



Julie Muse-Fisher • Executive Director of Special Education, Interim
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Dear Parents and Caregivers,

These are unprecedented times and the information and guidance from local, state and federal authorities has resulted in decisions and actions that need to be nimble to adapt to the quickly changing environment. As you have been informed, at this time the decision was made to close Needham Public Schools through April 7th, 2020.

The Needham Office of Special Education is working collaboratively with school leaders, in and out of the district, to determine the best response to COVID-19 and provide meaningful information to our families and staff. Please see below for relevant Special Education and student service information.

IEP Meetings/Evaluations in Process

Staff will resume working remotely as of March 23rd while schools remain closed. IEP meetings scheduled for this week may be held virtually with parent consent or rescheduled. You will be notified by your student's special education liaison or administrator about this.

Needham Public Schools, along with other districts in the Commonwealth, will freeze evaluation, referral, annual review, and plan distribution timelines for all students on IEPs and 504s. This means that as soon as schools open again, the timelines will commence as is required by state and federal regulations. Additionally, at that time we will be working with families to understand the impact of the closure on students and schedule or reschedule meetings.

When schools reopen and as long as access to schools is limited to essential employees and students, IEP meetings will be held virtually through video or phone conference with parent consent or rescheduled. A follow-up face-to-face meeting may be scheduled after



we are no longer in a state of emergency with the coronavirus pandemic; parents are asked to speak with their special education liaison or administrator about this if needed.

Special Education Referrals/Initial Eligibility

Needham Public Schools, along with other schools in the Commonwealth, will freeze evaluation, referral, and plan distribution timelines for all students in a referral cycle. This means that as soon as schools open again, the timelines will commence as is required by state and federal regulations.

Special Education Services

During school closures, the Needham Public Schools will follow the [Department of Education Guidance issued March 2020](#). Given that educational services will not be provided to the general student population from March 16 - March 27, there is no requirement for special education services to be provided. Instead, the district encourages students to remain engaged while school is not in session and to that end schools will provide suggestions and resources for enrichment activities. Teachers, special education team members and counselors will remain in touch with students and families to assist with access to these activities, to check in on students, and to offer support and guidance as needed. Although there is no obligation for students to engage in the enrichment activities we do encourage participation.

Given the most recent information from the Governor about extending school closures through to April 7th, the district is actively working on plans beyond March 27th.

Once school resumes, the Needham Public Schools will make every effort to provide special education and related services to children in accordance with the child's individualized education program (IEP). Also there may be exceptional circumstances and health related impacts that could affect how a particular service is provided.

Home Services

Home services and assessment will not occur during school closures. Additionally, once school reopens, our ability to send staff or contracted service providers into homes is contingent upon staff and student perceived health and wellness in accordance with state and CDC guidelines, protocols to limit activities within the community, or availability of home service providers. If home services cannot be provided once school reopens, teams will make individual determinations for the requirement of compensatory services.



OOD/Residential Placements

For students in Out-of-District day or residential placements, Needham Public Schools will follow the attendance recommendations of the individual school or facility. As a practice, the district does not provide tutoring when school is not in session.

Needham Special Education Transportation

Needham Transportation Office will continue to provide transportation to out-of-district schools that are opened and for students who are able to attend. Please contact the director Shane Marchand - shane_marchand@needham.k12.ma.us if you have any questions regarding your student's bussing.

Home Hospital Tutoring

Once school resumes, for students who may have medical or health issues and are physically unable to come to school as a result of COVID-19, the district will be following our process with regard to Home and Hospital Tutoring. This applies to students who will miss 14 or more school days as a result of being physically unable to come to school due to a health or medical issue. A physician's statement is required to initiate this process. If this situation applies to your child, please contact your school's Special Education Coordinator or Director.

The Special Education Department is committed to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for students and continues to closely monitor COVID-19 and its impact on student learning and social emotional needs.

The district's special education [website](#) has been updated with this information and will continue to be updated as information becomes available.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me or your student's special education administrator with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Julie Muse-Fisher
Interim Executive Director of Special Education

Cc: SEPAC
Mary Lammi, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services
Patricia Mullen, Special Education Director, NHS
Rebecca Sparrell, Preschool Director
Special Education Coordinators