

COVID-19 Operations Written Report

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Name	Contact Name and Title	Contact Information	Date of Adoption
Sweetwater Secondary School	Hayley Beaupre, School Coordinator	hbeaupre@sweetwatersecondary.com	Pending June 24, 2020, Board Meeting

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.

Sweetwater Secondary School (SSS) is an independent study, academic intervention program serving grades 7 through 12. SSS was established by the State Board of Education in 2017. SSS is part of the Altus Schools. Altus Schools focus on academic improvement, high-caliber teaching, safe and supportive learning environments, and the development of role models for educational reform. SSS serves over 400 students annually.

As of the 2019-2020 school year, SSS is identified by the California Department of Education (CDE) as participating in the **Dashboard Alternative School Status (DASS) program**. DASS schools must have an unduplicated count of at least 70 percent of the School's total enrollment (upon first entry to the school) comprised of high-risk student groups, to be eligible for DASS. **SSS served a student population comprising of 75% high-risk student groups in 2019-2020.**

In March 2020, SSS transitioned to distance learning due to the COVID-19 emergency. To ensure **equity and access to distance learning**, school staff sent a **needs assessment survey** to all students and parents to gather information on overall health, mental health, academic and physical needs. School staff, including their School Coordinator, counselor, social worker and school nurse, followed-up with each family and provided resources and support based upon specific needs. From March 16, 2020 to May 29, 2020, the SSS health department and school social worker reported 293 follow-up communications with families regarding health and wellness.

To close the **digital divide**, SSS deployed **Chromebooks and hotspots to families in need of home computing and internet access**. Priority was given to Students With Disabilities to ensure access to Special Education services. As of April 27, 2020, SSS issued 57 Chromebooks to families. Of these 57 students, 88% are considered Socially Economically Disadvantaged, 88% are Hispanic or Latino, 30% are Students With Disabilities, 21% are English Learners, 5% are Black or African American, 2% are White, 2% are Foster Youth, and 2% are Homeless. SSS staff continue to check-in with families regarding home technology needs and can issue Chromebooks and/or internet hotspots if there is a need.

School staff have remained committed to **mitigating loss of learning** during the COVID-19 emergency. Teachers and Case Managers make daily phone calls, send emails and secure text messages to

students and parents. Teachers have worked closely with all students to ensure they have a daily distance learning schedule. In addition to direct, distance instructional time, teachers provide “office hours” to ensure that students have access to teachers for assistance and guidance. All staff communication and intervention efforts are documented in the School’s Student Information System (SIS), within Contact Manager. From March 16, 2020 to May 29, 2020, SSS staff reported more than 18,000 communication and intervention efforts with students and families. These communication efforts include emails to students and/or parents, communication via a secure digital application, virtual conferences and phone calls.

By providing students with health support/services, access to distance learning tools/technology and ongoing academic instruction, SSS students have been able to continue their educational plan. For the 2019-2020 school year, 35 SSS students have already completed high school graduation requirements. SSS carefully monitors its graduation rate throughout the academic year and projects several more students to finish requirements by the summer deadline.

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

Currently, SSS serves approximately 350 students. Of these 350 total students, 83% are Hispanic, 4% are White, and 2% are Black or African American. 11% of students are other ethnicities. In addition, 70% of students are Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, 21% are Students with Disabilities, 15% are English Learners, 6% are Homeless, and 14% are identified as GATE. SSS serves 1 foster youth student at this time.

SSS’s cumulative 2019-2020 attendance rate for all students is 89%. Attendance rates for English Learners is 88.4% and low-income is 88%. Alignment of attendance rates for all students and the significant student groups demonstrate that the school is meeting the needs of all students.

From May 15-29, 2020, SSS surveyed students and parents regarding **equity and access to distance learning**. Some of the survey’s key findings are provided below:

- 100% of all survey respondents and 100% of survey respondents with Students With Disabilities reported that their student has had full access to complete coursework during distance learning. 100% of low-income survey respondents and 100% of English Learners survey respondents also agreed that their student has had full access to complete coursework during distance learning.
- 99% of all survey respondents and 100% of survey respondents with Students With Disabilities reported that the School has provided their student with the supports they need to engage in distance learning. 98% of low-income survey respondents and 100% of English Learners survey respondents also agreed that the School has provided their student with the supports they need to engage in distance learning.

Based upon the distance learning survey results, it is evident that all students and student groups, such as low-income, are satisfied with the School’s ability to provide access to distance learning coursework and supports needed to engage in learning. SSS can deliver in these areas by utilizing the School’s key process, the **Pathways Personalized Education Plan (PPEP)**. The PPEP continues to be

the key process utilized to analyze each student's current academic levels, academic credits, goals, learning style, interests, and post high school pathway in order to build an individual academic plan for each and every student. This process is developed and continually revised in collaboration with the student, parent, teacher, Counselor, and School Coordinator.

SSS's standards-based curriculum has been in place prior to the Covid-19 closures. With the Covid-19 closures, equity and access to the curriculum for both students who access the curriculum through traditional textbook based methods and students who access curriculum through the online learning platform, Edgenuity, has been a priority to the School. To meet the learning needs of all students, both curriculum delivery methods remain in use during the closure.

Curriculum is developed within the **Universal Design Learning (UDL)** framework to ensure equity and access for all learners. UDL principles are integrated into curriculum design to eliminate barriers to learning through the provision of multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression. Teachers utilize this curriculum feature to personalize curriculum for each learner.

SSS school staff provide distance learning instructional sessions that are data-driven and implemented strategically to support specific learner needs. A thorough data collection and analysis process for both all students and individual student groups (low-income, SWD, English Learners) helps inform instructional sessions and the overall Instructional Plan. These tutoring sessions utilize an extensive variety of instructional strategies to aid in increased academic engagement as well as a variety of methods in which students interact with the content of the curriculum. Teachers utilize virtual technology tools to provide instructional modeling and tutorial specific to the session topic in a manner that is engaging and tangible for online learning.

English Learners are engaged effectively in learning through Integrated and Designated ELD supports that align to the implemented English Learner Plan. Based upon SSS's 2019 California School Dashboard, 51% of English Learners are making progress towards English language proficiency. This is considered a medium-status level. SSS's comprehensive English Learner Development (ELD) Program includes integrated and designated ELD.

Integrated ELD: Integrated ELD ensures that English Learners are accessing ELD standards while engaged in CA standards-based curriculum. Curriculum is developed in consultation with the ELAD (English Learner Achievement Department) and aligned to both CA ELD standards and CA Common Core standards.

Designated ELD: Designated ELD ensures that ELs are developing language and literacy skills separate from core instruction. Students are enrolled in Literacy courses (aligned to CA ELD standards), receive virtual ELD instruction through literacy circles, and engage in online learning programs that develop reading, writing, listening, speaking skills.

SSS has communicated resources, support, and information to all families by creating a **COVID-19 resource page on the school website** and sending informational flyers directly to students and parents. Information and resources have been focused on distance learning best practices, COVID-19 updates, meal and food distribution, health and wellness, social-emotional learning, and academic tools.

To support the social-emotional learning needs of students, SSS has provided a series of live interactive, video broadcasts for students, which is called **Resilience in Student Education (RISE)**. RISE sessions are aligned to Social and Emotional Core Competencies and serve to enhance a student's capacity to integrate skills, attitudes, and behaviors which effectively and ethically deal with daily tasks and challenges. SSS understands how important it is to attend to the social and emotional needs that arise during times of crisis and challenge and will continue to offer social-emotional learning topics that are essential to mental health and wellness during this pandemic.

To educate and support the needs of SSS parents and families, the School has provided weekly trainings focused on distance learning expectations, health and safety, social-emotional support, IEP support services and support for English Learners. These specialized trainings are called **Altus University: Family Learning Series** and are offered Tuesday at 2:00pm. School staff have informed families of these training by sending flyers to parents with the virtual meeting links so that they do not need to pre-register and can easily participate. Participants who attend the live broadcast can ask questions and collaborate with others in the meeting chat feature. Lastly, each session is recorded so that it is available on demand for families who are unable to participate in the live event.

School staff also participated in professional learning led by a **Protective Services Supervisor with Child Welfare Services** which focused on mandated reporting in a distance learning school environment. Topics included department trends, considerations within the new environment, recent case examples, and how to proactively protect the physical and mental wellness of students.

From May 15-29, 2020, SSS surveyed students and parents regarding **support for family and student well-being**. Some of the survey's key findings are provided below:

- 96% of all survey respondents and 100% of survey respondents with Students With Disabilities reported that the school has provided them with information that has been responsive to their student's and family's needs. 93% of low-income survey respondents and 90% of English Learners respondents also agreed that the school has provided them with information that has been responsive to their student's and family's needs.
- 97% of all survey respondents and 100% of survey respondents with Students With Disabilities reported satisfaction with the services and supports during the COVID-19 emergency. 95% of low-income and 100% of English Learners respondents also reported satisfaction with the services and supports during the COVID-19 emergency.

Overall, SSS has been able to engage and support all students during the COVID-19 emergency by providing a **whole-child educational approach**. This approach prioritizes engagement, safety, health and access to support and resources.

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

Altus Curriculum is the traditional textbook based independent study curriculum developed by subject matter expert teachers. Since students cannot go to the Resource Center to pick up physical materials, the curriculum department has taken steps to ensure students can access digital lesson guides and have access to online textbooks. Students and families who require hard

copy materials are provided textbooks, lesson guides, and supplemental materials through no-contact methods organized by the Instructional department.

Edgenuity is the learning platform the School uses to deliver online curriculum. Edgenuity curriculum was offered to students before the COVID-19 closure if online instruction was their preferred learning style. Students have access through the Edgenuity curriculum platform to multiple scaffolds to support their learning; these are essential learning supports for English Learners, Students with Disabilities while functioning and universal tools to support all learners. Students have access to digital notetaking, transcripts of the instruction available in a variety of languages, hard copy graphic organizers that they can utilize during the instructional component of the lesson, glossary, academic language, digital sticky notes, extended time, video closed captioning, and the ability to enable text translation and read aloud text passages.

Students who did not previously have access to a computer and/or home internet have received a laptop and hotspot through the **Altus Connect Program** to ensure they have the same accessibility to the online Edgenuity platform from home as they would have previously at the Resource Center.

During the COVID-19 crisis, school staff remain committed to maintaining high-levels of student engagement and supporting academic achievement. Setting high expectations for students will support them with achieving their daily, weekly, and monthly goals. Some of the **key instructional distance learning strategies** are highlighted below:

Virtual one-on-one meetings and small group tutoring sessions: Teachers work with students virtually in both one-on-one meetings and in small group tutoring sessions to guide instruction and assess if a student has mastered content standards or if additional instruction is necessary.

Virtual office hours: In addition to weekly scheduled individual and group appointments, teachers hold virtual office hours to offer instructional support to all learners.

Online check-in: Teachers also check in with students regarding academic progress and engagement via online forms, surveys, screencast videos, virtual resource center events, and additional online communication tools.

Distance learning **math instruction** continues to be a key instructional area of focus. On average, students enroll in SSS 2-3 grade levels behind in mathematics skills as measured by the NWEA assessments. In order to improve student math proficiency, teachers regularly provide instructional sessions in math that scaffold student skills to achieve performance targets of the courses and assessments. While instruction is claim and target-driven with a focus on both skill-building and content mastery, adjustments are made throughout each session based on formative assessment to ensure understanding for all learners. Additionally, students are grouped based on academic level data and content needs to support individual progress within the group in a safe and supportive learning environment. These sessions are interactive with online video tutorial from both teachers and field experts that engage students in real-world math application and scenarios.

SSS has also provided increased support in **English Language Development (ELD)**. Designated ELD sessions incorporate online tools that support English Learners and struggling readers with the purpose of increasing Lexile scores and English language proficiency. Students engage in

online literacy circles that promote virtual collaboration and language development in alignment with the English Learner Plan. Throughout these sessions, students are exposed to frontloaded vocabulary, explicit and scaffolded instruction, and multiple means of representation while being able to use their home language when needed to activate higher-order thinking skills. In addition to a focus on reading comprehension, reading fluency, and writing structures, the Designated ELD sessions offer English Learners an opportunity to develop oral language competency through virtual interaction in a meaningful, collaborative learning environment.

Teachers monitor student engagement and academic progress by inputting all completed assignments in the School Pathways PLS Gradebook. Teachers also use communication programs such as Outlook email, Google Voice, Remind and phone calls to share student progress with families. All communication and student intervention efforts are documented by instructional staff in Contact Manager. When students do not demonstrate improved academic growth over time, instructional staff initiate and increase academic intervention efforts and supports. SSS utilizes a Student Intervention Program which is aligned to the framework of the **Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)**. This intervention model is designed to provide instructional staff with a system that quickly identifies and match the needs of all students.

Teachers employ **Trauma Informed Practices (TIPS)** in instructional engagement strategies. Some of the key strategies include empathy, active listening, and providing a sense of safety and connectedness. The **school social worker** partners with instructional staff to provide social, emotional, and behavioral support systems to students and families. The social worker provides services and facilitate referrals to support student academic and social/emotional needs.

The School continues to offer the **California Cadet Corps (CCC)** to students as a **leadership and development program**. While founded on military principles, CCC objectives and standards focus on developing leadership skills at every level. Some of the objectives and learning targets include: Develop leadership, engender citizenship, encourage patriotism, foster academic excellence, teach basic military knowledge and promote overall health, fitness and wellness. Cadets participate in virtual meetings with their instructors continue to build character and leadership development skills through the distance learning model.

Students with disabilities continue to receive an equitable education that is in alignment with acceptable practices as recommended by the U.S. Department of Education. Students with disabilities are provided a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) through the implementation of services, accommodations, modifications, and supplementary aids and services as outlined in each student's individualized education plan (IEP). Specialized Academic Instruction (SAI) is provided for each student by an Education Specialist through distance learning methods including virtual and telephonic. Related services are contracted through a CDE approved Non-Public Agency (NPA) and are delivered through virtual and telephonic methods. Curriculum is adjusted to ensure full accessibility and standards-based instruction is differentiated for each student through online learning platforms.

Continued **Professional Learning** during the closure is essential to increase teacher capacity for virtual instruction. Altus University (AU) continues in the virtual environment through AU in the Cloud utilizing Teams Virtual Conferencing. Professional Learning through AU in the Cloud is aligned to the California Quality Professional Learning Standards (QPLS). In conjunction with the student data used

to create the Altus University in the Cloud sessions, additional data is used to measure the participants needs. Data is collected from student outcomes and from the employee survey that was deployed at the beginning of the COVID-19 closure. The AU in the Cloud sessions use the school-wide initiatives to improve student learning in math and literacy. Family feedback from the survey results are helped to identify needs as well as participation, credit completion, and assessment results. AU in the Cloud sessions each have an evaluation for participants to provide feedback on the participation, satisfaction, usefulness, learning, and additional areas for follow up. The feedback is given back to the departments to use as a part of their PLCs and plan for additional AU in the Cloud sessions.

AU sessions allow participants the space to explore the curriculum content necessary to provide quality instruction to students. The instructors of the sessions build the capacity of the participants to use frameworks, standards alignment documents, and instructional pacing guides to support teaching content standards. Assessment and instructional strategies are incorporated into the AU sessions so that teachers are using formative assessment strategies to inform virtual instruction to a diverse student population. Teachers have been through **Leading Edge Certification (LEC)**, a national certification for educational technology. Through this certification process, teachers learned how to be effective online and blended learning teachers, skills necessary during the COVID-10 closures. For new teachers, we are continuing the certification through the LEC FLEX program. Through virtual tutoring session observations, the Instructional Coordinators provide feedback on new skills acquired through the Altus University sessions. AU sessions are delivered by instructors who model how to differentiate curriculum and scaffold instruction so that there is support in place for all students. The sessions uphold the school's values that kids come first by increasing the participant's capacity to strengthen students' participation, engagement, connection, sense of belonging, and emotional well-being.

Virtual instructional strategies are presented through an equity lens, ensuring access and equity for all students during distance learning. Data informing AU in the Cloud is disaggregated by gender, race, special needs, foster youth, and socio-economic indicators. This allows for the identification of student instructional needs focused on student groups. Virtual instructional strategies are presented through an equity lens, ensuring access and equity for all students during distance learning. All participants have access to AU in the Cloud Sessions through registration on the AU Portal. The AU sessions are generally on the same day of the week and time so that teachers can plan virtual instruction around the professional learning session they would like to attend. AU sessions are also recorded so staff members who are unable to attend a live session have access to on demand AU sessions.

Instructors for AU in the Cloud sessions are a collaboration of Special Education, English Learner, and General Education teachers. AU in the Cloud session instructors maintain a positive learning environment for all participants. Participants can utilize the chat feature within Teams to get answers to questions without breaking the flow of instruction and they also have an opportunity to unmute their microphone to participate verbally. Instructors of the AU sessions also engage participants through Web 2.0 tools learned from the Leading Edge Certification (LEC). AU in the Cloud instructors understand that especially in this COVID-19 closure, student Social Emotional Learning is at the heart and we focus on connection with students first, followed by content.

From May 15-29, 2020, SSS surveyed students and parents on their perceptions of **distance learning curriculum and instructional support**. Some of the key findings are provided below:

- 96% of all survey respondents reported that the distance learning coursework has been relevant and engaging.
- 100% of all survey respondents reported that the school offers distance learning instruction through phone calls, video conferences and office hours, for their student.
- 100% of all survey respondents reported that the distance learning instruction their student receives is effective and supportive.
- 100% of all survey respondents and 100% of survey respondents with Students With Disabilities reported that their student's teacher sets high expectations and provides the support they need to achieve.

Overall, SSS has used a systematic approach to provide high-quality distance learning opportunities for all students. The school has been able to meet the learning needs of all students during the COVID-19 emergency by providing students with a standards-based curriculum integrated with technology, research based instructional strategies, and a robust professional learning system available to all staff.

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

While maintaining all social distancing practices and ensuring staff wear proper masks and gloves, SSS has partnered with the San Diego Food Bank to provide meals Monday-Thursday to students and families at two office locations in Mission Valley and Bonita. Families arriving in vehicles are advised to remain in their vehicle as they receive food. All other visitors are advised to maintain six feet social distancing if there is a line. SSS has informed students and families of the Altus Schools **Grab and Go Meal Program** by posting information on the school website and emailing flyers directly to all enrolled students and parents. On average, these two distribution centers provide 150 meals to students, families and community members each week.

SSS has also posted available community-based food resources on the School website along with the CA Meals for Kids Mobile Application. Some of the food resources listed on the School website include the Pandemic EBT, CalFresh Online Shopping, San Diego Food Banks neighborhood distribution locations, Feeding San Diego, and 2-1-1. SSS's main office line has also been answered since the beginning of the COVID-19 emergency and staff have been able to provide families with community-based food resources and services.

In order to ensure access to meal distribution sites, the School continues to provide students in need of transportation with **bus passes**. Students have been provided bus passes prior to the COVID-19 emergency to 'Break All Barriers' of learning and increase access to safe and supportive educational environments.

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

SSS is helping families in need of child care find options that might work for their families. SSS has identified known programs that remain open during the COVID-19 emergency and have shared this information with staff. Resources have also been posted to the school website that direct family members to specialized advisors who can help them find licensed child care centers near their home. Advisors will call child care providers on the family's behalf to see which providers have open slots and may meet their needs best. Advisors are open Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm. Some of the childcare resources provided to families include the Statewide Consumer Education Hotline, California Child Care Resource and Referral (R&R), and San Diego YMCA Childcare Resource Service. In addition, the school social worker will continue to provide information to families that need open programs and educate staff on available resources. SSS will continue to work with community organizations and partners to ensure linkages to community resources so that services of families in need of child care are delivered.