

April 1, 2021

Dear Parents and Guardians,

Last week I had the opportunity to visit students and staff at Ben Franklin Elementary. I cannot tell you the joy I felt in seeing children at school, actively learning and engaged in their classrooms. It felt like a moment of normalcy when this past year has been anything but typical. As I look ahead to this spring, I am excited to see more of our students returning to their classrooms. I continue to be impressed at the flexibility and commitment of our special education staff. They remain dedicated to providing the best services to students despite ongoing changes and transitions.

My message today has two purposes. First, I would like to provide you with updates regarding the upcoming changes for in-person learning as it relates to students receiving special education services. Second, I'd like to share information and guidance regarding our plans for Recovery Services.

Changes in Schedules for Students

Our secondary students who have been attending school in person **will not** attend school during the transition week of April 12-16th. Instead, students will receive asynchronous instruction in alignment with their peers. Starting April 19th, the following changes will occur for students who receive special education services and have opted for in-person learning:

- **Early Learning:** Students who participate in Head Start will transition to a 2.5-hour, 4 day a week model starting April 12th. For our special education preschool programs, we are currently working with our colleagues in the Lake Washington Education Association to consider options for additional in-person learning opportunities. We will inform families within our early learning programs of any potential changes that may result from this work.
- **Elementary:** Students who receive special education services, and are attending school in-person, will attend school four days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday). Their school day will be 5 hours and 15 minutes.
- **Secondary:** Students who receive special education services, and are attending school in-person, will attend school four days a week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday). Their school day will be 5 hours and 35 minutes. We are eliminating the AM/PM in-person learning model and students will attend school on this new schedule. We expect that most of our students will attend their neighborhood school for in-person learning. However, if any changes are needed due to staff availability to work in-person, families will be contacted directly.
- **Transition Academies:** Our students who attend a Transition Academy program will remain on their current an AM/PM schedule, 4 days a week until the end of the school year. However, students will begin accessing parts of the community as King County has moved into Phase 3 or reopening.

Recovery Services

We are excited to announce that we are planning for recovery services for students in special education who were significantly impacted by the loss of instructional time last spring (March – June, 2020) as well as those who may have regressed during remote learning. Here is some general guidance and information on Recovery Services.

- **What Are COVID-19 Recovery Services**

Recovery Services are services that are provided in addition to the supports and services documented on a student's IEP. They are designed to address skills and/or content that was not taught, as well as the impact of this loss of instructional time. Provision of Recovery Services related to COVID-19, is not an admission that the school district violated IDEA, but rather they are intended to recoup lost skills or regain progress.

- **What is the difference between ESY and Recovery Services?**

ESY services are provided to eligible students beyond the normal school year, based on certain circumstances. The decisions that IEP teams make related to ESY are different than the decisions regarding Recovery Services. Recovery Services are provided to address skills and content that were not taught, as well as the compounding effects of those skills not being taught during the pandemic. ESY services are provided to address significant concerns regarding skill acquisition or maintenance during an anticipated break in services.

- **How are Recovery Services different than compensatory services?**

Compensatory services are awarded based on a violation of IDEA and must be provided within a specified time period following the identified violation. COVID Recovery Services are determined on a "no fault" basis due to the extraordinary nature of the pandemic and health/safety limitations, of which districts had no control, and are not subject to specific timing requirements.

- **How do you determine the need for Recovery Services?**

IEP teams will need to consider the need for recovery services for students. Teams will compare the data describing the student's performance from the last reporting period prior to school closure to data describing the student's current performance. They will identify the gap between where the student was and where they are at the time you are assessing the potential need for Recovery Services. They will review the provision of current special education services and supports, and the effect of those services on closing the gap. And finally, they will identify any additional recovery services that will be reasonably needed in order to close the gap

- **Is an IEP meeting required to consider Recovery Services?**

Recovery services must be considered for all students with IEPs. If there is evidence of student regression or lack of progress on IEP goals, and/or someone on the IEP team expresses concern (including parents), you should have an IEP meeting to consider the need for Recovery Services.

- **What do Recovery Services look like?**

Recovery Services can be provided before or after school, on days the student is not typically in school, or in the summer, as needed. Recovery Services are focused on the areas of the IEP where the student regressed or did not make progress. They should align to IEP goals and objectives, as determined by the district staff with input from the parent. **Recovery Services are designed to help the student bridge the learning gap and are not required to be a 1:1 replacement of IEP services that were not provided during school closure or the 2020-21 school year due to COVID-19.**

- We have created a presentation that parents can access to learn more. (link)

In summary, we remain committed to ensuring the best outcomes for our students in special education now and in the future. I want to thank our families for their ongoing grace and patience as we navigate multiple changes and transitions this year. I also offer my deep gratitude to all the teachers, paraeducators, therapists, and instructional assistants who have worked diligently to support students in person and remotely. As we transition all students back to school, much of the success of these transitions are directly related to the work of our special educators. Our staff welcomed students back to school in September and they are currently leading the way for their colleagues.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the upcoming transitions or recovery services, please don't hesitate to reach out. Your child's IEP team and your building principal are there to support you. Additionally, you are welcome to connect with the Special Services Director who supports your community.

Wishing you a wonderful spring break,

Shannon

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