

Greenwich Public Schools: Update on distance learning and special education

March 25, 2020

GPS Families,

We have received additional guidance from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) for Special Education students. While we have provided the full documents below, we wanted to share a brief summary of their guidance.

Providing Services During Extended School Closures:

As shared by the CSDE, "Present exceptional circumstances may affect how special education and related services are provided. School districts may not be able to provide all services in the same manner that they are typically provided. Federal disability law allows for flexibility in determining how to meet the individualized needs of students receiving special education services."

Given that Connecticut has mandated statewide school closures, it is essential that school districts focus on providing continued educational opportunities for all students. School districts must ensure that students receiving special education have access to these opportunities. For students with individualized education programs (IEPs), school districts must ensure that each student is provided the special education and related services identified in the student's IEP developed pursuant to the IDEA, to the greatest extent possible."

As we shared at the beginning of our distance learning journey, we asked the special education teachers to work with their grade level colleagues and provide additional strategies, accommodations and modifications for their students with IEPs. Our goal continues to be to increase access for all students to the lessons that are being provided. The special education supports would be described on the same document that the classroom teacher is providing to the rest of the class. Our special education teams continue to work hard to provide services through this new approach to learning.

PPT Meetings:

As shared by the CSDE, "During school closure, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has indicated that if all students are receiving continued educational opportunities, and therefore the general education population has moved to virtual, online, or distance learning, school districts are not required to revise an IEP because all students are receiving an alternate mode of instructional delivery of the general education curriculum. This would obviate the need to conduct PPT meetings related to the instructional delivery method in those cases and would not constitute a change in placement. This also allows school staff to focus on the provision of supports and services, rather than engaging in numerous PPT meetings. If a parent or the school district wishes to discuss the student's continued educational opportunity, the parent and school district have flexibility to use other means of conferring with one another rather than convening a PPT for a meeting."

As we mentioned in our previous note, we are waiting to convene PPT meetings when schools reopen. However, if you have a significant concern about your child's IEP, please email the administrator at your school so that we may work with you to determine if there is a way to support your child's needs more effectively. If the resolution involves a change to the IEP, the school will complete the "Change Without a Meeting" form and send a copy to you. If you need to have a meeting (phone or conference call) to clarify the issue or to discuss the concern, this can be done without a formal PPT. This type of meeting can be done with the 5-day waiver and members excused forms. We understand this is a challenging time for our families, students and staff, and we are committed to work together for all of our students.

Full Guidance Information

The full details of the [most recent guidance from the Connecticut State Department of Education](#) and [a one-page summary from the legal firm of Shipman & Goodwin](#) are available. We will post the Spanish versions as soon as possible.

Additional Resources

We look forward to continuing to partner with our families to provide the best experience for our students during this challenging and unprecedented time. Please visit our [Special Education distance learning website](#) for additional resources for students and families or reach out to our PPS Team if you have any questions or concerns. We are here for you and want to help any way we can.

Thank you,
Mary Forde & the PPS Administrative Team

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