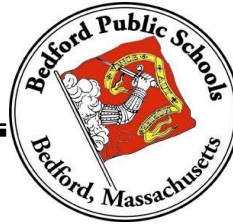


BEDFORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you and your families well. As you are aware by now, the school closure has been extended through May 4th and we are beginning to shift our focus from providing enrichment activities to providing remote instruction. During this shift, our focus remains on the safety and wellbeing of students, and families. As special educators we must focus on equity for our most vulnerable students. In keeping our focus on our most vulnerable students, maintaining connections between school staff and students is paramount throughout the next month. Our main goal will be to establish systematic special education resources, supports and services to promote continuity of learning.

These are unprecedented times in education as a whole. We are all learning how to best ensure that, in light of these circumstances, our special education students are receiving a free appropriate public education (FAPE) while protecting the health and safety of students, educators and service providers. It is important for you to know that in these circumstances, service will be provided differently than they are when school is in operation. However, we have been working tirelessly over the last weeks and have developed ways in which we believe we will be able to support your students through supports and resources and/or instruction and services.

- Special Education services will continue as part of the Bedford Public Schools remote learning initiative. Special Education services will be primarily focused on reinforcing skills already taught this school year and applying and deepening these skills. Services will target goals and objectives on your child's IEP. Data will be collected to ensure students are maintaining skills and progressing where appropriate, and changes will be made if regression is noted.
- Remote learning is vastly different than in-person instruction. The staff will work to ensure access to curriculum and instruction, individualize supports, and provide appropriate instruction/services/resources through a variety of methods.
- Communication is essential. You are encouraged to reach out to both your child's General Education and Special Education teachers with questions and/or support. The parent role is invaluable to the success of remote learning.
- Additional services may be considered based on your child's rate of progress through data collection. Your child's liaison will monitor progress and make recommendations during or after the remote learning instruction.

The determination of how FAPE is to be provided may need to be different in this time of unprecedented national emergency. Your child's liaison will be reviewing each IEP and making a determination on how best to provide your student with services. Your child's liaison will be reaching out to you next week to provide you with sufficient notice as to how services will be provided while students are out of school. It's important to understand that this temporary change in service does not change your son or daughter's IEP or impact "stay put" rights.

Some of your child's services may be provided directly through Google Meet. We ask that you assist us in making sure the student is available, and the student engages in appropriate online communication. Bedford Public Schools does not permit audio/video recording of any online classes, therapy session or meetings. If you feel you need such a recording to access and understand the content, please contact me directly.

Whether a student is entitled to receive compensatory services because of the school's closure is an individualized determination to be made by the IEP team. We will be doing everything possible now to provide required special education instruction and services. Once school resumes, we will review how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to individual students and convene IEP Team meetings as necessary in order to make an individualized determination as to what compensatory services may be necessary, and to ensure the student receives FAPE prospectively.

In some incidences, you child's annual IEP may have been due during this school closure. If that is the case, we will be reaching out to you to schedule meetings using Google Meet or telephone. Regarding evaluations (initial and re-eval), the school closure has had an impact on our ability to meet the 30-day timelines to conduct evaluation in addition to the 45 school working day timeline to develop an IEP. We will be reaching out to those families impacted to collaborate on an agreeable extension of timelines.

I know this is a lot of information. Your child's liaison will be reaching out to you over the next week and will be able to help answer questions that might arise for you. As always, if you have questions or concerns that I can assist you with, please do not hesitate to email me.

Sincerely,

Marianne Vines

Marianne Vines, M.Ed