

# COVID-19 Operations Written Report

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Name	Contact Name and Title	Email and Phone	Date of Adoption
<b>New Heights Charter School</b>	Amy Berfield, Executive Director	<a href="mailto:Aberfield@newheightscharter.org">Aberfield@newheightscharter.org</a> 323-508-0155	June 25, 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.**

- 1. 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.**

New Heights Charter School's first day of School Closure due to COVID-19 was on March 16<sup>th</sup>. Leadership informed all stakeholder groups (teachers, staff, parents, and students) of the final decision regarding school closure on March 12<sup>th</sup> through meetings with staff, robotexts home, and letters home. New Heights held a Board Meeting via teleconference on March 16<sup>th</sup> to confirm the School Closure starting March 16<sup>th</sup> and agree to continue to pay all employees and vendors who are continuing to provide services. The School Closure resulted in elementary and middle grades students (TK-8) doing their classwork in a home setting.

## **Phase 1: March 16-27**

- Students left New Heights on March 13 with two weeks' worth of class work to complete in the form of packets.
- Students also were given instructions to continue to use the online platforms they use in their class.
- To maintain contact with students, the leadership arranged for each child to have one "advisor" to check-in at home during School Closure. Advisors were teachers, teaching partners, resource teachers, coaches, afterschool staff and lunch staff.
- Teachers started designing their distance learning plans.
- Families were sent a needs assessment (and calls/texts were made) to gather data on their capacity for online learning at home and to assess other needs around food security and safety.
- Distance Learning Expectations were sent home to parents and students.

## **Phase 2: March 30-April 6<sup>th</sup> (Spring Break)**

- Staff distributed technology devices to all families in need and packets to students in Grades K-2 and students without internet.
- Staff distributed supplies for students to use at home for learning: paper, pens, markers, art supplies, notebooks, etc.
- Staff helped families get internet, where possible, and distributed hot spots as needed.
- Staff identified families that were “hard to reach” and asked office/counseling staff to also reach out. Some home visits were made, with social distancing, to make sure families were okay.
- Teachers, resource teachers, related service providers, teaching partners, and coaches continued to make their distance learning plans.

## **Phase 3: April 7<sup>th</sup>-June 16<sup>th</sup>**

- Teachers added Distance Learning components for students (see details below).
- Teachers and staff begin planning for distance learning for the rest of the school year. Small working groups have formed around such topics as: Summer School, Graduation, and Semester Grading/Report Cards.
- New Heights teachers and leadership, along with parent input, created a new, more simplified report card using a 1, 2, 3, 4 system to track effort, participation in online learning, and progress with skills/content.
- 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Graduation was moved to an online setting. 100% of 8<sup>th</sup> grade students completed their end-year research essays – a tradition of all graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade classes at our school.
- Regular Board meetings continued via Zoom.
- The Special Education Team and leadership wrote letters to all parents with special needs students to amend the services from in-school to online and to confirm continued service delivery of resource, speech, counseling and occupational therapy support online.
- Physical Education and Art classes moved to an online setting with staff providing pre-recorded video lessons and challenges for students.

## **Parent Communication:**

- Robo call/texts and letters with updates on school closure, health issues, distance learning, food distribution, and financial resources averaging about 3 times a week.
- Regular updates to our school’s website with resources for class work, parents, and health information.
- Staff, teachers, and leadership held Zoom Meetings with parents: whole school meetings, meetings on supporting students’ learning at home and using technology, grade level meetings, an English Language Advisory Council meeting and a School Site Council Meeting.

## **Staff/Faculty Communication and Professional Development:**

- The whole school started meeting three times a week on March 18<sup>th</sup> to discuss how to support students and families at home.

- Grade Band Meetings were scheduled and held once a week to coordinate services with families.
- Grade Level Meetings and Resource Team Meetings were held 1-3 times a week to support planning/technology use for teaching and learning.
- Administrative Staff and Student and Family Support Staff also met weekly to coordinate operations, such as materials and food distribution. Student and Family Support team met weekly to identify and support high-risk youth and their families by offering referral services, counseling services, and home delivery of technology, food and materials as needed.
- Professional Development focused on support for online learning, social/emotional support (dealing with vicarious trauma and self-care) and specific content support for teaching math, reading and writing.

### **Problem-Identification and Problem-Solving Process**

Weekly whole school meetings were designed on Zoom to allow for time in breakout rooms to address any problems/concerns. Examples of breakout rooms include: 1) Special issues of families for multiple children at home, 2) Needs of ELL students, 3) Concerns about students with low attendance (as logged daily by their advisor), and 4) Issues with Internet (problems getting the “free internet”) and support needed to set-up hot spots.

Office Staff continued to check voice messages from parents, meet with parents, and synthesize feedback from parents in order to ensure we were meeting basic needs, maintaining our school’s strong sense of belonging and connection, providing workshops in technology use (Zoom and Google Classroom), and providing mental health supports/referrals.

### **Summary of Key Challenges of our School Community:**

- Internet connection (about 25 families): We polled parents, tried to get them free internet, then bought hot spots as needed.
- Quiet Work Spaces for Students at home (60% of our families): We bought headsets for students to use at home. Will be purchasing visual dividers for families to set-up individual work spaces at home.
- Severe social-emotional needs of students (2 cases): Our counselors worked with families to provide support and refer families for additional support from community-based agencies.
- Food Insecurity (2 families): Coaching and counseling staff drove food to homes for folks who couldn’t travel safely to our campus for food distribution.

Teachers and leadership created a GoFundMe campaign to support our high-risk families and raised over \$12,000 to disburse to families for food insecurity, internet, and other home supports for learning.

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

Staff met the needs of ELL students, foster youth, and low-income students by a combination of daily check-ins with each household/child, consistent communication with parents, a system for identifying “high-risk” students (based on data collected at daily check-in’s and attendance/participation rates of daily check-in’s). Our school has a student population with 97% eligible for free and reduced lunch.

An Advisory System and Class Participation/Data Collection Charts were created to do the following:

- The Advisor conducted daily check-in’s with the student to support their social, emotional and academic development.
- The first set of check-in’s included a welfare check and data gathering around access to technology at home and internet at home.
- The second set of check-in’s shared information about our new plan for distance learning, how to find class work, how to access teachers, how to get mental health supports, how to get food for adults in the family, and what to expect over the next several weeks.

This system allowed staff to address the individual needs of our ELL, foster care, and low-incoming families with a focus on social/emotional support. In addition, we have a designated Foster Youth coordinator who provides check-in calls to students/guardians to ensure they are accessing our Grab and Go meals, joining our online classes, and have internet capacity at home. Student and Family Support Team members also maintained communication with community-based social workers, crises teams, and community-based mental health agencies.

To support **ELL students**, teachers implemented the following strategies:

### **Designated English Language Development:**

- Small group read alouds and discussion
- Conversational small groups online for recent immigrant students
- Small group: phonics/ sight words (SIPPS)
- Translated math groups
- Use of ELPAC format/practice questions to encourage talk work

### **Integrated English Language Development:**

- Flipgrid shares: provide sentences frames for students
- Individual scaffolds such as visual math charts and graphic organizers
- Use of vocabulary programs/applications such as Flocabulary

To ensure that ELL students were participating, administration reviewed class roster daily attendance to with an eye toward disproportionality. Families in need were identified and resources were given, such as extra devices, hotspots, and parent training in Zoom, to help ELL families as needed.

**Translation** was provided for all parent materials and parent meetings to encourage the participation of all families in giving input about how to best meet student needs. Parents also received ELL newsletters provided by the state to help them support student learning at home.

**ELAC Meeting:** An online, translated ELAC meeting was held to gather parent input. Parents voiced their appreciation of the regular phone calls/texts from teachers in their home language.

**Intervention/Extra Support:** Students in Tiers II and III continued to receive support through small group and 1:1 online instruction. If an advisor or teacher noticed that a student was not completing work or participating in classes, the grade level team would assign a staff person to provide small group support or 1:1 tutoring.) In addition, 5 students were placed with high school tutors who volunteered their time to support our students.

**Additional Social-Emotional Support:** Our school has 3 staff members assigned to the Student and Family Support Team, 1 homeless liaison, 1 foster student liaison and a resource team member designated for students with social-emotional needs as well as academic needs. This team regularly checked the class rosters to track student participation and regularly met with teaching teams to identify students in need of motivation, materials, additional devices, etc.

**Redeployment of Coaching Team and Afterschool Staff:** Coaches and afterschool staff were asked to create physical education lessons and art lessons for students to do at home. In addition, this team of staff performed regular virtual welfare checks with students to ensure their well-being and help our problem-solve issues related to the Stay at Home order.

### **Summary of Challenges/Plans for Upcoming Year:**

In our surveys, parents and students noted that between 17%-31% of students were starting their work after noon each day. In addition, 13%-20% of students were going to bed after midnight. When asked about setting a schedule for the day, 44% of students reported they set their own schedule, 22% reported their parents help them, 20% reported that they don't set a schedule most days, and 16% never set a schedule.

When asked, "Does your child (or do you) keep doing work even when it's hard?" 51% of parents and 44% of students responded yes, all the time. However, 16% of parents and 25% of students reported sometimes or never.

Based on this survey data, and the data collected through the daily experiences of school staff and faculty during this online experiment, we decided to extend our Summer School Program to help students set-up new routines for doing work at home through distance learning. We will address students' sleep schedules and work schedules with parents, set

consistent start times for class each day (9:00 am for Summer and 8:30 am for the school year), and create a visually appealing, schoolwide template for parents and students to see that clearly outlines the expected work for each day/week for every student. In addition, we are increasing the number of hours of live classes online (during the days students are at home) based on feedback that 79% of students were motivated to participate when invited to a Zoom Class or small group.

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

Our teachers and staff established an attendance and schoolwide calendar system to coordinate live, online classes. Approximately **97%** of the students accessed learning online.

The school created a handful of documents during this time to support our new delivery model, including:

1. Summary Document with Distance Learning Guidelines and Ideas for Teachers
2. A Google Site for parents/students that is accessed through our website
3. Distance Learning Expectations (including ways to address student privacy concerns)
4. Distance Learning Suggestions for Parents

Teachers added Distance Learning components for students including:

- Recorded Lessons
- Live Lessons
- Daily/Weekly assignments given online
- Feedback to student work
- Small group work session on Google Meets
- Service delivery of resource minutes for students with special needs
- Related Service delivery: Speech and Occupational Therapy

**Students with special needs:** Our resource teachers and related service providers are working closely with our teachers to continue delivery of services and coordinate scheduling. Our related services, Speech and OT, are providing service minutes online. Our resource teachers are providing co-teaching online as well as small group instruction and 1:1 support. Our Student and Family Support Team is continuing providing counseling support as well. All parents of students with special needs received communications from the school regarding changes we would be making given the school campus closure as well as our operating principles for continuing to providing high quality support during this difficult time.

In order to maintain consistent participation, the administrative staff and coaching staff were redeployed to create a distribution and tech help center at our Lower Campus (on private property.) Our team ensured that written packets were copied and distributed to families, computers and hotspots were set-up and repaired if broken, and parents/staff were trained to use the learning platforms for their grade level: Google Classroom (with some teachers also using Class Dojo,

Seesaw and FlipGrid.) Staff also created an inventory system, a computer use at home contract, and a system for distributing headphones to ensure all students had 1:1 tech device use at home. Parents voiced gratitude for teachers' and counselors reaching out to students, checking-in regularly, and ensuring students were able to understand and complete their classwork.

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

**Food Services for Students:**

New Heights has two daily food distribution times which have been operational every week day since March 16<sup>th</sup> from the Lower Campus. New Heights serves grab and go breakfast and lunch.

- a. 7:30-10:00 am
- b. 3:30-5:00 pm.

We provided meals starting on the first day of our closure, through Spring Break, and will continue seamlessly through the summer with one 2.5 hour window for morning distribution of breakfast and lunch. We serve approximately 800 meals a week.

The lunch staff sets-up three long tables outside and opens the school gate during the designated time. Parents line-up using the social distancing markings on the ground. Staff wear gloves and face coverings. Signage in both languages is posted from the state's nutrition office to ensure parents understand the safety issues around refrigeration of food after it's received, about not coming to campus if they have been sick within the last 24 hours, and reminders about washing hands.

Parents were alerted to the availability of food through weekly robotexts, the school's website, announcements during live classes online and parent meetings/trainings, as well as signage outside of the school. The school's regular catering company, Revolution Foods, is preparing and delivering these meals to our Lower Campus daily. School staff applied for the waivers needed from the state and stayed in close communication with state nutrition program staff in the first weeks to ensure we were in compliance and eligible for reimbursement.

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

- Parent Letters/Notices: We have sent several communications to parents since March 13<sup>th</sup>:
- Robo call/texts with updates on school closure, health issues, distance learning, food distribution, and financial resources averaging about 3 times a week.
- A letter home to parents on March 13 and again two weeks later with school closure information.

- Regular updates to our school's website, the primary form of communication for our students and families with a new COVID-19 tab with resources for parents including child care resources and health information.
- Zoom Meetings with parents. We have held 3 meetings via Zoom to update parents, share information, field questions, and plan upcoming parent workshops to support distance learning/technology at home.
- The main office phone line is open and staff are receiving and returning calls from families on a daily basis.
- Parents receive regular updates on child care options in the neighborhood.
- The Student and Family Support Team helps coordinate / make arrangements for families in need.
- The school office is open every day and messages from parents are returned by the Lower Campus office administrator.
- The initial plan to offer our Lower Campus classrooms to families in need of child care/supervision was not accepted by any of our families. Their concerns over leaving their homes were too great to take the risk to bring their children to school.
- As of June 22, we have 3 families using our classroom space for their family to engage in our distance learning Summer School. Our Lower Campus counselor provides supervision for the students while they engage in online summer school using social distance and face coverings.