

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The following is intended to provide an update to you regarding our actions to support the learning of students with disabilities. Given the unprecedented public health crisis and the indefinite closure of our schools, we have and continue to seek guidance from state and federal agencies on how best to continue educational services for students with disabilities. This letter outlines steps the special education team is taking to coordinate and/or provide your children with on-going educational opportunities.

In this transition to a virtual learning environment, we will work hard with you to provide the best possible learning opportunities for your child under these circumstances. Providing services from a remote environment inherently comes with challenges, and we will do our very best to navigate these challenges with you and your child through the following weeks or months.

Next, I share steps and actions special education teachers and related service providers will be taking over the next several weeks. This is followed by our expectations once school resumes and links to helpful resources.

Supporting Students with Disabilities in Response to the Extended School Closure

The district has every intent to provide meaningful educational opportunities as well as follow all applicable procedural requirements. However, under the current circumstances, implementing your child's IEP as written and/or meeting all procedural requirements may not be possible. As such, we are making a good faith effort to ensure every student with a disability has/receives:

- Equal access to instructional opportunities
- A free appropriate public education
- To the greatest possible extent, receives special education and related services

While we may not be able to fully implement IEPs, our efforts should result in progress towards both IEP goals and applicable curricular standards.

Next Steps

Over the course of the next two weeks, school staff will be engaging in professional development on virtual learning options, methodology and special education specific procedures. I share this with you to foreshadow their new learning, upcoming communication and the resulting staff actions. Special education teachers and related services providers will be asked to complete the following tasks as we implement virtual learning instructional models.

1. Complete third quarter IEP Goal Progress Report and send home. Doing so will assist school staff in determining a starting point and immediate next steps.
2. Special education, related service providers and 504 Plan case managers will review their case lists and prioritize the needs of students with the most complex disabilities first.

3. Staff will review each student's IEP/504 Plan focusing primarily on goals, accommodations and services.
4. Given the service delivery constraints, staff will contact parents/caregivers to determine the most applicable virtual instruction tailored to student needs. This may take the form of on-line lessons created by classroom teacher(s), computer-based content, Google Classroom lessons, and/or phone call consultations with students/parents/caregivers. The intent is to individualize to the extent possible such that the student can progress towards both IEP goals and applicable curricular standards. Individualization will impact the frequency, amount and type of service(s).
5. Where appropriate, staff will provide activities for parents/caregivers to continue learning opportunities, especially for areas not conducive to virtual learning and will establish mechanisms for checking in with parents/caregivers to provide guidance and problem solving.
6. Staff will develop and maintain methods of tracking lesson completion, assess learning/work completion and methods of providing feedback to students.
7. Establish regular communication patterns with staff and families.
8. Staff will utilize Assistive Technology to the extent possible to make instruction/communication available and accessible.

What you can Expect to Receive in the Coming Weeks

Once services that can be provided are determined, you will receive a form called a Prior Written Notice. This form, which is new and will only be used during the current school closure, will describe:

- Services able to be provided in a virtual environment during the closure
- Services not possible to provide at the present time
- How prioritized IEP goals will be addressed and assessed
- Communication expectations between students/families
- Consultation supports for parents should there be questions (where needed)

IEP and 504 Plan Meetings

Once the MMSD moves to virtual instructional models, IEP meetings will also be conducted virtually. What follows are steps we are taking regarding IEP meetings.

1. Your child's IEP that was in effect at the time of the school closure will resume once school reopens, unless the IEP is revised or a new annual IEP is completed during the time of closure. There may be situations where school staff and the parent agree that a change to an IEP is needed. In these cases, staff will make the change and send you an updated or amended IEP (electronically).
2. In conducting IEP/504 Plan meetings virtually, school staff will ask for your consent to proceed (preferably in writing). Unlike face to face meetings where it's obvious who is

participating, virtual meetings run the risk of confidentiality errors, so we will be clarifying who is present in the meeting environments.

3. During the school closure period, we will streamline IEP meetings as much as possible - focus on prioritized disability-related need(s), goals and services.
4. In the event that a parent does not have the technological capacity to engage in remote participation in a meeting, we will work with you to determine alternate options. For example, the district may offer you a room at the district office, if open, set up video or phone conferencing.

IEP and 504 Plan Evaluation Guidance

- For evaluations currently in process (initials and reevaluations), we will complete everything that can be done in the absence of face to face assessment/observation such as scoring or analysis; finalize all aspects of the evaluation where possible and move on to an eligibility determination (virtual meeting). If there are critical assessment elements that can only be done face to face and thus the evaluation cannot be completed, you will be notified that the evaluation will resume when school is in session.
- For new evaluations requests (initials and reevaluations) we will review and evaluate whether or not eligibility can be determined based on existing data. If eligibility cannot be determined via existing data, you will be notified that the evaluation will resume once school is back in session.

When Regular (face to face) School Resumes

Once schools reopen, staff will comprehensively assess student skills and progress toward IEP goals. This information will be utilized to inform subsequent IEP decisions. Your input will be critical during this process. For example, if a student has lost significant essential skills, their IEP team will discuss the instruction and services necessary to address this regression. In some cases, this may be in the form of compensatory or extended school year services.

Who to Contact with Questions

When questions or concerns come up, please begin by contacting your child's special education teacher or related services provider. If your questions or concerns persist, please contact the building PST or building administrator. If the issue or question is not resolved at the building, please contact the level Student Services administrator, contact information can be found on our website [Special Education](#) and [Staff Directory](#)

With respect,

John Harper
Executive Director of Student Services

Links to Informative Resources

On March 21st, The US Department of Education (ED) released the following updated procedural guidance **additional guidance** regarding IDEA procedures.

Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children With Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak March 2020

- <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>
- https://zoom.us/rec/play/usIvJbr-pm03TNGXsQSDAaB4W469L_6s03VK-PIEyhuyUXMLMFekZ7NDNOZ0KplYrw19W5AsPdOeqZSC?startTime=1584110179000 (U.S. Department of Education and other federal partners hosted a conference call with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) to discuss the Administration's response to Coronavirus (COVID-19). OSEP explained Q&A and answered additional questions).

Fact Sheet: Impact of COVID-19 on Assessments and Accountability under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act

- <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/03/COVID-19-OESE-FINAL-3.12.20.pdf>

K-12 School Closure FAQs

- https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/administrators/e-mail/K-12_FAQ_3.15.20_.pdf

Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil Rights of Students

- <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ocr-coronavirus-fact-sheet.pdf>

Student Services | 545 West Dayton St. | Madison, Wisconsin 53703-1967 | studentservices.mmsd.org

John Harper, Ph.D., Executive Director | Jane Belmore, Ph.D., Interim Superintendent of Schools