student policies for the duration of Covid-19 in the following areas: grading, attendance requirements, and technology use. Additionally, Bright Star Schools also issued a temporary work from home policy for all Bright Star employees.

The week before school officially closed, when it became clear that a school closure was a possibility, Stella Middle Charter Academy administered a survey to 100% of its students, to determine the students' home situation, including their access to Chromebooks and stable internet. Based on that, the staff began to prepare an inventory of Chromebooks to be distributed to students to take home. At the onset of the closure, the school issued chromebooks to all students who reported not having a device at home. Subsequently, the school issued two needs assessment surveys to better assess the effect Covid-19 was having on families and subsequently student's ability to participate in distance learning. The first survey was issued on April 17th and the second survey on May 29th. These surveys asked questions on the following topics: (1) student access to technology, (2) family housing security, (3) family preferred communications method/frequency, and (4) food security.

Based on family responses, the school distributed and coordinated internet services for all families who have indicated need and reconfirmed students willingness to participate in distance learning. Additionally, the school adjusted communication frequency, and the meal distribution (both timing and frequency) to best meet the needs of families.

While the school was pivoting to a remote learning model, the school prioritized checking in on students and ensuring their socioemotional well-being. Within the first two weeks of closure, the staff coordinated to have an emotional and academic check-in with 100% of its students. The school's team of instructional assistants continued to reach out to students on a daily basis, and their main responsibility over the next few months was to reach out to students (via text, phone, email, or video conference) to provide academic, emotional, or motivational support. SMCA's four counselors focused on reaching out to each of their ~120 student caseloads and their families, to provide support through this transition and run Circles with students on various topics. The school kept a close log of student online participation, so students who were less responsive were put on priority lists for staff to reach out to them.

In order to ensure ongoing communication with families the school used multiple methods. The school's primary parent communication method has been Parentsquare, a technology platform that allows the school to send emails, text messages, posts, video posts, and resources directly to a parent's phone, app, and email. The school also established the following norms regarding parent communication: once a week communication from Bright Star Schools (CMO), once a week communication (on Monday) from the grade level with weekly assignments and virtual office hours, and once a week admin video. All communication from school to families is delivered via ParentSquare. Teachers also use ParentSquare to reach families, in addition to direct email, phone calls, and text messages.

More detailed description of the major changes to the educational program are included below.

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

In order to ensure our English Learners (EL) were supported with distance learning, English Learner Coordinators (ELD) partnered with classroom teachers and joined Google classrooms to support their caseload of students during their ELA and math classes. In addition to ELD Coordinators working directly with instructors to modify Google classroom assignments, they have also provided time during the week for focused instruction and targeted intervention for EL to develop critical English language skills. Teachers were also provided with some training and online resources (e.g., Newsela, Common Lit, Flocabulary) that would help teachers to embed EL support in their instruction and assignments. Additionally, ELD coordinators were asked to monitor their students participation and completion of assigned work. In order to ensure that students, teachers and families could access ELD coordinators, they were asked to make themselves accessible to Monday through Friday from 7:30AM - 4:00PM via email, phone, facetime, zoom or google hangouts. Every EL at SMCA was assigned an instructional assistant who would call them 2-3 times per week to check in on their academic progress and provide support.

Bright Star Schools has prioritized assessing and providing device and internet access to students, so that all students regardless of income and at home resources are able to participate in distance learning. The school issued chromebooks and mobile hotspots to students who self-reported needing access to internet and devices. Bright Star Schools Information Technology (IT) team also set up technology pick-up dates throughout the spring to allow student's whose circumstances may have changed to pick-up a device and/or mobile hotspot. To date the school has issued 101 chromebooks to students. The IT also set up office hours so that students and staff who were having tech issues could call in or stop by the school for help with their device.

As noted above the school administered a needs assessment survey to better understand how our students housing and food security was being affected by Covid-19. School counselors then worked with families and students to connect them with resources as needed, including cash gift cards and grocery vouchers provided by donors. The school also consistently provided meals to all children 18 or younger in households, from the start of closure until present.

In order to ensure all students but especially our low income, english learners and foster youth continued to receive support during this crisis the leadership team set the following expectations of counseling staff. Counselors were asked that they continue to host both individual and small group circles with students in their caseload virtually. Each counselor was asked to host at least two virtual circles per week. They were also asked to make contact with at least 10 students and/or parents on their caseload per day to ensure continuous student and family engagement. Additionally, counselors were asked to share one video per week with their caseload of students. The videos were instructed to include a positive message, focus area for the week, shout outs of specific students, and a strategy for students to cope with distance learning. Lastly, counselors were asked to set up weekly office hours and communicate those hours to students and families.

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

All teachers began delivering continued instruction using the adopted curricula beginning on March 17th -- one day post campus closure. All teachers used the Google classroom platform to organize learning activities, although a small percentage of families initially declined the opportunity to borrow a device and thus worked using paper packets. To date 83 percent of students are actively participating in distance learning.

Teachers are delivering direct instruction to students through three weekly, pre-recorded video lessons, from 5-15 minutes in length, aligned to independent practice activities assigned on the Google classroom platform. Additionally, teachers hold optional office hours via Zoom and/or Google hangouts daily. Teachers are providing students with either written or verbal feedback on their work at a minimum of two times per week. Teachers have been given the guidance that they need to be flexible with student deadlines, to account for each student's unique circumstance. Additionally, they have been told that late work must be accepted without penalty within a reasonable amount of time. Additionally, it has been articulated to teachers that the sole purpose of grading assignments at this point is to provide students with meaningful feedback on their performance so they can continue to progress in their learning and master new skills.

Teachers continued with standards-based instruction into distance learning, and they were all given time to revise their pacing plan to account for distance learning and to prioritize the most important standards for their content. Teachers continued to have weekly Professional Development and weekly staff meetings via Zoom, and in these times, they received training on using various online platforms for high-quality instruction. Teachers learned effective ways to produce and record instructional videos, to communicate with students, to embed checks for understanding in their videos, and to incorporate engaging visuals and content in their digital assignments. They also had department times to come together to share best practices and new learnings.

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

Bright Star Schools has established a grab and go meal distribution for both breakfast and lunch at Stella Middle Charter Academy, located at . This grab and go meal distribution is open to the public and will continue to offer meals throughout the summer. The school has communicated all and any changes to meal distribution on parentsquare. As of June 8th, Bright Star Schools has provided more than 36,000 meals to families in the West Adams/Baldwin Village and the current distribution schedule is outlined below:

[West Adams] - Mondays and Wednesdays; 9am-12pm. On Mondays, families receive breakfasts and lunches for 2 days (4 meals total) and on Wednesdays families receive breakfasts and lunches for 3 days (6 meals total).

Meal distribution will continue throughout the summer.

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

The school offered social distance learning during school hours as outlined above. However, due to health guidance from the Los Angeles County health department the school has not provided any direct supervision to students during school hours outside of distance learning.

However, in order to ensure that families were connected with supervision resources the school surveyed parents in April. For the parents who expressed that childcare was an issue the school reached out and shared community resources. Additionally, school counselors shared resources with parents who were deemed essential workers.