

The Public Schools of Dover and Sherborn

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*Commitment to Community
Equity and Excellence
Respect and Dignity
Climate of Care*

March 31, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians and Caregivers,

I am reaching back out to provide updates to our initial communication as a result of the closure being extended through May 3rd. This is an unprecedented situation and I am so thankful for your patience while we work together to find the best ways to support students and families. During the extended closure, we will continue to ask special education staff to connect with families and students in a similar fashion as they have been since the closure began.

There are updates and additional options we will begin offering in light of the new state and federal guidance and extended length of the closure. Many messages and documents were shared within the past week. Last weekend, the US Department of Education released this [guidance](#) to school districts. On Wednesday, Governor Baker and Commissioner Riley extended the school closure through May 3rd. And on Thursday, the MA Dept of Elementary and Secondary Education's Associate Commissioner for Special Education provided additional [guidance](#) for schools. Please understand that this is an evolving situation and additional updates may be forthcoming. I wanted to share the following Dover-Sherborn specific updates as a result of this new information:

Team Meetings and Deadlines

Although typical timelines and regulations are still on hold during the school closure, we would like to offer the option to hold virtual team meetings beginning on April 6th. This would be the case for any annual meetings planned for the closure and for any initial or re-evaluation meeting where all evaluations have been completed. We will be reaching out to families in the coming week in order to begin scheduling these meetings beginning on April 6th. If families do not wish to take the option of holding their meetings virtually, we can wait until we are back in session to hold meetings in person. As a reminder, if your student's IEP or 504 Plan expires during the closure period, the last accepted IEP or 504 Plan will be in place until we reconvene the IEP team.

Special Education Supports

All special education staff members will broaden the depth of services as well as the platforms that are used to connect with students and families. During this national emergency, we may not be able to provide services in the same manner they are typically provided. In addition to the continued emails, pre-recorded videos, phone calls and shared resources, we would like to offer virtual connections with students and families. This could happen through "google hangouts" or "zoom conferences". Here are a few additional details about services and supports:

The Public Schools of Dover and Sherborn do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex/gender, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or homelessness.

- *Amount of Support* - We are still not expected to provide all of the services that are outlined in active IEP's, but we should try to expand our check-ins to support the goal areas that we had been focusing on. I make it clear to families that we will not match service delivery, but I think people should envision up to 40-50% of the support that the student was receiving prior to the closure.
- *How to Support* - Support staff can use a multitude of modes to connect with students and families. These options include video chat, pre-recorded videos, phone calls, emails, resource sharing or platform updates. As I mentioned in a previous communication, the expectation would be at least one direct connection per week with students.
- *Confidentiality* - Something to keep in mind regarding any support or service provided in virtual platforms is that confidentiality cannot be ensured at all times. Please review this confidentiality disclaimer at the end of this document in order to learn more about the limitations and policies on this topic.

Office Hours

In many cases this has already been in place, but beginning on April 6th, all special education teachers and related service providers will have identified weekly times or ways that they will be available to connect with families and students.

Consultation

The consultation between staff began on day one and continues to be a priority in supporting all students. Weekly Department Meetings are being held and regular communication is occurring between special education and general education staff to assess the need for modifications or accommodations to the curriculum being provided.

Thank you again for your continued collaboration and patience during this stressful and disruptive time. We would like to support you through this journey and understand that this closure creates concerns for many reasons. Our goal is to provide as many options for support that work for everyone and allow for our staff to continue their work with students and families. I will be in touch with any additional updates as they are available. Please contact me with any questions or concerns that I could address. Please stay healthy and safe.

Best,

Katherine McCarthy

Katherine McCarthy
Director of Student Services
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Confidentiality Disclaimer During School Closure

The Dover-Sherborn Public Schools is dedicated to providing engaging and effective remote learning opportunities for our students. As part of our remote learning opportunities, the district is offering these opportunities via a virtual platform. Prior to engaging in these virtual opportunities, the district seeks to clarify expectations around appropriate use of virtual technologies for educational opportunities:

1. 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 a crime to record another person through any medium without his or her knowledge.
2. 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.
3. Parents/guardians and other household members who normally are not privy to day-to-day classroom and group service discussions agree to respect and keep confidential any personal or private information (e.g. disability status) inadvertently discovered about other students due to proximity to virtual education.

As a reminder, the district's [Acceptable Use Policy](#) applies to virtual learning, including school-issued devices and networks.

For questions regarding school policies and procedures, the District directs parties to [the district website](#). For all additional questions, concerns, or inquiries, parties may contact your building or district administrator.