



LOWELL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

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4/24/20

To Our Valued Lowell Families,

We hope this message finds you and your family safe and healthy. We fully appreciate the impact the mandated public health closures have had upon all families and truly everyone in our community. We understand that this impact is particularly complex for families of students with disabilities. We appreciate your understanding, collaboration and support as we navigate this difficult time as a school community. This message is being provided to share how special education services and processes will be conducted during this mandated school closure.

Consistent with federal and state guidelines, we will be shifting to the next phase of distance learning- to provide directed remote learning opportunities. In this phase, Educational services will be provided in a different manner than if your child was physically present in his/her school program. Lowell Public Schools Special Education Staff will review your child's needs based his/her current IEP to determine creative ways to reasonably provide instructional and related services through a remote learning platform. We acknowledge this a different challenge for the Lowell Public School Community so we plan on navigating and problem solving together.

A few things to remember as we are developing remote learning services:

1. This is all brand new. We are not a brick and mortar building yet we are tasked with providing educational experiences to our students. It will be up to us to make sure that our students have the opportunity to maintain their connection to their teachers, their classmates and what they have learned over the course of the year. In order to accomplish this services will look different than what is listed in the current IEP.
2. The federal and state legal mandates of special education have not been waived; we are expected to do what we have always done - what we are doing now - to meet the needs of our students. Federal mandates have not changed and is not new.
3. We'll need to combine this new venue with what we know about our students and what they need, in order to make the most effective remote learning plan that we can. We cannot replicate a service delivery grid that assumes learning is happening inside a school BUT we can determine the appropriate Supports & Resources and Instruction & Service for each of our students.

What follows are guidelines to consider as you think about each individual student and what he/she/they will need during the school closure. Suggestions are made with two variables in mind: the level of need of each student and the two areas that DESE wants us to consider in providing educational opportunities for students: 1) Supports & Resources, and 2) Instruction & Services. In addition, please note that we need to keep the "Individual" in the Individualized Education Program (IEP). That means that, based on your expert knowledge and understanding of your students, you may decide to increase or decrease the suggested frequency - this is okay, as long as your students' individual needs are being met remotely.

Special Education Teams will be making contact with you in order to develop temporary distance learning plans that provide each student with the resources and supports needed to support the remote learning platform. The temporary distance learning plan will not change your services within your current IEP and will only address services during school closure. Temporary learning plans will address academic services and related services in a remote platform and will look different than in their current setting.

When developing a Temporary Distance Learning plan please know that we do not need to get parental consent however the district does need to provide notice. The district also believes it is important to communicate with the parents and include all information pertinent and relevant to your student's success during this time.

The following procedures will take place if:

1. **Your students' annual review and or re-evaluation is due-** the special education team will convene through distance learning platforms that are available to all parties involved. If you as a parent or guardian choose not hold an IEP meeting during the temporary school closure, then your decision will be respected and the team will reconvene when the temporary school closure is over.
2. **Your student was in the process of an initial evaluation but had not been tested-** the special education team will continue with testing when the school closure is over.
3. **Your child's testing has been completed-** the special education team will convene through a remote learning platform and complete an evaluation determination meeting. If your student qualifies for services than a temporary learning plan will be developed to provide services through a remote learning plan. When the school closure is over the team will convene to develop an IEP.
4. **Your child is transitioning to a 3-year-old program and qualifies for special education services-** you will need to register your child with the Lowell public schools and a temporary learning plan will be provided.
5. Any requests for initial evaluation or additional testing will be completed when the temporary school closure is over.

We want to wish you well during this period of personal and community crisis. We remain committed to your child's success and express commitment working diligently to get through this pandemic. The delivery of special education services remains our top priority, and we look forward to a continued partnership in meeting the needs of your student.

Michael Lovato, Director of Special Education