

School District of the City of Erie
148 West 21st Street
Erie, PA 16502
(814) 874-6116 Office
(814) 874-6064 Fax

Re: Written Notice of Erie School District’s Plan for Providing a “Free Appropriate Public Education” during the COVID-19 Closure

Dear Parent,

Your child has previously been identified as being eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (“IDEA”). Under IDEA, special education students are entitled to receive a “free appropriate public education” or “FAPE” which is delivered to them through an Individualized Education Plan (“IEP”).

As you know, Governor Wolf has closed all school districts in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the period of closure, school districts are required to make good faith efforts to offer a “continuity of education” to students using alternative means. You will be receiving more detailed information about the Erie School District’s Continuity of Education Plan in the near future. Until now, the district has provided a continuity of education to its students through offering informal enrichment and review activities that reinforced your child’s prior learning. The District will soon be offering planned instruction of new concepts and skills aligned to standards – although that instruction necessarily will be offered through a variety of modalities that are different than the traditional classroom setting. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with written notice of why and how the Erie School District’s delivery of a free appropriate public education to your child will necessarily be changing in the temporary period of time the district remains closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. Purpose of this Written Notice:

- The purpose of this Written Notice is to communicate the District’s interim plan to offer continuity of education to your child through the delivery of a “free appropriate public education” (under these exceptional circumstances) during the period of state-mandated school closure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The Erie School District is not proposing to revise your child’s current IEP. That IEP remains in effect and the District will resume the implementation of your child’s IEP when schools re-open.

2. Reasons why the District is Proposing Temporary Changes to Delivery of FAPE:

- The reason why the District is recommending the changes summarized below in the delivery of special education and related services section (Box 3) is because the normal ranges of instructional resources are necessarily limited during this period of closure. All school buildings are closed for

health and safety reasons and thus in-person instruction services cannot be provided.

- Under the current circumstances, the option of delivering FAPE services in the home is also impossible at this time due to government-mandated social distancing and stay-at-home orders imposed for health and safety reasons.
- The District is using best and good faith efforts to implement the FAPE services outlined in your child's current IEP and to meet the individual needs of your child during the time period instruction to the entire student population is being delivered through alternative means, which "alternative means" are generally described below and through the District's Continuity of Education Plan.
- Please understand and recognize that continuation of programming exactly as described in your child's current IEP is not possible because the closure of all schools, and social distancing requirements mandated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, preclude full implementation of the IEP as currently written.
- This interim, emergency FAPE (under the current circumstances) plan shall remain in effect only during the period of emergency school closure.
- You may be contacted during the closure period to participate in a virtual or telephonic annual IEP revision meeting. This would be a standard (non-COVID-19 related) IEP meeting. The purpose of this annual IEP meeting is not to discuss the interim emergency FAPE (under the circumstances) plan but will focus on what programming will be in place for your child during normal operations when school reopens.

3. Overview of District's model for delivering special education services/specially designed instruction provided to support the special learning needs of your student during the mandatory COVID-19 school closure period:

- Your child's special education teacher/s will work collaboratively with general education teachers to provide accommodations and/or modifications as identified in your student's IEP as appropriate to assigned instructional materials.
- Supplemental resources that both general and special educators will utilize to implement your child's IEP will include but are not limited to Google platforms and Zoom meeting conferencing.
- Teachers will provide instruction and support through online platforms and/or through distribution of paper packets, and individual consultation with parents regarding their child's unique learning needs.
- Special education teachers will have office hours available for students to access at specific times daily.
- Special education teachers will be available to schedule 1:1 check-ins with students. These can be held through Zoom conferencing, by phone, or by email.
- Your student's special education teacher/s will make efforts to work with your student to implement the SDI listed in your student's IEP. Some examples: adapting or modifying the distance or virtual assignments, adjusting reading level of assignments, utilizing Google Chrome extensions to help with read-aloud or readability, chunking assignments, extra skills practice, choice boards, social stories, and organizational supports.
- Teachers will have activities and lessons on their Google Classrooms. If a parent/student is unable to access the folder, please contact your student's special education teacher or case manager for help on how to gain access to the folder.

4. Overview of District's model for delivering related services (if so required by your child's

IEP) to your student during the mandatory COVID-19 school closure period:

- If your student’s IEP requires delivery of a related service such as OT, PT, Speech, Vision, and/or Hearing Support, you will be contacted by the therapist currently working with your child to discuss the mode of delivering these services to your child during the closure period.
- Delivery of services could take place through group or individual telephone conferences, video conferences, delivery of live or pre-taped lessons, or a combination of these modalities.
- The delivery model will be explained by the therapist and the District will work with you to ensure that the proper technology and resources are in place. If barriers exist, the IEP team will revisit this area of need and develop a plan upon your child’s return to school after the closure period ends.

5. Next Steps During and After the Closure Period:

- If you have questions or concerns about your child’s ability to access the educational resources and instruction being made available to him/her and/or the Erie School District’s delivery of a “free appropriate public education (under the circumstances)” to your child during the implementation of the District’s Continuity of Education Plan, please communicate those questions or concerns to your child’s special education teacher. The District will make all reasonable efforts to work with you to address your issues or concerns during this challenging time.
- Once school resumes, your child’s IEP team will be convened to analyze the consequences the district-wide closure had on your child and to determine whether compensatory education is necessary to adequately address those consequences.

Stay safe and well.

Sincerely,

Brian Polito, Superintendent

Angela Kownacki, Pupil Services Director
Erie’s Public Schools
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Erie, PA 16502
(814)874-6000