



WESTWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Honoring Tradition, Inspiring Excellence, Shaping the Future

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Director of Student Services

May 12, 2020

Dear Parents,

I am writing today to continue to provide updates on the provision of special education and related services during the continued closure of our physical school buildings. The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (MADESE) continues to provide evolving guidance to school systems. We are adjusting and adapting our approach in light of that new information.

In the past weeks, Westwood has built a process for scheduling and holding virtual Team meetings for both students with IEPs and 504 plans and those meetings are now occurring. We have worked through many of the technical issues, and now have the ability to send and receive document signatures electronically. Each student with an IEP has also been issued a Remote Learning Plan that clearly identifies the specific services that the student is receiving during the period of closure. Parents should have received an email from special education staff to share these plans and we invite your ongoing input into these plans and feedback on how the services are being implemented.

While the majority of meetings that we are holding are Annual Reviews and meetings at key grade level transition points, Districts have been advised by DESE to develop a mechanism for intakes for students turning three years old. Lisa Freedman at the Westwood Integrated Preschool has developed a procedure to use the information already available from our Early Intervention partners to create a pathway for initial eligibility for these students. If you have a preschooler who is turning three years old, who you would like to refer, please contact Lisa Freeman at: lfreedman@westwood.k12.ma.us to make a student specific intake plan. If you wish to make an initial referral for a three or four-year-old child who did not participate in an Early Intervention program please also contact Lisa Freedman and she will work with you to develop a plan to begin the process.

The special education Teams have also been recently advised by DESE to contact any students who were previously scheduled for initial or three year re-evaluations as the Federal Department of Education has indicated that the timelines that are normally followed during in-person schooling are still in effect during the period of closure. The recommendation from DESE is to make an individual student-based decision collaboratively with families to determine if a formal evaluation is feasible and appropriate at this time or not due to the current constraints. Parents of students who would typically be undergoing a three year re-evaluation or who were involved in an initial evaluation during the period of closure, will be contacted by the Team Chair to have a student-specific conversation on the topic and to make a plan together for which components of the evaluation/re-evaluation can and cannot be completed with reliability and validity during the period of closure. There are methods of evaluation and reevaluation that may not require formal testing such as using previous assessments and current informal data to make these determinations. Teams are also being encouraged, at this time, to consider recommending only those formal measures that might be deemed crucial to determine continuing eligibility and include a comprehensive review of previous

testing and the student's current performance within his/her program. It is also possible for a parent and the school system to agree to move testing to the fall if that is the right decision for an individual student.

At this juncture, we are planning to maintain our current level of service and Team Meeting systems until the close of the year on June 19th. Parents will be emailed Progress Notes in June aligned with the end of year report cards to document student progress towards IEP goals. If you would like to provide feedback on how the District's overall process of providing remote learning is going, make suggestions for changes or improvements, or share your thoughts, please feel free to give your input via the [survey linked here](#). If you have specific requests for changes or adjustments to your child's individual Remote Learning Plan, please contact your child's liaison directly.

The Governor's emergency order has closed school buildings to in-person instruction until June 29th. We are waiting to hear if that order will be lifted or extended. While we are actively planning for in-person Extended School Year (ESY) services, we are also engaging in contingency planning for what remote ESY might look like. Once the information about ESY programming is available, the District will communicate how ESY services will be offered. This is a multi-layered process that will involve direction from State agencies such as the Department of Public Health and MADESE as well as local decision makers such as the Westwood Department of Health. We also need to consider the School Department's ability to meet and maintain the cleaning and social distancing requirements that will likely accompany a re-opening of the physical buildings. Toward that end, we are working to collect parent feedback and input on your level of comfort with regard to your child attending in-person ESY services and, if so, under what conditions. Please share your thoughts on the [survey for ESY linked here](#) so we can include your input in the decision making process.

As always, the Westwood Special Education Parent Advisory Council is an excellent resource for information and support. Please consider joining the SEPAC. Their next event is a virtual Parent Support meeting this evening, May 12th from 7:30 - 8:30 pm. More information can be found on their website at: <https://www.westwoodsepac.org/>.

Thank you again for your support of our staff during this time. They are working extremely hard to create and design the services your students are receiving and I am very appreciative of their tremendous commitment to our students throughout this time. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at ahanscom@westwood.k12.ma.us.

Thank you,



Abby Hanscom
Director of Student Services