



COVID-19 Pandemic: Navigating Special Education Frequently Asked Questions as of April 9, 2020

***Information will be updated as DESE guidance changes**

What is the goal of special education in a remote learning environment?

Special education teachers and related service providers will ensure equally effective access and opportunity to reinforce knowledge/skills and to ensure special education students are provided with the opportunity to work towards IEP goals. Our educators will make every effort to follow the guidance by the DESE “to make every effort to use creative strategies to provide special education instruction and services to the extent feasible.” Due to the very unusual circumstances, we know we cannot provide all the services in the way that they are typically provided (i.e. hands-on physical therapy, occupational therapy), but we will do our very best to help our students progress during this period of closure.

What does “Supports and Resources” look like as a service delivery model?

- Special educators and related service providers collaborating with general educators on accommodations and access of materials and assignments provided for students.
- Providing resources and support for families, students, and general educators.
- Communication is essential. Special Education liaisons (the special educator who typically provides the greatest amount of student service, in some cases this can also be a related service provider) are expected to communicate with families/students at least once a week. Communication can be via conference call (phone or video), email, or Google Classroom.
- Your student’s liaison will be sharing with you specific information regarding how special education will be provided to your child in a remote learning environment. This will be shared with you through a new document called a Special Education Student Learning Plan. Special Educators and related service providers are developing these plans and they will be shared with you and your student in the coming weeks.

What does “Instruction and Services” look like as a service delivery model?

- Inclusion support from special education teachers and related service providers by joining whole group instruction opportunities provided by classroom teachers.
- consultation with families, and general education teachers on a weekly basis via video, phone, email, or Google Classroom.
- Small group virtual instruction. Again this will not be at the frequency or duration as during the regular school year.
- Provide video instruction that is self-created or sourced from professional organizations to support learning for students and/or caregivers
- Student specific assignments, as feasible.
- For many students, services such as speech, OT, and PT may shift to focus on consultation and collaboration with general education teachers rather than direct services to students.

Where can I find information on remote special education?

- In addition to communicating with your child’s liaison and reviewing your child’s remote learning plan, please visit our [special education website](#) for resources, supports, and services.

Does the district need to amend my child’s IEP to provide remote learning?

- Remote learning is different but districts are not required to amend a student’s IEP for services being temporarily provided during the school closure.
- Remote learning does not change the IEP or impact any “stay put” rights.

What about student privacy and confidentiality during remote learning?

- As part of our remote learning opportunities, the District is offering some of these opportunities through a virtual platform. It is important to understand that there are limitations to student privacy and student confidentiality when using virtual platforms.

- The District strictly prohibits screenshots, pictures, audio/video recording and distribution of any virtual educational experience in order to protect student privacy, proactively prevent potential cyberbullying, prevent the distribution of copyrighted materials and comply with Massachusetts law. Please note that in Massachusetts, it is illegal to record another person through any medium without his or her knowledge.
- Students, and where appropriate parents/guardians, agree to engage in virtual educational experiences in a quiet, private area to the extent practicable given the circumstances, in order to minimize background noise and distractions and to protect the integrity of student engagement as well as student confidentiality.
- Parents/guardians and other household members who normally do not have access to day-to-day classroom and small group special education services agree to respect and keep confidential any personal or private information (e.g. disability status) inadvertently discovered about other students as they engage in remote learning. The use of headphones, if available, may help to minimize the unintentional sharing of personal information.

Will IEP meetings still be held?

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) has provided the following responses regarding IEP meetings:

Q: How can the district meet special education evaluation timelines if schools are closed?

The Department recognizes that school closures may impact the ability of school districts to meet the 30-day timeline for conduct evaluations in addition to the 45 school working day timeline to develop an IEP after receipt of a parent's written consent to evaluation or reevaluation. We encourage school teams and parents to work collaboratively and creatively to meet IEP timeline requirements. Districts are encouraged to work with parents to reach mutually agreeable extensions of timelines, as appropriate.

Q: A student's IEP expires during the school closure period. Will it still be in effect?

Yes. The current IEP will remain in effect until a new IEP is developed and accepted, irrespective of the expired date reflected in the IEP forms.

Q: How can the district hold an IEP Team meeting if school is closed or Team members can't meet face-to-face?

In circumstances where an IEP Team meeting *may* need to be convened during this time when IEP teams are not able to meet in person due to health and safety considerations while schools are closed, districts should convene IEP Team meetings telephonically or virtually using technologies such as Google Hangout. Districts should

ensure that interpreters are provided during telephonic or virtual IEP team meetings when the parents primary language is not English.

The above was taken from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education document

[COVID-19 Information and Resources for Special Educators - Special Education](#).

Please see the complete document for additional information regarding special education.

How will it be determined if my child requires additional services (compensatory services)?

- All students' progress has been interrupted. The impact of remote learning is yet to be determined for all students. The IEP team will have to determine the impact and possible need for additional services (compensatory services) on an individual student basis once we return to school.

Will initial and three year reevaluation IEP meetings be held?

- In some cases, the District will be able to hold virtual initial and three year reevaluation meetings if all or most of the assessments were completed prior to the school closure. Special Education Team Chairs will work with families to either hold the meetings or extend the evaluation timelines. For those meetings where the assessments have not been completed, the evaluations will be completed when school resumes and an IEP meeting will be scheduled to review the results.

Will transition meetings be held?

- Given our current anticipated return date of 5/4/20, there will not be any transition meetings scheduled during the school closure period. We will reassess this should the schools remain closed for a longer period.

My student attends an out of district placement, what information do I need to know?

- Please note that this document refers to special education in a remote learning environment for students who receive special education services in-district. If your student is placed in an out-of-district setting, you should follow the communication the placement has sent you. If you have any questions regarding out-of-district students, please contact Renee Morgan directly via email at rmmorgan@woburnps.com.

My student is having trouble with technology. Where can they get help?

- Are you having trouble logging into your school accounts at home? Think your password isn't working? Please contact help@woburnps.com.
- Students can also contact their special education teachers and classroom teachers for additional support about how to use specific technology resources.

I have additional questions. Where can I get more information?

Email your Special Education Team Chair directly via email:

Woburn Memorial High School, **Chris O'Neill**, coneill@woburnps.com

Joyce and Kennedy Middle Schools, **Derek Mousseau**, dmousseau@woburnps.com

Altavesta, Linscott, and Reeves Elementary Schools, **Elizabeth Rudzinski**, erudzinski@woburnps.com

Goodyear, Hurd Wyman, White Elementary Schools, **Jaimee Greitzer**, jgreitzer@woburnps.com

Shamrock Elementary School, **Pam Walker**, pwalker@woburnps.com

Preschool Coordinator, **Heidi Friedstein**, hfriedstein@woburnps.com