



TOWNSHIP OF OCEAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Dear Parents and Guardians;

Welcome to the 2020-2021 school year! I hope this finds you and your family healthy and well. Although this school year will prove to be one in which we experience much uncertainty, I am hopeful that we can look forward to the unexpected positive opportunities to come. I have found that this has been a time that parents with special needs children have really shined because all of you have already been trained so well in patience, love, and tolerance by your amazing children.

I am writing to provide information on the 2020-21 reopening plan as it relates to the provision of special education and related services. I am sure you are anxious for details so you can make important decisions for your child and family. Several communications have been shared recently by Dr. Stefankiewicz related to the District's plans for the 2020-21 school year. The 2020-21 Re-entry Plan and other related documents may be accessed on our website at www.oceanschools.org

The Township of Ocean School District, along with the Board of Education (BOE) has selected remote learning as the model of instruction from September 3rd to September 11th and then the hybrid model of instruction will commence on Monday September 14th. All students, including those with disabilities, have the option of full remote learning for any family who would like to remain in that setting. Regardless of the learning path you select, your child will have access to their specific services that are outlined in their current IEP to the greatest extent possible.

While an IEP Meeting is not required based on the model of instruction that each family has selected, the district understands that amendments may need to be made in how the IEP accommodations and modifications are delivered. Teachers, related service providers, and Child Study Team Members will make any needed adjustments to your child's program in order to meet your child's needs to the greatest extent possible. Be assured that our staff will continue to monitor student progress to determine what, if any, adjustments are needed for your child. If this is the case, your child's case manager will contact you to discuss, with your input, what will be accessible, reasonable, and appropriate and if needed an IEP team meeting will be convened to address the concerns and possible lack of progress with the progress on IEP goals, objectives, or in the general education curriculum. In addition, please be advised that any required IEP meetings will be held via telephone or video conference call to the greatest extent that is practicable and feasible.

The first 3 - 4 weeks of school will be utilized to transition students and staff back to the physical environment, provide time for staff and students to learn and practice health and safety protocols, monitor enrollment to ensure our classrooms and buildings do not exceed maximum room

capacity for social distancing, assess students' present levels of functioning, ensure adequate staffing and monitor student and staff health data. During the initial weeks of school, your child's special education team will support your child's transition back to school. This transition period will be used to:

- Reestablish connections and assess student's social emotional well-being
- Implement schedules that provide access to rigorous instruction while maximizing cohorting and minimizing exposures
- Implement IEPs and establish in-person and remote instructional routines
- Assess students' health and safety skills to determine which skills are limiting access to school and life during the pandemic (wearing masks, washing hands, social distancing)
- Develop and implement teaching plans to address deficits in health and safety skills
- Acclimate to and build tolerance for wearing PPE or accepting PPE being worn by others
- Collect baseline data, consider regression and the need for revision of Individual Education Plans
- Assess students with unsafe behaviors and adjust behavior intervention plans to support behaviors that will lead to continued access to school and life.
- Provide students who may have difficulty adjusting with greater physical distance, increased opportunities for PPE breaks and more outside breaks
- Create social stories and visual supports to teach and support student understanding of routines and expectations and provide opportunities for practice

Remote learning will take place Mondays through Fridays, and will have an official start time with an established routine for each day. Please expect a full instructional day for the fall. Teachers will be in contact with you in the coming week or so to set clear expectations for the way in which your child will spend their learning time on a daily basis. This will continue whenever your child is engaging in remote instruction.

While we continue to monitor the community spread of COVID-19 as the school year resumes, we will suspend our community based work study experiences. After the first quarter of the 2020-2021 school year, we will reevaluate the risks associated with resuming community based instruction, and determine if it is safe to resume. Parents who have students involved in community based instruction will receive an update regarding the status of this instruction for the second quarter of the 2020-2021 school year.

Work study experiences will be provided, to the greatest extent possible and as appropriate, within the school environment. Health and safety precautions and assessment of risk will be utilized to determine when and if students will return to community based work study opportunities.

In addition to following the district and building established health and safety precautions, staff will wear additional personal protective equipment when supporting students with special needs who are unable to wear or who are building on their tolerance of wearing their protective facial coverings, or will be unable to adhere to social distance measures. The educational staff working with your child will determine a plan for skill acquisition and protocols will be put into place to increase compliance. During this time when the student is working their way up to wear a mask they will be provided a face shield and if a student can't wear a shield, they will be given a barrier and work their way up to a shield if possible.

We understand that some parents and guardians may want to begin the year with additional in-person days, please know that we want that for your students as much as you do. However the health, safety and well being of all of our children and the full school community must take priority in the current health emergency. Please be assured that an intentional and planned transition to return to school is being developed and when we can we will return students, especially those with significant needs, as participating in person is ideal for the social, emotional and academic well-being of our students.

Lastly, as quickly as they can be arranged, you will be receiving phone calls from your child's case manager to discuss any technological needs your child may have, your communication preferences and to discuss your current concerns.

We are eager to work together in good faith and partnership with you to design and implement an effective program for your child, in light of current circumstances. We look forward to collaborating with you and we thank you for your support.

Kind regards,

Jennifer A. Zona Ed.M, NCED
Assistant Superintendent of Special Services