



SUFFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Special Services Department

Diana L. Kelley
Director

Gina Olearczyk
Supervisor, PreK-5

Dr. Sharon Goulet
Supervisor, 6-12

Lorin Kelleher
Special Services/Grant Specialist

June 5, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope you and your family are doing well. It seems like so long ago that we have seen your children in our classrooms and we miss them! This school closure has certainly put demands on us all, you, our teachers, support staff and our kids, but we persevered. Thank you for your patience, your feedback and continued collaboration. Teachers remain busy providing services and implementing IEPs to the greatest extent possible, conducting necessary PPT meetings and doing their best to ensure your child has a positive end to the school year. They are also finalizing recommendations for Extended School Year (ESY) services should your child be eligible for those services and planning for the transition to the next school year. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with additional information.

Extended School Year

In regards to Extended School Year (ESY) services, the guidance we have received from the Bureau of Special Education has confirmed that the criteria for determining eligibility for Extended School Year services has not changed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The data that was collected prior to the school closure on March 13, 2020 will be used to make that determination. ESY eligibility and services are determined by the child's PPT. Your child's case manager has been or will be in contact with you to discuss the ESY process and options for team decisions.

For those students eligible for ESY services, the health and safety of our students, families and staff is the primary factor in determining how those services will be delivered. To that end, after careful review of current rules and guidelines related to health and safety in schools, at this time due to the COVID-19 health emergency, the district will be providing ESY services through a distance learning format. We will, however, continue to explore opportunities to safely provide limited and voluntary in-person instruction for certain types of services at some point during the summer, subject to health and safety conditions and requirements. Such opportunities for those designated services will only be possible, however, after the district can ensure significant health and safety measures are implemented as required by the State Dept of Education and in consultation with the local health department. A few examples of such measures include, but are not limited to:

- Mask wearing by all students and staff unless exempted;
- Face shields and surgical masks worn by staff if physical distancing cannot occur (assisting with toileting, ambulation, etc.);
- Temperature monitoring upon arrival;
- Social distancing of at least six feet or more of physical space between all individuals;
- Significantly reduced class sizes;
- Restrictions with sharing of educational materials;

- The arrangement of desks to face the same direction at least six feet apart;
- Consistent staff members in each classroom;
- No visitors while school is in session unless required per the IEP

Please be reminded any opportunities for voluntary in-person instruction may change based on updated guidance from the State Department of Education, information from the local health department or a decision from the Superintendent to suspend any in-person services for health and safety reasons.

Transition Planning

Your child's successful transition back to the school environment is important to us, our special education teams have been thoughtfully planning for those transitions and in many cases, holding parent meetings to discuss this transition to answer your questions or address any concerns you may have. While we do not know at this time what next year will bring, our staff is committed to providing as smooth a transition as possible to meet the academic and social/emotional needs of our students. Once we are able, our teams will be gathering information to determine your child's current level of functioning, conducting evaluations and holding PPT meetings to adjust IEPs as necessary. Your input will be critical in assisting to plan this important transition.

We are so grateful for your continued partnership during this difficult time. Our teachers want nothing more than to see your children back in our classrooms, filling our hallways and socializing with their friends. I wish you all good health and will continue to share information as I receive it. Don't hesitate to reach out to me or any member of our Special Services team with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Diana Kelley
Director of Special Services