



GROTON-DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

344 Main Street Groton, Massachusetts 01450

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Jill Greene

Director of Pupil Personnel Services

March 16, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians/Caregivers,

The long-term school closure has generated many questions and concerns regarding special education and related services. We are not alone in this, as districts across the state are grappling with many of the same questions and concerns.

We have been participating in webinars and phone conferences, gathering as much information as possible regarding our educational obligations to students. We are also collaborating with colleagues across districts.

Here are some highlighted points that I hope will answer some of your immediate questions and concerns:

- We will not be providing direct special education, related services or 504 accommodations during our closure given that school is not in session. However, the district will be providing educational activities and resources, via the District website, for students and families to support learning experiences during the closure. That said, we will be reviewing all individual student circumstances in order to make informed student specific decisions.
- We will not be providing home/hospital tutoring during the school closure.

The following is the federal language regarding our obligations:

“If an LEA closes its schools to slow or stop the spread of COVID-19, and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, then an LEA would not be required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time. Once school resumes, the LEA must make every effort to provide special education and related services to the child in accordance with the child’s individualized education program (IEP) or, for students entitled to FAPE under Section 504, consistent with a plan developed to meet the requirements of Section 504. The Department understands there may be exceptional circumstances that could affect how a particular service is provided. In addition, an IEP Team and, as appropriate to an individual student with a disability, the personnel responsible for ensuring FAPE to a student for the purposes of Section 504, would be required to make an individualized determination as to whether compensatory services are needed under applicable standards and requirements. If an LEA continues to provide educational opportunities to the general student population during a school closure, the school must ensure that students with disabilities also have equal access to the same opportunities, including the provision of FAPE. (34 CFR §§ 104.4, 104.33 (Section 504) and 28 CFR § 35.130 (Title II of the ADA)). SEAs, LEAs, and schools must ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, each student with a disability can be provided the special education and related services

identified in the student's IEP developed under IDEA, or a plan developed under Section 504. (34 CFR §§ 300.101 and 300.201 (IDEA), and 34 CFR § 104.33 (Section 504)).”

The complete Q and A is found here:

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>

We are awaiting guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education on guidelines for decision making regarding service delivery when schools reopen and supporting students when they return to school. Additionally, we will work with families to understand the impact of closure as we support students transitioning back to school.

As far as timelines, we, as general practice, will be freezing special education evaluation, referral annual review and plan distribution during the school closure. This means that as soon as school opens again, the timelines will commence. Please consider this school closure in the same way we would snow days or vacations. The dates that we are not in session are not included in the count for timeline obligations. The District will not be convening Team meetings while school is closed. We will be working to reschedule meetings that have been previously scheduled for the days we are not in session. That said, we will be reviewing all individual student circumstances and will be making student specific decisions regarding the need to formally connect during this school closure.

At this time, our priority will be maintaining positive connections with students and families. As we gain more information, we will share with you. On behalf of the Special Education Leadership Team, please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions or concerns. While we may not have answers to all of your questions, as this is ever evolving, we will work to find the answers and disseminate the information to you as soon as possible.

Please take care.

Sincerely,

Jill Greene

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