



NORTH EAST SCHOOL DISTRICT

50 EAST DIVISION STREET • NORTH EAST, PENNSYLVANIA 16428
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Mrs. Brianne Hodges, Special Education Supervisor

Mrs. Nancy Bifulco, Administrative Assistant

Re: Written Notice of [School District's] Plan for Providing a "Free Appropriate Public Education" during the COVID-19 Closure

Dear Parent,

Your child has previously been identified as being eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA"). Under IDEA, special education students are entitled to receive a "free appropriate public education" or "FAPE" which is delivered to them through an Individualized Education Plan ("IEP").

As you know, Governor Wolf has closed all school districts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the period of closure, school districts are required to make good faith efforts to offer a "continuity of education" to students using alternative means. You will be receiving more detailed information about North East School District's Continuity of Education Plan in the near future. Until now, the North East School District has provided a continuity of education to its students through offering informal enrichment and review activities that reinforced your child's prior learning. The North East School District will soon be offering planned instruction of new concepts and skills aligned to standards – although that instruction necessarily will be offered through a variety of modalities via online/digital resources, phone contact, pre-recorded videos, and live-instruction via video chat- that are different than the traditional classroom setting. Again, more detailed information will be provided to all families about North East School District's Continuity of Education Plan.

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with written notice of why and how the North East School District's delivery of a free appropriate public education to your child will necessarily be changing in the temporary period of time the North East School District remains closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Purpose of this Written Notice:

- The purpose of this Written Notice is to communicate the District's interim plan to offer continuity of education to your child through the delivery of a "free appropriate (under these exceptional circumstances) public education" during the period of state-mandated school closure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The North East School District is not proposing to revise your child's current IEP. That IEP remains in effect and the North East School District or affiliate schools will resume the implementation of your child's IEP when schools re-open.

2. Reasons why the District is Proposing Temporary Changes to Delivery of FAPE:

- The reason why the District is recommending the changes summarized below in the delivery of special education and related services section (Box 3) is because the normal range of instructional resources are necessarily limited during this period of closure. All school buildings are closed for health and safety reasons and thus in-person instruction services cannot be provided.
- The option of delivering FA(under the circumstances)PE services in the home is also impossible at this time due to government-mandated social distancing and stay-at-home orders imposed for health and safety reasons.
- The District is using best and good faith efforts to implement the FAPE services outlined in your child's current IEP and to meet the individual needs of your child during the time period instruction to the entire student population is being delivered through alternative means, which "alternative means" are generally described below and through the North East School District's Continuity of Education Plan.
- Please understand and recognize that continuation of programming exactly as described in your child's current IEP is not possible because the closure of all schools, and social distancing requirements mandated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, preclude full implementation of the IEP as currently written.
- This interim, emergency FA(under the circumstances)PE plan shall remain in effect only during the period of emergency school closure.
- You may be contacted during the closure period to participate in a virtual or telephonic annual IEP revision meeting. This would be a standard (non-COVID-19 related) IEP meeting. The purpose of this annual IEP meeting is not to discuss the interim emergency FA(under the circumstances)PE plan but will focus on what programming will be in place for your child during normal operations when school reopens.

3. Overview of District's model for delivering special education services/specially designed instruction to support the special learning needs of your student during the mandatory COVID-19 school closure period:

The below special education plan takes into consideration the specific type of programming that is offered in your child's current IEP in conjunction with the current limitations on normal school operations resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, pending government orders and mandates as of the date of this notice and health and safety concerns.

- If your child typically receives specially designed instruction in a regular education classroom, your child's special education teacher/s will work collaboratively with the general education teachers to provide accommodations and/or modifications individualized to the learning needs of your child to assigned instructional materials. Your child's special education teacher/s will work with his/her regular education teachers to implement the SDIs listed in your student's IEP to the greatest extent possible and appropriate under these circumstances. Some examples include: adapting or modifying the virtual assignments, adjusting reading level of assignments to meet student need, utilizing Google Chrome extensions to help with reading aloud or readability, chunking assignments, extra skills practice, choice boards, social stories, organizational supports, or organizing live in-person supports via Google Hangouts or Zoom to provide individualized supports as needed.
- If your child typically receives specially designed instruction in a special education classroom, your child's special education teacher will be creating instructional and supporting activities that are aligned with your child's ability level and utilizing SDIs to the greatest extent possible and appropriate under these circumstances. Your child's learning support teacher will create a separate Google Classroom and/or host separate events in order to provide instruction in order to meet to the greatest extent possible the SDI and instructional time listed in the IEP.

- If your child’s disabilities preclude him/her from effectively utilizing or accessing online resources and distance-learning instruction modalities being used by the North East School District, school personnel will consult individually with you (the parent) to determine the most appropriate ways to meet your child’s individual learning needs during the period of closure, including but not limited to the use of assistive technology, 1:1 support by school district staff, use of printed materials, etc.
- Supplemental resources that both general and special educators will utilize to implement your child’s IEP will include but are not limited to Google Hangouts/Zoom meetings, pre-recorded lessons, links to online resources for parents or students, links to Google Chrome extensions to help with a variety of accessibility features, individualized assignments, special educator access to all general education classrooms to assist with monitoring assignment completion/participation/accommodations.
- Special education teachers will have telephone or video office hours available for students to access at specific times (will vary by teacher). You will be notified how to access your child’s teacher/s for office hour support. Some examples of supports that may be available through office hours include: setting up a check-in, rewording directions, asking questions, addressing home concerns (academic and behavioral), and explaining and/or modifying content.
- Special education teachers will be available to schedule 1:1 check-ins with your child if necessary and appropriate. These check-ins can be held through Google Hangouts or Zoom depending on the teachers preference.
- If your student’s IEP references the use of 1:1 or classroom aides, your child’s aide/s will work with the teachers to check in with your student, provide review sessions, consult with the parent about the implementation and use of behavioral supports, etc., as appropriate.

The special education services described above will be offered in addition to any virtual or distance regular education course work in subjects in which your child participates in the general curriculum per his/her current IEP.

4. Overview of District’s model for delivering related services (if so required by your child’s IEP) to your student during the mandatory COVID-19 school closure period:

- If your student’s IEP requires delivery of a related service such as OT, PT, Speech, Vision, and/or Hearing Support, you will be contacted by the therapist currently working with your child to discuss the mode of delivering these services to your child during the closure period.
- Delivery of services could take place through group or individual telephone conferences, video conferences, delivery of live or pre-taped lessons, or a combination of these modalities.
- The delivery model will be explained and the District will work with you to ensure that the proper technology and resources are in place. If barriers exist, the IEP team will revisit this area of need and develop a plan upon your child’s return to school after the closure period ends.
- For some classes, related service providers will be added to the Google Classroom in order to provide activities for the entire class.

5. Next Steps During and After the Closure Period:

- If you have questions or concerns about your child’s ability to access the educational resources and instruction being made available to him/her and/or the North East School District’s delivery of a “free appropriate (under the circumstances) public education” to your child during the implementation of the North East School District’s Continuity of Education Plan, please communicate those questions or concerns

to your child's special education teacher. The North East School District will make all reasonable efforts to work with you to address your issues or concerns during this challenging time.

- Once school resumes, your child's IEP team will be convened to analyze the consequences the district-wide closure had on your child and to determine whether compensatory education is necessary to adequately address those consequences.

If your child's IEP is due during this time, his or her case manager will reach out with options and instructions on how the meeting can be held. For all meetings held via phone or video during the closure for COVID-19, parents will have an option to request an in-person meeting once the school is reopened.

Please direct any questions you may have regarding your child's IEP programming first to their case manager. If the case manager is not able to adequately answer your question, then please contact the Supervisor of Special Education for additional information.

Thank you,

Brianne Hodges
Supervisor of Special Education
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