

NORTHERN LEHIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Matthew J. Link
Superintendent
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March 29, 2020

Dear Northern Lehigh Community,

The past two weeks have been like none we have seen in education in our school district and, in most cases, across our nation. The NLSD staff and administration thanks you for your cooperation, flexibility, support, and patience thus far. In a very short amount of time we have designed and implemented systems that were not previously needed and certainly did not previously exist for us. For example, we now know how to feed all the children in the community that need a meal when school is not in session. We have also become accustomed to hearing phrases such as “social distancing” and the “new normal.” I have seen our community come together to support and care for each other in ways I have never witnessed prior to the global pandemic to which we are all making drastic life adjustments. I am asking that all of you continue to partner with the district and each other until we see our way through the COVID-19 pandemic and can return to educating our students, your children, back in our classrooms. We miss them!

The following document is the NLSD Continuity of Education Plan and will serve as a framework for all of our stakeholders moving forward. You will see as you read through the plan that we will soon begin to transition from enrichment and review activities to more planned instruction as the mandated school closures continue. We fully understand that we are asking students, their families, and our employees to engage in teaching and learning in a new manner. We also realize that it will take some time to adjust to it and that adjustment will not happen at the same time and in the same way for all involved. We hope that through ongoing communication and cooperation we can ease the adjustment. Please know that the NLSD administration and staff is here to support you and we are confident we can work our way through what lies ahead.

Sincerely,

Matthew J. Link

Matthew J. Link

Superintendent

NLSD Continuity of Education Plan

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Goal of Plan
It is the goal of NLSD that its students have the opportunity to maintain and develop skills while away from the customary school environment. This will be provided through eLearning and traditional (paper and pencil) opportunities during any mandated school closures due to state or federal orders, typically in response to an emergency declaration.

Overview of Plan
<p>NLSD will implement a combination of both planned instruction and enrichment/review activities. Planned Instruction is formal teaching and learning similar to that which occurs in a classroom setting. Within this process, teachers use planned courses of instruction of new concepts/skills aligned to grade level standards. Teachers assess the learning of their students and make adjustments to instruction based upon student progress. In order to receive a grade and credit, students must attend regularly and complete the course requirements. Additionally, NLSD will continue with Enrichment and Review which consists of informal activities to reinforce or extend students’ prior learning. No standards and skills are addressed through the Enrichment and Review portion of the Continuity of Education Plan. Enrichment and Review began on March 13, 2020 by instructional staff and administration and was implemented on March 16, 2020 for the current mandated school closures due to COVID-19.</p> <p>NLSD has chosen to implement a combination of Planned Instruction and Enrichment and Review to best meet the needs of ALL of our students and their families, knowing that not all students and families have access to the same level of resources at home, such as internet connectivity, stable shelter, or consistent in-home child care. Key components of Planned Instruction are: expected regular participation by students, and coursework completion with course credit. Planned Instruction also needs to ensure consideration for the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for students with disabilities and appropriate accommodations for English Learners that are reasonable and appropriate based on student need and current circumstances. It is understood that <u>some</u> students may not be able to fully participate in either Planned Instruction or Enrichment and Review during the current mandated school closures due to COVID-19. In each case, NLSD will demonstrate that it has made a good faith effort to address the needs of all students. NLSD will also plan for appropriate follow-up instruction and/or compensatory education owed to such students once traditional school operations resume.</p> <p>NLSD believes its Continuity of Education plan best meets the district’s mission of creating a challenging and supportive environment dedicated to meeting the diverse educational needs of all learners.</p>



Expectations for Teaching and Learning

NLSD has identified the following expectations for students and families, teachers, instructional support staff, and administration during the currently mandated school closures due to COVID-19.

Structure at Home for Students and Families:

The COVID-19 pandemic has required all stakeholders to rethink what teaching and learning looks like in our school district and across the country. Establishing structure and routine for learning will be critically important. NLSD believes that increased structured learning will assist in providing a greater sense of normalcy and routine for children. Some suggestions for creating a structured learning environment at home include, but are not limited to:

- Identify a space, such as a dining room table, that could become the study space. It is beneficial to make this space different from a bedroom or other location with distractions.
- Develop a structured schedule for school work (e.g., 8:00 - 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.). This structure will begin to form a routine.
- Eliminate other distractions, such as cell phones and television, from the environment.
- Take a few moments to help your child get a feel for the “week’s worth” of assignments. This is a new skill. Some students are not used to looking at a large batch of learning activities at one time and then developing a plan to break them down into manageable sections. This is a lifelong essential skill and will get easier.
- Allow some “brain breaks” and exercise opportunities within the work times. These breaks are a good idea for all family members, especially during the COVID-19 global pandemic. Please be sure to continue to practice social distancing if taking breaks outside.
- Ensure that students continue to get an appropriate amount of sleep, staying up late at night will be disruptive to your next day. It may be easy to slip into “summer mode” and that will be detrimental to this new structure of teaching and learning.
- Reach out with questions. We want students and parents to ask for help or direction if they need it.

Expectations for Administration:

Administration is expected to fully support students, families, teachers, and support staff. The support will look different for each group, depending on need. A good faith effort will be made to remove barriers to a continuity of education, provide the necessary technology and other resources necessary for teaching and learning, communicate in a timely and effective manner with all stakeholders, and maintain the essential functions of the school district as necessary during mandated school closures.

Expectations for Instructional Support Staff:

Instructional Support Staff is expected to make themselves available for teachers and students in a manner that allows them to engage in supporting the teaching and learning process. This may include, but is not limited to, assisting in modifying assignments and activities, or contacting students through an approved method to offer assistance and/or encouragement.

Expectations for Teachers:

See section titled Teacher General Expectations

Expectations for Students:

See section titled Student Expectations

Communication Tools and Strategies

Tools and Strategies for communication during the mandated school closures due to COVID-19 include but are not limited to:

- Standard US Mail
- Telephone Calls or when appropriate Text Messages **between parents and staff, however students and teachers should not text messages with each other from their personal devices**
- Emails
- School District Websites
- School District Community Outreach System
- Teacher Identified Communication Platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Canvas, and Class Dojo, Remind, Curriculum Software such as Google Classroom, Imagine Learning, Study Island, USA Test Prep, Xello, Read 180 and System 44
- School District Social Media

Access (Devices, Platforms, Handouts)

Student Access to Devices:

- High School (9-12) - All students are assigned a 1:1 laptop and are allowed to take home devices for educational purposes. Moving forward, your device can be picked up by appointment only.
- Middle School (7-8) - All students are assigned a 1:1 Chromebook and are allowed to take home devices for educational purposes. Moving forward, your device can be picked up by appointment only.
- Elementary (K-6) - Students and families have been allowed to pick up a Chromebook to take home for educational purposes. Moving forward, this will be done by appointment only.
- All students in all grade levels were given multiple opportunities to pick up a Laptop or Chromebook device if they did not have a device at home with them. Additionally, the district has delivered some devices directly to family homes.

Teacher Access to Devices:

- All teachers are assigned a laptop that may be used at home for instructional purposes.
- All teachers have access to their educational files through the use of Google Drive and also access to district electronic resources through a virtual private network (VPN).

Instructional Support Staff and Office Staff Access to Devices:

- Each will have access to devices on an as needed basis.
- Technical support will be provided.

Technical Support:

- Technical support is being provided to both teachers, students, and support staff remotely through a combination of email, phone support, and remote support sessions.
- Provisions can be made to exchange a device that experiences a major failure that can not be fixed remotely, by appointment only.

Internet Access:

- All devices assigned to staff and students have WiFi access and are capable of connecting to the Internet
- The district provided families with information from two local Internet Service Providers that are currently offering special programs for families without Internet access

Teacher General Expectations

- Participate in virtual meetings such as faculty meetings, IEP, GIEP or 504 meetings, professional development sessions, team or content/grade level meetings, as required by principal or supervisor.
- Post assignments and activities on their choice of platform by Sunday of each week. Allow the full school week for students to complete.
 - Establish a classroom communication plan with parents and students.
- Be available for student and parent questions.
- Provide feedback on student work.
- Direct student connections should occur minimally once per week during this time via virtual meeting, email, phone, or through another chosen platform.
- Open Office Hours/As assigned by administration
 - Possible activities may include:
 - Connections with students having specific questions or needing assistance.
 - Participation in IEP or GIEP meeting conference calls
 - As needed, teachers may use this time to collaborate with others including but not limited to department/team/grade level members, special education teachers, technology staff, district and Building administrators, EL teachers, gifted education teachers, reading specialists, Instructional Support Teachers (IST), speech and language teachers, OT and/or PT staff, school counselors, nurses, etc.
 - When applicable, establish a communication protocol with special education, gifted education, EL Teachers, reading specialist, and/or IST regarding instructional plans so they can provide appropriate materials and/or modifications as necessary.
 - Regular education teachers must collaborate with special education teachers prior to posting assignments, activities, and/or assessments in order for accommodations and/or modifications to be made.
 - Teachers should respond to students and parents within 24 hours of the initial contact during weekdays. If contacted over the weekend, teachers should respond the following school day.
- ★ NLSD fully understands that for our younger students, parents/guardians will play an integral role in the implementation of the Continuity of Education, specifically for communication.

Student Expectations

- Students can access teachers' expectations, supports and assignments via their teachers identified communication platforms such as Google Meet/Classroom, Class Dojo, Canvas, or Zoom to communicate lessons and assignments.
 - Students are expected to connect online with the class/teacher at least weekly or as indicated by the teacher. Other possible communication tools include email, telephone calls, and Standard US Mail.
 - Complete the assignments and/or activities as assigned by each teacher by the end of each school week.
 - Students do not need to login to complete the work during any specific time of the day; however, teachers may schedule times to check-in with individual students or entire classes as communicated by the teacher.
 - Contact the teacher if they have questions or concerns.
 - Follow the teacher's established communication plan.
- ★ NLS D fully understands that for our younger students, parents/guardians will play an integral role in the implementation of the Continuity of Education specifically communication.

Attendance / Accountability

- Weekly attendance is mandatory starting on April 6, 2020. Until that date, teachers will continue providing enrichment and review activities.
- Students (or parents/guardians depending on grade level) are expected to connect with the teacher at least weekly and this will be documented as attendance. The possible communication tools include email, telephone calls, and Standard US Mail. Please know that teachers will be available daily, during the school week, to communicate with students and families. There may be some times when a teacher is not readily available, but he or she will respond within twenty-four hours or the next school day.
- In order to maintain accountability, grades will be based on weekly completion of assignments. In the event of a holiday, as per the district calendar, the due date is Friday or the last school day of the week. If students complete all work by the due date, they will receive a passing grade for that time frame.

Good Faith Efforts for Access and Equity for All Students

The NLSD staff and administration is committed to offering a good faith effort for access and equity for ALL students. Some examples of how NLSD is implementing good faith efforts include, but are not limited to, providing either a laptop or chromebook for ALL students in the district. The district has offered several opportunities for students and families to pick up a device. To ensure every student that wants a device can receive one, even if they could not pick one up, the district has made arrangements to deliver a device to their home. Additionally, NLSD has shared contact information of Internet Service Providers (ISPs) with families who may not currently have access to the internet or can not afford access. These ISPs are offering free or low cost internet accessibility during the mandated school closures.

Knowing that some students and families may not be able to utilize an electronic device due to connectivity issues, paper packets of assignments and activities will be made available for either pickup or mailing home. The mailing home of packets is reserved for students who do not have access to a device or internet connection or have documented plans requiring specialized instruction as part of an IEP, a 504 plan, or for students who are English Learners.

For students who qualify for special education, gifted education, 504 plans, or English Language services, please see the following appropriate sections.

Special Education Supports

During this time of social distancing due to COVID-19, virtual learning may be our best option to provide continuity of education. NLSD special education staff is committed to making a "good faith" effort to provide, planned instruction, enrichment, review and reasonable services for students during COVID-19 school closures. General education teachers will provide accommodations to the degree possible and appropriate based on each student's IEP (Individualized Education Plan) and 504 plans. Special education teachers and regular education teachers will collaborate to ensure access to the content for all students including those students with disabilities. Case Managers will contact parents/guardians via, email, phone, Google Meet, or Zoom weekly to discuss questions or concerns.

Related Services (Occupational Therapy and Speech and Language Therapy) will provide enrichment and review activities in collaboration with case managers. NLSD is in the process of setting up therapy groups in order to do live video conferencing via Zoom or Google Meet as early April 6, 2020.

Annual IEP meetings will be held according to compliance with Federal guidelines via phone conferencing or Google Meet. The case managers will be reaching out to parents/guardians to set up a time and will email draft documents to preview. After the meetings, the parents will be asked to confirm participation and agreement via email. Upon return, hard copies will be sent via Standard US mail.

Reevaluations will be completed, in collaboration with staff and parent/guardian, through record review as per the Federal Guidance. MDT meetings will be held via google meets or phone conferencing.

Evaluations where face-to-face testing was completed, previous to COVID-19, the Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) meeting to review the report will be conducted via google meets or phone conferencing. If a determination can not be made, the report will be completed with the information available. The

school Psychologist will contact the parent/guardian to review the report. A NOREP will be issued stating due to the COVID-19 closer, more testing is needed and another Permission to Evaluate (PTE) will be issued upon opening of schools.

English Language Development Program Supports

Teachers in our English Language Development Program (ELDP) will make a good faith effort to work with other classroom teachers, English Learners (ELs), and their families to ensure academic materials are provided with modifications to the general education curriculum as per the English Proficiency Level of each student.

ELDP Teachers will communicate with families through standard US mail, telephone calls (or when appropriate text messages between parent/teacher), e-mail, Google Meet, or other means identified in the *Communication Tools and Strategies* section of this document. Where necessary, teachers will provide written communication in the home language or use a translator/translation service to facilitate communication.

For ELs who also receive special education services through an IEP, ELDP teachers will make a good faith effort to work with various members of the IEP team to make appropriate modifications, as described in the *Special Education Supports* section of this document.

Gifted Education

Gifted facilitators will work with regular education teachers to provide a good faith effort which ensures that students who are eligible for gifted support services receive specially designed instruction and curricular modifications, as outlined in their GIEP to ensure students receive differentiated instruction, enrichment, and/or acceleration.

GIEP's will be held in accordance with Federal timelines via Google Meet or phone conferencing.

Building/Grade Level Contacts

Superintendent - Mr. Matthew J. Link, mjlink@nlsd.org, 610-767-9800

Assistant Superintendent - Dr. Tania Stoker, tstoker@nlsd.org, 610-767-9800

Director of Special Education - Mrs. Michele Dotta, mdotta@nlsd.org, 610-767-9849

Director of Technology - Mr. Eric Hill, ehill@nlsd.org, 610-767-9851

High School Principal - Mr. Robert Vlasaty, rvlasaty@nlsd.org, 610-767-9832

Middle School Principal - Ms. Jill Chamberlain, jchamberlain@nlsd.org, 610-767-9812

Slatington Elementary School - Mr. Scott Pyne, spyne@nlsd.org, 610-767-9821

Peters Elementary School - Mr. James Schnyderite, jschnyderite@nlsd.org, 610-767-9827

Resource Links

[Northern Lehigh School District](#)

[Northern Lehigh High School](#)

[Northern Lehigh Middle School](#)

[Slatington Elementary School](#)

[Peters Elementary School](#)

[FERPA Notice for Virtual Learning](#)

[Center for Disease Control](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Education](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Health](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Education Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) \(Guidance and Resources for School Communities\)](#)

[Center for Humanistic Change](#)