

Elementary Special Education & Section 504 Parent Conference Call
May 6, 2020 6:00 - 7:00 pm

Summary of Parent Questions & District Responses:

1. Will the District utilize the CARES funding to assist students when they return to in-school learning with any extra help / assessments that need to be put in place to help students who fell behind as a result of the school closure?

Answer: Yes, depending on how much funding SPS is allocated the money will help with any recovery efforts that are needed to assist students with academic recovery and social-emotional needs. The plan will be to assess students upon return to school to determine their level of functioning PPT meetings will likely be held to review goals and objectives and services to make any necessary revisions.

2. A Section 504 meeting was supposed to be held just before the school closure to determine if my son qualifies for a 504 accommodation plan. Will the school team be able to hold the meeting now?

Answer: If the school team has enough information, data and documentation to determine eligibility, a meeting can be held.

3. Will student's current individual learning plans be revised as a result of needs that present during the distant learning phase? Do parents have to initiate the revisions?

Answer: The Continuity of Learning Plans may be adjusted during the distance learning period. Parents should reach out directly to their child's case manager or the Supervisor of Special Education for their grade level (Gina Olearczyk, grades PreK-5 golearczyk@suffield.org or Dr. Sharon Goulet, grades 6-12 sgoulet@suffield.org) to discuss any questions or concerns in regards to their child's Learning Plan.

4. My student attends SMS. I have been told that there currently isn't a Reading Interventionist at SMS. Are there plans to bring one on?

Answer: Yes, there are plans to bring a Reading Interventionist next school year to SMS. In the meanwhile, Academic Support staff and ELA teachers can assist as needed. Let the SMS administration know if your child has a specific need or assistance.

5. For students with IEPs will transition meetings be held for students moving on to a new school next year? Will parents and the teachers familiar with these students be involved in the meetings?

Answer: Members of your child's team are planning for his or her transition and will be contacting you to discuss these plans. In some cases a virtual meeting to discuss the transition with the team will be held. It is expected that these conversations involve meaningful input from the student's current school team and staff members from the receiving school.

6. Will there be a delay in testing/evaluations next year when school resumes?

Answer: To the extent that is possible, testing/evaluations that were recommended as part of an initial evaluation or a reevaluation will be completed as soon as possible when school resumes.

7. Will ESY (Extended School Year) be happening this summer? Will there be summer programming for students who are not receiving special ed services?

Answer: Yes, for students with IEPs who meet the requirement for ESY services, these services will be provided. The District is waiting for guidance from the State Dept of Education to determine which format ESY will take - whether it will be in-schools, virtual (distant learning) or some combination of both formats.

The Assistant Superintendent and Curriculum Coaches are currently working on a potential "Summer School Continuation of Learning Program" to be offered to all students virtually. More information on this program will be forthcoming.

8. Specials classes have been a hardship for my children to follow and keep up with. The class expectation is difficult for students with special needs and this has added to our frustration level. How should we handle this? Can these classes be modified?

Answer: We have heard this from many parents. We are aware that Specials classes like Art, P.E., etc are more challenging to follow for some students. Please do the best you can to get through the lessons. The Specials teachers are doing their best to provide interactive, easy-to-follow lessons. But if it is too much for your child, do not worry if they are unable to follow along or keep up. You can choose to do an alternative activity with them.

9. Is the District considering offering a "mental health" day which would provide a break during the week for the students, parents and staff from the rigors of the distant learning model?

Answer: Yes, we are exploring this as an option we may pursue. We recognize that right now this is an extremely challenging time for all families. We understand the challenges families are facing right now with the burden of home-schooling their children. The District is trying to meet the needs of all students and accommodate their different learning styles and levels. Students and parents should do the best they can do in this moment. The social-emotional wellbeing of students and parents is the priority right now.

10. My son is on a 504 Plan. He is struggling right now with the volume of work he is getting. Is there a way to break the workload down so it is manageable for him?

Answer: If your child is struggling in any way with workload/volume, you should reach out to your child's 504 coordinator directly (school counselor for grades 6-12 or building administrator or school psychologist for grades K-5)) to alert them to the situation and ask for support to help your child. We encourage parents to reach out to staff to work collaboratively in determining whatever assistance students may need.

11. The weekly time changes and new live classes have created a disruption to the schedule my child was used to just last week. My child needs consistency and a routine. Each week that Distant Learning models change to include such things as live classes, these changes are difficult for my child to adjust. Can a plan include consistent times/class offerings so we can get in to a routine?

Answer: We are aware that these formats are difficult for some students. We also acknowledge that for some these changes are too rigorous while for other students, the changes are not robust enough. We are trying to find a balance to meet the needs of all students. We will talk to school teams to see if they can keep class times and formats consistent. We cannot emphasize enough that families should do the best that they can do given the circumstances. We understand that some schedules may be too demanding for some.