

Students Still Must Learn, San Diego Unified Moving To Remote Instruction

KPBS Barrera Transcript

Speaker 1: 00:00 Officials at San Diego's largest school district are trying to work out the complex task of keeping schools closed, keeping kids safe and fed and parents informed. All wildly outline a plan for moving forward. Yesterday school superintendent Cindy Martin appeared to break with governor Gavin Newsome's prediction that schools would remain closed through the rest of the term, but San Diego unified is working on innovations that could bring back school and still keep kids at home. Joining me, a San Diego school board member, Richard Barrera and Richard. Welcome. Thank you Maureen. What is San Diego unified thinking of doing?

Speaker 2: 00:38 Well, we've got two jobs. One is day by day, we have to meet the needs of our students. Now while we plan for, you know, the potential of longterm closure of our facilities. So as of today we're really focused on two main issues, student learning and food distribution. So probably the most important thing that I could tell you is parents and people from the community said go on the district's website, S a N D i.net. And if you go on the information button about the Corona virus, you'll go to sections about both where our food distribution sites are and learning options for students. So for learning options when students left school on Friday, they all went home with packets of work for the next couple of weeks. That included reading materials included, uh, you know, guided questions and included, uh, journals for writing. So there's a lot of work that students, you know, can and should be doing right now.

Speaker 2: 01:47 And of course, in addition to that, our partnership with KPBS KPBS too is providing educational programming for students, uh, all throughout the day. And on our website, on the learning options section, uh, parents and students can find day by day lesson plans, uh, for all grades in all the core subject areas. So there's plenty, uh, that students can and should be working on right now. And I know parents are taking on an incredible, uh, obligation responsibility right now to work with their students. And every parent I talk to is exhausted and more than ever appreciative of the work that our teachers do every day. Um, but student learning really should be going on now.

Speaker 1: 02:32 But the district is also working on an aspirational program of churning classrooms, virtual for all the students who are at home.

Speaker 2: 02:40 That's exactly right. So in the event that we are going to see longterm closure of our facilities, we need to be able to ramp up our distance learning program. And that's the

work that's also being done right now by district leaders in partnership, the teachers and in partnership with, uh, with other stakeholders. So the first thing that we need to do though in any comprehensive online program is we need to make sure that there's equity for students across the district. So for instance, right now we're doing an inventory and assessment of all of the students in our district who do not have access to internet at home. And we are home delivering computers with wifi hotspots so that every student will have access, uh, to the, um, online tools that they need to participate in online learning. In addition to that, we are developing a professional development programs training for our teachers and other educators so that they'll be able to do, for instance, what a lot of teachers are already doing, which is setting up virtual classrooms over zoom and having an irregular schedule and being able to, uh, regularly, uh, you know, uh, assess students' work and give students feedback.

Speaker 1: 04:05 Do you expect students will get their normal grades and tests this way when it's fully up and running

Speaker 2: 04:10 when it's up and running? You know, it really is. It is school, you know, and so students are going to have assignments and they're going to be graded. Um, now in terms of things like the statewide testing, you know, we anticipate that that is going to be postponed indefinitely. And then for, you know, students who are, you know, applying to college things like sat tests, AP exams, those are likely to be postponed as well. And I know that the college board is also working on, uh, trying to figure out how to do those tests online. But in terms of our own district assessments, um, that will, um, that will be part of, you know, the uh, the comprehensive online program.

Speaker 1: 04:54 Will students be able to have any kind of graduation ceremonies this year

Speaker 2: 04:59 at this point we should assume that that will not happen. You know, uh, obviously a graduation ceremony is a large gathering of people and it's, you know, hard to those graduation ceremonies would be regularly scheduled for June 8th and ninth. You know, for most of our students now if that, if we are in a position to be able to bring our students back onto our classrooms and then, and then be able to hold those graduations again, we will do that and we want to not close that option off because as you know, Marine, none of us know where we're going to be in a month from now or six weeks from now.

Speaker 1: 05:36 Now when it comes to the school food services staying open, what precautions are you taking to make sure the meal program stays safe for everyone involved?

Speaker 2: 05:45 Yeah, so right now it is a, what we call a grab and go program. So families can either drive up or walk up and they're simply going to be handed, you know, by, uh, either a volunteer or somebody on our food services staff, a, a, you know, a school lunch or a and, and

a, and a breakfast for the following day. And, and there's very limited contact, you know, in that, in that process.

Speaker 1: 06:14 What about spring break? Is that taking place as normal?

Speaker 2: 06:17 So again, you know, we, our school is going forward on schedule, so that means this week and next week students should be working. Teachers are fully available to their students. Uh, and again, many students, many teachers have already taken the initiative to do virtual classrooms. Um, but students should be working, you know, this week and next week, the following week, March 30th is the spring break week for all schools. And then traditional calendar schools will resume on April 6th, uh, unlikely to be in their facilities. But again, we'll, we'll resume with what's happening now and then the ramp up to comprehensive online. Um, we'll resume on April 6th and then for the year round schools, a school will resume on April 27th.

Speaker 1: 07:07 Okay. Then quite a lot to deal with. I appreciate your time. I've been speaking with San Diego school board member Richard Barrera. Thank you. Thank you Maureen. And please remember that San Diego Unified's grab and go school meal program will continue during spring break.