



NEW PROVIDENCE SPECIAL SERVICES

356 Elkwood Avenue, New Providence, NJ 07974 (908)464-9450 FAX (908) 464-4675

August 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I hope that this communication finds you well. As the district continues to develop its plans for a hybrid opening of school, I would like to provide some further information regarding the educational experience for students receiving special education services. While this has been a difficult planning process for everyone involved, we have worked to put together a framework that prioritizes first our ability to provide for the health and safety of our students, staff, and families, while still enabling students to benefit from a robust educational plan. We are certainly aware of the challenges that a hybrid plan for school opening presents to our students and their families, and we are appreciative of the opportunity to work with you during this process.

In District Instruction

As stated in previous correspondence, students will be divided into 4 groups for the hybrid plan. Most students attending school will be divided into Group A and Group B, while some students will be included in Group D. Students who opt for remote only education will be placed in group C. Students receiving special education services will be placed in these groups as follows:

Group A/B: Students whose primary program is in the mainstream are placed in this group. This includes students who are receiving services in a co teaching, ICS, ICR, or replacement setting (such as the resource room). Students in this group will alternate between attending school in person and participating in classroom instruction remotely. Each school will place students in Group A or B by late August. Please refer to individual school plans for additional information.

Students in Group A and B will attend school on alternate days. In each school, students will follow a half day schedule that will include all subjects. Students in single teacher, co teacher, or replacement settings will continue to receive instruction in these settings throughout this time. Accommodations and modifications will continue to be offered as established in the IEP to the greatest extent possible. When students are being instructed from home, they will access their classes remotely in real time using the Zoom app. Teachers will teach to students who are both physically in the classroom and those who are working remotely, using a combination of synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods. These include the use of breakout remote sessions to meet with small groups of students to provide additional support, parallel teaching, and frequent checks to measure student comprehension of material. Students will be expected to attend all Zoom classes, and a schedule of these will be provided to parents and students in advance.

All students in groups A and B will work remotely during the afternoon sessions. Following a break for travel from school to home and lunch, all students will be expected to log onto remote sessions from home for further instruction in key subject areas. Depending on their grade level, students will receive additional instruction in core subject areas from their teachers in their mainstream or replacement settings, as appropriate. In addition, teachers will hold office hours during this afternoon period, which will



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provide students with a further opportunity to ask questions or receive additional support. Please see the plans for your child's school for more specific information.

Group C: Students in Group C are those who opt for full remote instruction. Students receiving special education services who opt for Group C will continue to receive the supports and accommodations indicated in their IEP to the greatest extent possible. Related services are available to be provided remotely. However, parents utilizing the remote option may request that their child receive their sessions in person. In this event, the parent would be responsible for transportation of the student to and from the school for the scheduled appointment. Sessions may be scheduled during the morning or afternoon, depending on therapist availability. The related service provider will offer scheduling information prior to the September 15th start date of related services. Please see below for additional information on the provision of related services.

Group D: Students in Group D are those who are placed in specific programs. These programs include all preschool programs, Kindergarten, and self-contained (LLD) classes. These students will attend school 5 days a week. Students in half day preschool or Kindergarten programs will attend for the full 2.5-hour schedule, while students in full day preschool or LLD programs will attend for the entirety of their full day program. Students who are in school for the full day will have lunch in their classrooms. Elementary students will also have a recess period, as well as additional opportunities to take "mask breaks" throughout the school day. Related services will continue to be provided to these students throughout their school day.

Related Services

Related services, including speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and counseling, may be offered individually on either an in person or remote basis. Students in Group A and B will have the opportunity to either have their session during the mornings when they are in the building, in person during the afternoon (with parents providing transportation), or remotely. When determining the schedule for students, related service providers will consider the following factors:

- Amount of time the student is removed from in person instruction
- Feasibility of conducting sessions in person vs. remotely
- Issues experienced by students when previously attending sessions remotely
- Number of related services sessions total for the student

In order to maintain appropriate social distancing, group sessions will only be held with students from the same class. Students from different classes will not be grouped together for in person groups. However, therapists may utilize groups made up of in person students and remote students where appropriate.

Out of District

Out of district programs are developing their own reopening plans, which they will be sharing with both parents and the district. Questions related to specific aspects of those plans should be directed to those programs specifically. However, it is recommended that you remain in contact with your case manager, who will assist you in clarifying necessary information. If you have decided to have your student attend their school remotely to begin the school year, please be sure to communicate this with the Office of



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Special Services. Students who are attending their out of district programs will continue to be offered transportation services. Please see below for additional information.

Transportation

Transportation services will continue to be provided this fall for out of district students and in district students who have this service as part of their IEP. Masks will be worn by all students and staff while on the bus. Temperature checks and health checks will be performed prior to allowing a student to get on the bus to go to school. The transportation department is also working to ensure proper distancing for students and staff while on the bus. As a result, additional bus runs may be incorporated. Additionally, buses will be cleaned after each run. The transportation coordinator will be in contact with families receiving this service to confirm route and pick up time information prior to the beginning of the school year.

We are currently working with our transportation providers to coordinate transportation needs heading into the school year. These will be refined as different programs develop their own reopening plans and parents decide whether to proceed with in person or remote instruction for the beginning of the school year.

Parents who are eligible for transportation services, but would like to opt out and transport students themselves, are asked to please notify the Office of Special Services. This can be done without removing the service from the student's IEP. Additionally, parents of students who are placed out of district may also elect to provide transportation for their students themselves and be reimbursed by the District. Reimbursement can be provided by the district provided that a contract is established and approved with the family, and assuming parents meet required licensing and insurance standards. Parents may only transport their own children via this process. Interested parents should contact Special Services for more information.

IEP Meetings

In order to maintain appropriate social distancing, IEP and parent meetings will continue to be held remotely through the Zoom app or teleconference. This is being done to limit the number of visitors who enter the school building.

Evaluations

Our Child Study Team will be resuming in person testing and evaluations with the opening of school. Due to the quarantine, there is a significant backlog of students who require either initial CST/related service testing or reevaluations. We will be putting a priority on performing evaluations of students necessary for determination of eligibility for special education services, and will move to complete this testing as quickly as possible. Your case manager will notify you when this testing is completed, and a meeting to determine appropriate outcomes will be scheduled.

For evaluations to be conducted safely, staff will follow appropriate health and safety guidelines that include the wearing of appropriate PPE and use of appropriate barriers and the cleaning and handling of



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all materials between uses. Please note that students may be pulled from their classes, or scheduled to return to school during the afternoon session, to facilitate evaluations.

Personal Protective Equipment

While students are attending school in person, they will be expected to wear masks throughout the school day. This follows direction from the Department of Health and Department of Education. Students should be prepared to bring their own masks with them to school. Students at all levels will be provided with breaks throughout the day that will allow them to remove these masks in a safe manner. If your child has a diagnosed condition that prevents him/her from wearing a mask, please provide a copy of a doctor's orders indicating this. In all other circumstances, it is recommended that students who plan to attend school in person in September begin practicing wearing masks for extended periods now. This will assist in the acclimation process that students will need to be more comfortable once in school.

We understand that students receiving special education services are a very diverse group, and it can be difficult to fully encapsulate the ways in which the needs of all are met in a few pages. Our teams of teachers, case managers, support staff and related service providers are ready to assist you and your children with any specific concerns that impact their school experience. Please feel free to contact your team or myself with any questions as we move forward. Thank you, and be well.

Sincerely,

Joseph R. Harvey, Psy.D.
Director of Special Services
New Providence School District