

CONCORD PUBLIC SCHOOLS CONCORD-CARLISLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Coronavirus Special Education FAQs

April 18, 2020

Are remote annual IEPs taking place? What timeframe can families anticipate in receiving draft or IEPs for signature?

Yes, remote annual meetings are taking place. The draft is being downloaded as a PDF and emailed to parents within the 10-day timeframe. Since we are not in school, if a parent decides to have an IEP mailed the timeframe will be longer, as nobody is in the school buildings to process paperwork.

What type of IEP implementation can families expect?

The DESE guidance is that the six-hour school day be cut in half to three hours and that each student will receive support based on their individual goals. The special education staff is working collaboratively given the individual goals and designing implementation to support and maintain a student's progress.

What help should families expect with direct services? If pull-out academic or related service supports are on the IEP, what will replace this level of support for students?

See the answer above. If there are pull-out services on the C grid, the staff is providing supplemental material to students and having check-in hours to review or answer any questions regarding the material.

For example, the district is providing Lexia to all students during the COVID-19 pandemic -- If a student receives reading support in his or her IEP, the prescription that a teacher would give to that student might be for 20 minutes per day of Lexia, with additional support in their office hours as needed.

As another example, if a student has speech services for a social pragmatic goal, the SLP might start the week with the "rules of a conversation" activity and follow up if there are any questions. The parents are expected to support the students in these activities as well.

Can you explain why the decision was made not to introduce new material at the elementary level and why zoom-based services for kids on IEPs or for classroom meetings will not be held. They seem to be taking place in other districts.

There is new content being delivered in science and social studies. After a great deal of discussion with families and teachers, it was decided that the challenges for the youngest children learning new material virtually were significant. Instead, we are moving to online adaptive software in math and reading that will adjust to the student's readiness for more advanced material. This way, the child is working at an independent level and not a frustration level. Many parents of young children also shared their stress of working and supporting learning from home.

We feel strongly that teachers have the choice of tools they use with students. In this environment, offering live sessions where new instruction occurs presents great challenges, given the conditions in the homes of both teachers and students. If teachers elect to offer "office hours", the discussions focus on support and clarification rather than trying to move forward content or skills.

What type of accommodations can families expect for academic assignments?

Academic assignments are accommodated as the IEP calls for. Depending on the individual student's needs, each assignment is chunked out into smaller pieces or timeframes in order to allow students to access the material.

Are individual modifications being made to ensure all students can access the curriculum?

Yes, students are working with teachers for individual accommodations as needed. If a student is in full inclusion and receives the initial instruction from the general education teacher, the teacher is modifying the curriculum as he/she would normally do. If a student requires differentiated instruction, the special educator makes accommodations for that specific student to access the curriculum. Most students in full or partial inclusion have three levels of accessing the curriculum: independent, instructional and frustration levels. The special education teacher modifies curriculum to ensure that a student is working at either an instructional or independent level.

As a follow-up, as new websites are introduced for online learning in the elementary schools, what supports are planned to help students and parents transition to this new approach?

If a parent or guardian feels he/she doesn't have enough information to assist a student on a website, he/she should reach out to the student's teacher. Most websites are self-explanatory; however, learning sites with individual login/passwords are set up through the school licenses, and a staff member will walk a parent/guardian through the process.

Do all the websites have the ability for work to be modified for students who need it?

The school district is working on platforms where everything will be in one place, with a

form of artificial intelligence within those platforms or learning sites. For example, in Lexia, if a student answers a series of questions correctly then he/she will move up a level; if he/she is struggling with a few questions the level might decrease. This is invisible to the student and will help the student maintain the independent and/or instructional level. Some of our current licensed programs that are being used by students do have this capability. If there is a resource that is too difficult for a student, reach out to the teacher(s) and they will assist.

This question/comment relates to the message sent out on Sunday. The following was stated in the Special Education paragraph: "Special education services as typically provided are not possible in this environment." To what extent are you not able to provide services, and can you comment on why we are seeing inconsistencies among different subjects at CCHS?

As has been stated on the DESE calls, special education services as they are currently on the IEP cannot be supported. An example is that if a student has 1x30 for Speech on his/her service delivery grid C, the SLP cannot support that in this environment. The SLP can, and will, address the essence of the goal in an activity or concept-based way on Zoom and support the student with any questions they might have.

As we discussed earlier, each student's goals are considered individually. All staff choose the platform and approach for their instruction during school closure. Much as we look at students individually, staff also present in a multitude of ways so that they reach all students. If there are concerns, please reach out to the student's case manager.

What emotional supports (beyond emails) are in place or planned for students who are extremely anxious about their academic struggles? An email isn't enough.

The staff has met and continues to meet with students who are anxious about their academic struggles, most notably at the secondary levels. Students have reached out, and parents are aware that students are being held harmless at this time of school closure. We have entered a credit/no-entry time for grades, and that information has been made available to both families and students directly.

When do you anticipate starting transition meetings? EI to Pre-K; Pre-K to K; Elementary to MS; MS to HS; HS to Launch; Launch to adult services. If school is unable to reopen this school year, how will school staff support kids making a transition to a new school building?

These conversations have begun and we have started to identify all students who are transitioning. The sending and receiving staff are collaborating on two things: The receiving school may have a whole group presentation on what is available at the school, what the expectations are, and who to reach if there are questions. Then the plan is to meet with individual parents/students for approximately twenty minutes to answer specific questions. The decision has not been finalized, but the plan is to begin the

meetings the first week of May, or sooner.

EI to Pre-K - are scheduled and ongoing online.

Pre to K - are in process of being scheduled, there are dates planned in May and if we are not back to school they will be online.

Grades 5 to 6 - meeting to plan presentation week of 4/27 and hope to begin meetings the week of May 4. If we return to school the dates will be pushed out.

Grades 8 to 9 - meeting to plan presentation week of 4/27 and hope to begin meetings the week of May 4. If we return to school the dates will be pushed out.

Please comment on what OOD families should be expecting from the District. (Will the OOD coordinator be reaching out to OOD families to check in and gather kudos and concerns?)

The district continues to fund the OOD placements during this time and the coordinator is working with the schools daily for our students. The OOD families are getting support from the individual schools that their students attend. The OOD coordinator is working with individual families as they reach out and holding ZOOM meetings as the parents and/or schools request.

Are plans being made for extended year services? What might they look like? When can families expect more information?

Right now, we are continuing to help families and students adjust to the new learning environment, this being the second week of phase 2, but we have discussed extended year services. This is a front-burner issue for all of us, and as soon as we know more about the timeline for re-entry and what that will look like, extended year services will be clearer.

How will the progress or regression of special education students be assessed on their return to school? Is the district planning for extra support in the fall to get students back on track?

The staff has data on the current performance of each student's goals through March 13, 2020. When students return to school, staff will work with the students and determine current performance as they re-acclimate to the school environment. The goal during this school closure is to maintain, review, reinforce and generalize student's skills. Depending on the level of regression, plans will be put in place to support students.

It may be difficult for some kids (kids with anxiety, for example) to return to school after this extended period at home. How will school staff collaborate with families to create supportive re-entry plans?

These discussions have started to take place.

Our community and our world are experiencing a collective trauma. Some students and families will experience it more directly than others and some students will show more signs of it than others. Do you have a plan for training all staff members in trauma-informed practices? It is understandable if you don't yet. Everything is moving so fast.

These discussions have started to take place. We have no answers on this yet, but these are things that we are focused on as well.

How are existing sub-separate programs such as Launch, Branch or Intensive Learning Program operating?

The sub-separate programs are operating similarly to the other classrooms. Depending on the student's needs the support may look different. Daily activities go out to the students, and the staff have check-in hours. In some instances, if a student requires support in the classroom via a tutor or an aide, that person has been reaching out and working with the student on an individual basis.

Are any new programs under development for next year?

Next year we are strengthening the programs we currently have, but we also have plans on the horizon to look at new programs.