



FAIRFIELD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Parent and/or Guardian,

We certainly hope that this letter finds you and your family well. The past two weeks have been filled with many changes for families, schools, and our community. Most of you have had to alter your family schedules, routines, and daily practices to conform to the mandated closure of schools and businesses and to engage in social distancing recommendations.

As a District, we wanted to take this opportunity to communicate personally with our families who have a child with a disability, as you may have additional questions and be facing unique challenges related to your child's specific needs. These last weeks have been difficult for schools to navigate the many aspects of this mandated closure while continuing to support our families. While the possibility exists that the closure of schools may be extended, please know that teachers and administrators have been working diligently to plan for ways to engage your child in meaningful educational opportunities.

As you may know, based on recent communication from the building principals, your child's teachers, including special education teachers and related service providers, have been developing activities and resources to share with students on a daily basis. These activities and resources have been developed with the intent of re-establishing connections and extending the learning that has occurred throughout this school year. The information being shared may include both online and offline activities.

We recognize that students with disabilities have unique learning and social-emotional needs, which may prevent them from participating in some activities at home. Special education teachers and related service providers will be available to support you and your child over the next few weeks, providing answers to questions about your child's daily activities. Your child's teacher(s) will be reaching out to you over the next few days to share the best way to contact them for support. We are encouraging all students to participate to the greatest extent possible.

Another document is called a Notice of Recommended Educational Placement (NOREP). This document outlines the reality that during this mandated school closure, should the District begin to provide instruction, we are not able to replicate the programming that is currently outlined in your child's most recent Individualized Education Program (IEP) in the home setting. As stated in the document, upon your child's return to school, the District will immediately begin providing all services as outlined in your child's IEP.

Starting on March 30, 2020, we will begin to provide online/remote instruction. Our teachers will work hard to provide all students with exceptionalities supports and services aligned with their educational plans using the online/remote format. Our teachers are working diligently to develop instruction, activities and opportunities that will be made available to your child during this mandated closure. We ask that you sign the NOREP, and return it to the District electronically. If your child receives instruction through an LIU or Consortium program, you will receive a letter that will most likely highlight the online/remote instruction as they move forward.

The District is committed to working collaboratively with parents during the COVID-19 global Pandemic to continue to engage our students with disabilities in the educational process. As the District continues to work closely with local, state, and federal officials, adjustments to our plan may be necessary, particularly should the state-mandated school closure be extended. Rest assured that we will maintain an open line of communication with you and alert you to any changes should they arise. If you would like to speak to one of us, do not hesitate to reach out via phone or email. We do appreciate your understanding and flexibility during this unprecedented time in public education and are confident that, working together, we will successfully engage our students while doing our part to keep all students, families, staff, and the community healthy.

Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) & Gifted Individualized Education Plan (GIEP)

Deadlines are in place and require annual review. If your child has an IEP or GIEP, your child's teacher will be contacting you to seek your preference on meeting via email, telephone, or Zoom in place of a face-to-face meeting. We will be glad to schedule a follow up meeting with you when face-to-face meetings are allowed, if you prefer. We will also do our best to assemble full IEP teams for the meetings and to ensure that you have documents ahead of those meetings. We will provide you with a Notice of Recommended Education Placement (NOREP) outlining that we held meetings in this manner.

Evaluations and Re-evaluations

Re-evaluations for students who already receive special education services are also still required. We plan to maintain timelines to the extent possible in situations in which additional testing and/or observations are not required. For those that require additional testing or observation, we will communicate with you directly about our current inability to complete the evaluation due to the governor's order to not be in school, the need for social distancing, the allowance for only essential employees to report to work, and the inability to complete observations or in-person testing. We will also provide you with a NOREP requesting a temporary suspension of the timeline until we are able to conduct assessments and/or observations. It is our priority to ensure that all students with exceptionalities are educated based on their individual needs and we recognize that procedural timelines and practices enable this to occur. We will keep thorough and accurate records to ensure that all face-to-face meetings that are requested and all testing and observations that are needed occur when we are able. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions you have about this information or any concerns you might have. Please maintain regular and ongoing communication with your child's special education teacher about their support.

Sincerely,

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