



Dear Families of Students Served by Special Education,

We hope this letter finds you safe and healthy as we work together to navigate the challenges of living with the coronavirus. As we prepare for the coming school year we want you to know that staff are eager to connect with students and families to provide as much support as we can. As you likely have read in our district communications, all of Portland Public Schools will begin the school year offering a Comprehensive Distance Learning Program. This means that special education services will also be provided online within the Comprehensive Distance Learning Program.

The safety of our students and staff is our highest priority. Because of this, based on Multnomah County's current school health and safety metrics, the Portland Public Schools Leadership Team has determined that it's not safe for our students to attend schools for limited in-person instruction at this time (Special Education, Career-Technical Education, English Language Learners). The District will make a determination regarding when in-person instruction can resume, when Multnomah County metrics show that it is safe to do so.

We have spent the summer building our Comprehensive Distance Learning Program. You will recognize some things that are carried over from last spring, and some things that are new and improved. Here are the key points:

- IEP Teams will continue their commitment to partner with families to support implementing special education services within the online education program.
- Case managers will be reaching out to every family at the beginning of the year to learn about needs and concerns and to discuss how their child's IEP will be implemented. This will happen during the District wide Soft Start.
- Staff will continue to focus on meeting individual student needs using a variety of strategies like the ones listed below:
 - Case managers will be partnering with general education teachers to thoughtfully plan for accessibility needs within the online education program.
 - Case managers will establish a weekly schedule that ensures students receive specially designed instruction.
- SDI should be teacher-facilitated instruction and can be synchronous or asynchronous instruction;
- There are multiple ways to provide synchronous learning, including but not limited to:
 - Online video or audio conferencing, (i.e., teacher/staff provide large group or small group instruction)
 - Phone calls while using shared points of reference (i.e., the student and teacher are each working with the same learning materials as they engage in discussion around them via the phone), or
 - Collaborating on assignments in a cloud-based office suite while also engaged in a simultaneous two-way conversation.
 - IEP Teams will continue to offer a broader continuum of services, meaning that special education service schedules will

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mirror the continuum typically offered in schools. Examples could include:

- Special education instruction will be co-planned with the case manager and provided mostly in the classroom by the teacher in the virtual environment
- Special education instruction co-taught by the classroom teacher and special education teacher in the virtual classroom
- Special education instruction support provided in the virtual classroom while instruction is led by the classroom teacher
- Special education instruction provided in a focused classroom setting
- Special education instruction provided in a virtual small group setting
- Your child's Specially Designed Instruction will be teacher directed, and a combination of synchronous (live online or by phone), and asynchronous (on your own time). Your SPED case manager will reach out to you to find the combination of teacher directed SDI services that will work best for your student and family

We know that Distance Learning is exceptionally challenging for students experiencing more complex disabilities. Our staff is deeply committed to providing as much support to students and families as possible within our safety parameters. In addition, one of the top priorities we are exploring is how to increase on-site in-person instruction for specialized programs in the Hybrid model. When our school district is allowed to offer on-site in-person instruction (referred to as a Hybrid model) more information will be provided about how special education services will be integrated into the Hybrid model.

We hope this overview provides some clarity about what the online educational program might look like for students experiencing disability. We assure you that during this challenging time your child's IEP Team stands ready to partner with you and work diligently to support your child in the online learning environment! Teaching staff will be reaching out to you during the Soft Start that begins on September 2nd. We are committed to every child's success and we are here to help!

Portland Public Schools
Special Education Department

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