



Ipswich Public Schools

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DR. BEVERLY HEGEDUS
DIRECTOR OF PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES

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Dear Parents of Special Education Students,

I am writing to add to our shared knowledge base regarding the most recent guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). As you know, last week, Dr. Blake notified all Ipswich families of the launch of Remote Learning, moving forward from learning support to remote services.

In planning this shift for Ipswich, our District reached out with a survey sent to all families for input regarding delivery of services. Over 600 families responded to the survey. We learned parents are seeking structure, schedules, and ways of engaging their children. They are also hoping not to be overwhelmed since the closing has already brought a great deal of disruption to all of our lives.

Our Pupil Personnel Services staff members have been working collaboratively, both with one another and with general education staff, at the District level, and in their buildings. There have been several principles which have guided our planning:

- Since in-person services remain prohibited for safety reasons, our school teams have created **Remote Learning services for all students**, and the special education services for most of our students in the inclusion setting are embedded within this framework. For our students with more intense needs, including attentional and behavioral challenges, we realize that that Remote Learning will present significant challenges. Teams have been working on creative solutions to engage our neediest students, and will continue to do so, working collaboratively with families.
- The remote learning activities being offered to our students encompass a **wide variety of teaching** formats. Services include both high and low tech methodology. Some services such as reading and speech and language may be offered in a small group format. In all activities, participation is strictly limited to students, and recording is prohibited. This has been detailed in the confidentiality expectations that are posted online in the District's Remote Learning Plan, and that have also been sent to parents by building principals.
- For students in out-of-district (OOD) public and private special education placements, the respective programs have been reaching out directly to families with contact connections and **schedules** for remote delivery of special education and related services.
- You have already, or in some cases, will receive later this week, **special education Remote Learning Plans** that provide meaningful and productive learning for approximately half the length of a regular school day. This includes a combination of both **educator-directed** learning **and student self-directed** learning. For students in inclusion settings, this has involved coordination with general education, and special education services have been embedded within the over-arching schedule in order to avoid confusion or unnecessary complexity. In the case of those students with more intense needs, the schedule reflects the coordination of multiple service providers. As providers work with your children, the Remote Learning Plans will continue to be adjusted to maximize student engagement.

- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) is encouraging, but not requiring, **virtual meetings** for regularly scheduled Annual Review meetings. There is no requirement that a family participate in a virtual meeting. The Program Managers will be in contact with you regarding scheduling, but you have the choice of refusing.
- Special educators and related service providers have jointly planned their communication with you. Some have “Office Hours” or **contact schedules** in which they will either initiate contact with your child to check in, or you can contact them. Not every provider will be communicating with you every day, but you should have regular communication from team members. The frequency and type of communication **will vary** depending on your child’s individual needs, and the mode of communication utilized. Since many staff members have families of their own at home, they may not always respond immediately, but we have encouraged them to **maintain regular connections** with their students. This ongoing communication will help “fine tune” individualized instruction in remote learning opportunities.

Thank you for collaborating with us during this challenging time. Please feel free to reach out to the Program Managers or me with any questions you have. Please check the PPS homepage regularly. I continue to attend regularly scheduled meetings with the Department of Education, and will plan to keep you updated regarding their updates.

Sincerely,

Beverly Hegedus

Beverly H. Hegedus, Ed.D.
PPS Director