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Dear Parents/Guardians:

The District is preparing for the start of the 2020-2021 school year on **Monday, September 14th** for all students.

Moving into the new school year, DESE has indicated that districts are responsible for accepted services in the IEP and require that districts plan for delivery, regardless of the format for return to school. Delivery of services identified in the IEP however may look differently and therefore districts are charged with communicating with families a students “COVID 19 Student Learning Plan”. Students identified as “high needs” will have priority for full time in person services, so long as it is safe to provide them and the local board of health supports in person services. The document below identifies questions and answers regarding Special Education and 504 service as they relate to the opening of school.

**Q: What is the criteria for a 4 day “in-person” Special Education service model, when the district is following a hybrid or a remote model?**

Students qualifying for full time “in-person” learning are described below and such students must meet at least two of these criteria:

- Students already identified as “high needs” through the Individualized Education Planning (IEP) process and have services provided outside of the general education classroom:
  - Service providers are special education teachers and related service providers;
  - Special education services constitute more than 75% of the student’s school day (or 4.5 hours per day or more as represented on service delivery Grid C)
  - Preschool age students with disabilities
- Students who cannot engage in remote learning due to their disability-related needs;
- Students who primarily use aided and augmentative communication;
- Students who are homeless;
- Students in foster care or congregate care;
- Students who are dually identified as English Learners, SEI Level I

**Q: If my child is identified as “high needs” do I have the option of sending them hybrid or remote?**

Ultimately it is your decision as the parent to determine what is best for your child, however it is the responsibility of the district to comply with DESE guidance and provide services identified in the accepted IEP. It is recommended to work with the IEP Team to determine services to be provided “in-person” and services that can be accessed remotely.

**Example:** My child has 4.5 hours of sub separate special education programming. I am concerned that inclusion opportunities may increase their risk of virus exposure. Can I forgo inclusion opportunities per their IEP and only access special education in person services? The answer is yes. Work with your special education teams/liaison to develop a schedule of special education services.

**Q: What will service delivery for students with disabilities look like in the 2020-2021 school year?**

- students will receive a consistent schedule of classes, services, interventions and therapies as outlined in the signed and accepted IEP
- students will have structured learning time so to access state standards
- students will have regular, scheduled interaction with teachers, therapists and trained staff to ensure participation either in person or remotely per their IEP

**Example:** Prior to 9/14 or within the first week of school for students, special education providers will initiate communication with parents to discuss a schedule of services and what that will look like for students.

**Sample Schedule:**

- Monday/Tuesday (in person): Reading services Monday and Tuesday from 9:30 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. - Special Education Setting
- Wednesday (remote from home): Speech from 10 - 10:30 a.m.; Art with general education classroom 11 - 11:30 a.m.; SEL general education classroom lesson, 9 - 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 - 3:00 p.m.; student check-in from instructional assistant 3 - 3:20 p.m.
- Thursday, Friday (remote from home): Combination of synchronous and asynchronous instruction. Reading instruction from 9 to 9:30 a.m. by instructional assistant and again, from 11:00 - to 11:30 a.m. provided by a special education teacher. Inbetween, assignments are completed independently by the student. Lunch bunch 12:00 - 12:30 p.m.

Special education teachers and instructional assistants will be working in both general education classrooms and in special education classrooms during in person days to support service delivery while developing schedules to limit cohort exposure and while considering the number of adults in a classroom. as guided by DESE. On remote days, some of the Grid B services may translate better to Grid C services (like a small group meeting to support assignment completion). Conversations between special education providers and parents will best support these decisions. The scheduling of special education services and implementing new safety protocols are a big charge and will take time. I anticipate it will take our teams the month of September to complete and refine these schedules.

A summary of these schedules will be reflected in a written document called the Covid 19 Special Education Learning Plan, which parents will receive by the middle of October.

**Q: My child does not meet the criteria for the definition of “high needs”; however, is a student with a disability; what will IEP services look like for my child in a hybrid model?**

Students will receive services both in person and remotely per the above mentioned definitions. An emphasis will be placed on providing both a combination of “in-person” and remote services.

If your child receives a related service such as speech, OT, PT or counseling, your child may receive that service in person in the therapy setting, or via teletherapy while at home. If teletherapy has to be delivered while students are in person, an adult will be available to support the delivery of this service while maintaining student confidentiality as a priority. Many students are aware of their surroundings. This will be taken into consideration as we consider the “how” and “where” of service delivery. Since class size will be smaller due to the hybrid model, general education teachers and special education teachers will be able to individualize students schedules to support their needs while reducing movement and limiting cohort exposure.

**Q: My child meets the criteria for “high needs” and receives most of their services in a sub separate setting, however there is an element of inclusion in their IEP. How will inclusion service be provided if my child is expected to remain in their sub separate cohort?**

Due to the constraints of social distancing, IEP teams will make every effort to include students in the general education setting, even if that is through remote access or through inclusion opportunities with only one cohort. To begin the school year, a student's programming may be more restrictive to safely implement new safety protocols.

**Example:** If my student is receiving in person instruction for 4 days, they may attend content area instruction (social studies, science) and lunch/recess on Mondays and Tuesdays with cohort A. They may access remote learning with their general education and special education peers on Wednesday (art, music, academics), and they may be provided with all services in their special education setting on Thursday and Friday to limit cohort exposure in person. Through phase one of the hybrid model, the goal of limiting cohort exposure will assist to support implementation of new safety protocols. Ultimately, as time progresses, other inclusion opportunities will be considered as the district enters into Phase 2 of this model.

**Q: How will parents be made aware of the service delivery for their child?**

Parents will receive written notification of the service delivery for their child through the ***COVID 19 Special Education Learning Plan***. IEP teams have worked to develop cohorts and will work to deliver service delivery schedules for all students over the next two weeks. While DESE requires that all agreed upon services in the IEP are implemented, it is understood given the current health and safety requirements, the “how” of service delivery will look different. The “how” will be first determined through correspondence with IEP teams or special education

liaisons during the first few weeks of the special education providers returning to school. After these conversations are held, parents will receive a written summary reflected in the *COVID 19 Special Education Learning Plan*.

**Q: What will parent communication look like?**

Special education providers will structure regular communication with parents. The frequency and type of communication will depend on the child's individual needs. Engagement between teachers and parents may occur through scheduled phone conversations, "office hours," email, weekly newsletters, or virtual platforms such as *See Saw or Class DoJo*, as examples. The "how often communication will happen" and "what does communication look like" will be determined through communication with the special education providers.

DESE has indicated that districts are responsible for providing Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and implementing students' Individualized Education Program (IEPs) as agreed upon. **Yet, delivery of services identified in the IEP may look differently, therefore districts are also responsible for communicating with families about "how" and "when" services will be implemented.** As a result, special education providers/liasons will contact parents/caregivers as soon as possible to discuss how and when a students' IEP services will be delivered if different than described in a student's IEP. Special education providers will summarize these discussions through written notification titled the *COVID 19 Special Education Learning Plan*, which parents will receive a copy of.

**Example (remote service):**

Grid B service on IEP reads 3 x 60 to support science/social studies in the general education setting.

The team may decide to transition the service to: Grid C 3 x 30 via remote platform.

A less frequent, more intense service may better meet the individual student needs given the remote platform. A collaborative, team effort between parents and special education providers will determine these decisions, which will then be documented in the *COVID 19 Special Education Learning Plan*.

**Q: If I have chosen for my child to attend school remotely, how will the services in the IEP be delivered?**

Remote learning is expected to be more robust than the experience during the spring of 2020. It is expected that students will receive an "Instruction and Services" model of remote learning through

- a regular and consistent schedule of classes, services, interventions and therapies
- structured learning time to provide access to state standards

- frequent interactions with teachers, therapists and support staff
- Synchronous lessons via teleconference and/or video conference or in person
- Asynchronous lessons via recorded lessons or through independent assignments

**Q: My child is provided with 1:1 support as a service in the IEP. How will that service be implemented if my child is in a hybrid or remote model?**

Instructional assistants under the guidance of the special education teacher and related service providers, will support students in both “in-person” and through remote activities. They will conduct small group and 1 to 1 instruction both in person and remotely. Instructional assistants will receive training along with professional staff with regard to remote learning and supporting students in both environments.

**Q: If I choose a full remote model, how will the services in the IEP be delivered?**

Each and every student with an IEP will have a COVID 19 Special Education Learning Plan developed in order to address the services in the IEP. If the choice is full remote, the TEAM will determine how special education services can be provided to meet the individual needs of the student. Parents will receive written notification of that plan as well as a schedule of classes, therapies and support services to be provided. This will all be facilitated through conversation with your special education provider.

**Q: My child is a child with a disability and receives accommodations through a 504 plan. Can my child qualify for full time “in-person” services and if not, how will services be provided?**

According to the DESE provided definition of “high needs students”, students with 504 accommodation plans do not qualify for full time “in-person” services. It is recommended to contact 504 coordinator or classroom teacher and discuss concerns related to your child and their individual learning needs. In regard to accommodations and supports in the 504 plan, the 504 TEAM will work with you to determine how those accommodations will be provided.

**Q: How will accommodations be provided in a remote platform?**

Accommodations on an IEP or 504 Plan may or may not be applicable in a remote platform. It is up to the student’s team of professionals, in conjunction with parents, to determine which accommodations the student requires to access learning in a remote platform. For special education students, these accommodations can be highlighted in the student’s *COVID 19 Special Education Learning Plan*.

**Q: What will be the procedure for IEP and 504 meetings in the Fall of 2020?**

Given the requirements for social distancing provided by DESE, all team meetings both Special Education and 504 will be held remotely via teleconference, Google Meet.

**Q: In the spring, I agreed to extend my child’s IEP due to school closure, what is the plan for holding the meeting once school resumes?**

Once school resumes, Team Chairs, Mrs. Oliveto (Grades K - 6; [toliveto@norfolk.k12.ma.us](mailto:toliveto@norfolk.k12.ma.us)) and Mrs. Alicia Whitehead (Preschool; [whitehead@norfolk.k12.ma.us](mailto:whitehead@norfolk.k12.ma.us)) will be working with families and school staff to schedule Team Meetings that were deferred until the fall. All meetings will be held remotely via telephone or video conference as we reenter the school year.

**Q: My child was due for an evaluation in the spring of 2020 and due to school closure that evaluation was not completed, what are the next steps?**

IEP teams will be prioritizing evaluations based on necessity for completion and date of consent. The District will continue to work with families to meet timelines and your team chairperson will reach out to seek consent to agree to waive or extend initial evaluations, re-evaluations or team meetings, as needed.

**Q: How will eligibility evaluations be conducted?**

The District made progress this summer completing some of the outstanding evaluations from spring. Once school resumes, special education staff will be scheduling outstanding assessments. Team Chairs will be in contact with families to finalize scheduling of evaluations and team meetings. Our goal as a department is to support our students’ transition back to school especially during the first two to three weeks of their initial return of students. Therefore evaluations will be completed after that time.

**Q: My child receives “related services only” through Norfolk Public Schools. How will services be delivered?**

Related services will be provided both in person and remotely. If your child receives “walk in services” please follow the Norfolk Public School health guidelines about sending your child to school. See Guidelines for when to keep students home- [Daily Screening Checklist](#)

Example: (1) Your child has speech services twice a week per their IEP. Once a week speech may be delivered in person and once a week speech may be delivered remotely; (2) Your child sees the occupational therapist once a week, as a walk in. Prior to sending your child to school, you will have to conduct a self screening asking questions such as “does my child have a temperature?” If answers to questions on the daily screening checklist are “yes,” you are encouraged to access services remotely on that day or to cancel.

**Q: How will toileting assistance be provided for students requiring such service?**

PPE (personal protective equipment) will be provided for staff that assist students in the bathroom.

Example: My preschool student is not fully toilet trained. If he/she requires assistance in the bathroom, the preschool teacher or instructional assistant will wear a mask, gloves, and perhaps a

disposable gown to support your child with toileting. Lysol wipes, hygiene wipes, and other cleaning solutions will be readily available in between bathroom use. The district has added additional custodial staff to support cleaning, as well.

**Q: My child attends the Special Education Preschool Program as a peer partner, what will school look like for my child?**

The Special Education Preschool program will provide for all students with disabilities “in-person” services per their IEP. Students that attend the preschool program as a peer partner will follow the hybrid model attending school 50% of their originally planned program. Tuition has been adjusted based on the hybrid model.

Example: My child was selected for a 3 day, 2 ½ hour preschool program on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. In the Hybrid Model, my child will attend school 2 days a week, for 2 ½ hours on Tuesday and Friday from 8:30 - 11:00 a.m.

**Q: My child receives transportation as a related service in the IEP. Will transportation be provided for “in-person” services?**

Students riding on a transportation vehicle will have to follow all health and safety protocols put in place by our transportation company (Van Pool) and DESE including but not limited to wearing face coverings and social distancing.

If a parent begins the year by transporting their child and decides that daily transportation is not feasible, it is required to provide the District with notification and expect at least a 72 hour turn around for transportation to be arranged. Just a reminder....all requests for changes in transportation (seating arrangements etc.) should be made through our office. Contact Mrs. Kathy Haley at [haley@norfolk.k12.ma.us](mailto:haley@norfolk.k12.ma.us).

**Example:** My child takes the van to school. Prior to getting on the van, he or she will have to hand sanitize. Prior to exiting the van, my child will hand sanitize. Prior to getting into school, my child will wash his/her hands.

**Q: My child is deaf or hard of hearing, will teachers be provided PPE that will allow my child to see their face and what will be the protocol for the FM system.**

Teachers will be provided with face shields to wear in addition to clear face masks. FM systems will be sanitized if required to be shared with staff.

Example: My child’s teacher wears a clear mask. Additionally, they wear a microphone around their neck to amplify sound.

**Q: How do I get my child help immediately?**

Contact your special education liaison immediately via email. Your special education liaison will work with you to establish a method of communication to address the needs of your child whether that be through regular, weekly check ins with the teacher or instructional assistant.

**Q: What type of training will staff be receiving to support my child and remote learning?**

Both teachers and instructional assistants will be receiving training as it relates to remote instruction and supporting transition back to school for all students will occur the opening week of school. Topics include training on Google Platform, both basic and advanced training. Staff will be receiving more advanced training on how to run small group and individualized instruction from a remote platform. Updated de escalation strategies and physical restraint training will be provided to relevant staff. Supporting students who have experienced trauma, training around anxiety and behaviors, mindfulness practices, and training on new safety practices will be addressed in the opening week of school. Goals around offering parent training to align with these topics will be forthcoming.

I hope this FAQ supports your questions and transition back to school. Feel free to contact me directly with further questions or concerns: 508-541-5478 x 2248.

Anna