



DRACUT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Student Services

2063 Lakeview Avenue
Dracut, MA. 01826
Phone; (978) 957-4633 Fax; (978) 957-9706

Steven Stone
Superintendent of Schools

Kimberly Lawrence
Director of Student Services

April 28, 2020

Dear Families/Guardians:

As a District, we understand that the recent public health mandated school closure has been extremely challenging for all families and particularly complex for families of students with disabilities. There are many questions as it relates to the education of students with disabilities and the services outlined in their IEPs, during this time of school closure. I hope your family is well and adjusting to these difficult circumstances. We appreciate your understanding, collaboration, and patience as we navigate the remote learning world during this difficult time.

The following are frequently asked questions and answers provided based on our current guidance from MA DESE Commissioner, as well as DESE Associate Commissioner for Special Education. Updates will be provided as additional guidance is received.

Q: My child is a student with an IEP or 504 Plan and I am concerned about the impact of the school closure due to COVID -19, what will happen for my child?

A: Upon the conclusion of the closure, and the re-opening of the district, IEP teams will work collaboratively with families/guardians to determine the impact the closure had on your child's educational progress and make individualized, team based, decisions where applicable and necessary. During the school closure, it is important to note that FAPE (Free and Appropriate Public Education) will not look the same as it does when regular school is in session. It is important to access remote learning opportunities, staff office hours and remain in contact with staff in order to best meet the needs of your child in a remote environment.

Q. My child's annual IEP review is due, can I expect that this meeting will be held during the school closure?

A. Under the advisory by DESE, the District is working with families/guardians to discuss options for IEP annual reviews. District Team Chairpeople will be reaching out to all families/guardians of students in need of an annual review throughout the remainder of the school year. They will be discussing the option to extend the current IEP until such time as school resumes or the potential of a virtual TEAM meeting. Any IEP that families/guardians agree to extend at this time are considered "stay put". Please know that any IEPs written during school closure, as a result of a virtual TEAM meeting, will be implemented when school resumes, and FAPE will be provided consistent with federal and state guidance given the school closure.

Q. How will my child's IEP be implemented during the school closure?

A. Consistent with state and federal advisories and timelines for implementation, Dracut Public Schools has implemented remote learning. As stated before, FAPE is not expected to look the same as it would when regular school is in session. That said, the district is committed to work with families/guardians to work in good faith

under the current circumstances to provide special education services during the school closure. More individualized questions regarding your child's IEP should be directed to your IEP Team Chairperson.

Q. My child is a child with an IEP, and attends an out of district placement. What are the implications of this school closure on my child attending the out of district placement?

A. The current school closure should not have any impact on your child's continued placement in the out-of-district placement. You should have been contacted directly from your child's school with remote learning plans. The Dracut Public Schools Out of District Coordinator is available to assist with any questions relative to remote learning plans or IEP related questions.

Q. My child is a child with an IEP and receives "services only" (i.e. speech/physical therapy/occupational therapy). Will my child receive these services during the closure?

A. At this time, services will be provided remotely through various mediums. Please know these services will not replicate the same level as during the time when school is in regular session. Your child's remote learning plan will outline the methodology for service delivery at this time. If you have questions regarding service delivery contact the service provider or Team Chairperson assigned to your child.

Q. My child's IEP proposes an ESY program, will ESY services be provided remotely due to the school closure?

A. At this time, the District is planning for remote ESY services. Students with ESY services in their signed and accepted IEP's will be provided with remote ESY services as indicated in the IEP. At this time the previously communicated ESY dates will remain the same (July 6-July 20 and August 3 -August 10). As additional information becomes available from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education as well as Governor Baker, ESY plans will be finalized and communicated to families/guardians.

Q. Will my child's special education staff be available if I have a question during this closure?

A. Yes, the special education staff that your child normally works with will be available to assist with specific questions during school closure. You can expect ongoing "check ins" from staff, via email or google classroom. Special education teachers and related service providers will be virtually collaborating with general education teachers to ensure that accommodations and modifications are being implemented to the extent possible. Please feel free to reach out to your child's teachers and service providers as needed. Collaborative communication is encouraged in order to achieve the best outcome for your child's learning experience during this crisis.

Q. My child was due for a triennial evaluation during the school closure time, what impact will the school closure have on the triennial evaluation?

A. Students for which consent was signed and returned prior to the school closure, evaluations will resume once school closure ends. Students for which consent was signed and evaluations were initiated prior to the school closure, the following options will be considered:

- review the existing data for a determination of eligibility and;
 - Team Chairpeople will request to extend the TEAM eligibility meeting until school is in session, and
 - Team Chairpeople will contact to schedule a virtual TEAM eligibility meeting based on the existing data.
- evaluation will continue when school is in session, in which case the TEAM Chairperson will contact and explain the situation to parents/guardians.

Students for whom a triennial evaluation was due during the school closure and consent is not yet accepted, the TEAM Chairperson will be contacting families/guardians to discuss the options, including an agreed upon extension of the time period to complete the evaluation, a potential waiver of the evaluation, and/or completion of the evaluation once in-person instruction resumes. .

Q. My child was referred for an initial evaluation to determine eligibility for services through the Special Education Department, what impact will the school closure have on the initial evaluation?

A. All initial evaluations, where consent was received prior to the school closure and assessments were not completed, will continue upon return to school, due to Governor Baker's order to not conduct in-person educational services. Initial evaluation requests that were received after the school closure will be processed upon return to school, as staff are working remotely.

Q. My child was referred for an initial evaluation through Early Intervention and will turn three years old during the school closure period, what impact will school closure have on the evaluation and eligibility process for my child?

A. Referrals received during the period of school closure will be reviewed by the Director of Student Services. Once referrals are reviewed, a plan will be proposed to families/guardians of students that are turning three during the closure period. Families/guardians will be contacted by the District to discuss the proposal. All services at this time for students with active and accepted IEPs are being delivered remotely. At this time the District is not able to conduct initial evaluations due to the school closure and the order by Governor Baker to not conduct all in-person educational services.

Q. My child is a child with an IEP and will be transitioning to a new building in the Fall of 2020, what are the plans at this time for transition for students and families?

A. At this time, the Administration is working to plan transition activities in a virtual format. At this time, due to the continued school closure, traditional school visits, open houses and tours are not permissible. District Team Chairpeople are reviewing the IEPs for all transitioning students to be certain that the IEP reflects services to be delivered for the fall. If an IEP requires an amendment or changes of any kind, families/guardians will be contacted to discuss those changes and if necessary a virtual meeting will be scheduled.

Thank you for your support and patience during this unprecedented time. We realize that you are all dealing with many different responsibilities and that these have been challenging. All of our decisions have been based on the premise that this is an unprecedented time of crisis, and that our priorities must be: a) physical safety and wellness; b) mental health; and c) academic enrichment and support and, as we move towards remote learning as a district, meeting individual needs.. We are grateful for the dedicated Dracut Public Schools staff. I appreciate your patience as we figure it out the remote learning world together. The most remarkable aspect of my experience thus far in Dracut Public Schools has been the collaboration and teamwork of our staff and families on behalf of our students. I know we will continue in that spirit to not only support our students during this difficult time, but also one another. Be safe, be well and please reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

Best regards,

Kimberly Lawrence

Kimberly Lawrence, M.Ed., CAGS
Director of Student Services

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