



WESTPORT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Westport Families:

I hope this email finds your families well. I am so proud of the work our students are doing during this time and hear lots of positive stories during my twice-weekly meetings with the special education administrators in the district. I know this distance learning format is not easy for parents who never aspired to a career in education! Please continue to reach out to service providers in your child's building if questions arise. Working together, we will keep children engaged in learning.

As you know, Governor Lamont has extended the school closure until at least May 20. Our special education teachers and related service providers are continuing to follow the Pupil Personnel Services Distance Learning Plan. They are focusing instruction on prioritized goals and objectives as well as supporting the completion of classroom assignments. While formal assessments cannot be used due to the distance learning format, our special education teachers and related service providers are taking data on student performance in order to inform continued learning opportunities.

Given the extended closure, we are going to begin conducting Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings as follows:

1. Students transitioning to kindergarten, grade 6 or grade 9
2. Exit PPTs for students graduating high school
3. Triennial review PPTs or Initial Evaluation PPTs for evaluations that have been completed

We will begin scheduling PPTs for the week of April 27 and are looking for your assistance while we plan these meetings. Our priority continues to be providing continuous learning opportunities for our students. The more teachers are participating in PPT meetings, the greater impact there will be on their ability to communicate with their students. Many students transitioning to a different building will have already had their annual review PPT. We are hopeful that in many of these cases, we can have a short meeting with parents to explain any changes in service time and then change the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) through an amendment without conducting a PPT. Of course, parents would need to be in agreement with this process.

For those students who are transitioning to a different building next year and whose annual review PPTs fall on dates after March 11, I am recommending school teams conduct those annual reviews in order to be able to update students' current levels of performance and develop new goals and objectives. These recommendations would be based on the information school teams had regarding student performance as of March 11, 2020. The IEPs that are developed will contain service recommendations for when we are back in

school, not services that will occur during the school closure. The receiving school teams need to have this updated information. For any of these annual reviews, school teams will be sending draft documents home for your review prior to the meeting. We are hopeful that these meetings can be as focused as possible so teachers can get back to work with their students.

We are moving forward with plans to have Extended School Year (ESY) services this summer. Any changes to the structure of ESY services will be communicated as conditions warrant throughout the spring.

School teams will be making recommendations regarding eligibility for ESY services based on student performance as of March 11, 2020 as they are not able to directly assess students at this time. In many cases, after consultation with parents and with their agreement, the ESY services can be added to an IEP through an amendment to the document.

Please be reassured that if your child has an annual review that was due to occur after March 11, their IEP will continue to be in effect even after the end date of the IEP document. Once schools reopen and students are engaged in learning in their schools, service providers will plan to conduct their annual review as soon as is practicable. This is also true for students who had an initial evaluation or reevaluation that was not completed prior to schools closing. Those evaluations will be completed when school reopens and PPTs will be scheduled to review recommendations.

As I have shared previously, information coming from the federal and state governments frequently changes. If I receive any information that is in conflict with what I have described in this letter, I will be sure to communicate those changes with you.

I am so impressed with how families and school teams are working together during this unprecedented time. I appreciate this collaboration and look forward to the time that our students can return to school!

Please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions.

Stay well!

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