



Pasco County Schools

Kurt S. Browning, Superintendent of Schools

7227 Land O' Lakes Boulevard • Land O' Lakes, Florida 34638

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Date: March 30, 2020

RE: COVID-19 School Closures and Temporary Distance Learning Plan

As you are aware, the United States and other nations around the world are currently fighting the spread of the Novel Coronavirus, otherwise identified as COVID-19. In an effort to protect our children and our community, Education Commissioner, Richard Corcoran, closed schools until April 15, 2020, and has announced that all Florida students must begin distance learning by March 31, 2020. Pasco County Schools will be providing the required distance learning through an online format.

Given the uncontrollable circumstances created by COVID-19, and the very limited time period that districts have had to reconfigure their entire educational system, the Florida Department of Education has provided school districts with latitude in the provision of continued services and accommodations to their exceptional student populations: "To support students identified with IEP-related services who may have a disruption in services, school districts have flexibility for the remainder of the school year to provide alternate services or delay services in coordination with the student's parents and IEP team."¹ The USDOE similarly explained: "It is important to emphasize that federal disability law allows for flexibility in determining how to meet with individual needs of student with disabilities. The determination of how FAPE is to be provided may need to be different in this time of unprecedented national emergency."²

Flexibility will be required in order to educate your child while schools are closed. In order to ensure your student has appropriate access to the distance learning program, Pasco County Schools will be implementing this Temporary Distance Learning Plan (hereinafter, referred to as "Distance Learning Plan"), as set forth in this correspondence, for your child. This Distance Learning Plan will act to temporarily supplement your child's IEP so as to clarify that your student will be temporarily educated through an individualized version of the online distance learning program being used by Pasco County Schools. This Distance Learning Plan will ensure that the online program is individualized for your student so that it is presented in a manner that is consistent with the accommodations, services, and needs of your child, as indicated in their IEP. A member of your child's IEP team will be in contact with you to receive your input and collaborate regarding how to best implement your child's IEP during the emergency closure.

To the extent that your child's IEP is set to expire during the temporary closure of schools, or if your child is in need of a re-evaluation, during this closure, this Distance Learning Plan will act as a temporary amendment to your child's IEP for the purposes of date compliance. During the school closures our staff will do its best, taking into account the circumstances, to perform the necessary IEP amendments and re-evaluations. If the amendments or re-evaluations are not completed during the school closures, your child's school will contact you soon after schools re-open to perform the needed work.

Upon your child's return to school, the Distance Learning Plan will automatically expire and cease to operate, and your child's IEP will resume as normal.

In accordance with the USDOE's guidance, to the extent that your child was not able to receive adequate access to their education during the COVID-19 emergency, upon the re-opening of schools, you will be invited to participate in an IEP meeting so the IEP team can "make an individualized determination as to whether and

¹ FLDOE (March 24, 2020) *Coronavirus (COVID-19)*, retrieved from <http://www.fldoe.org/em-response/index.shtml>, (March 24, 2020)

² USDOE (March 21, 2020) *Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools while Serving Children with Disabilities*, retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/rr/policyguidance/Supple%20Fact%20Sheet%203.21.20%20FINAL.pdf>

to what extent compensatory services may be needed, consistent with applicable requirements, including to make up for any skills that may have been lost.”³

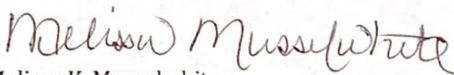
To the extent that your child participates in group sessions for certain academic classes or services, such as: speech therapy, language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, please be advised that multiple students may be simultaneously participating online. We ask that you treat these sessions just as if they were occurring in a classroom, and thus respect the privacy and maintain confidentiality of that learning environment. Please be advised that it would be illegal to record these sessions without the explicit permission of all participants.

Should you have any immediate questions, comments, or concerns regarding this Temporary Distance Learning Plan, please feel free to contact sspshelp@pasco.k12.fl.us. Otherwise, school-based staff will be in contact with you in the near future to assist you and your child with this transition.

You and your child have certain rights under Federal and Florida Law concerning the provision of their education. Attached hereto you will find your procedural safeguards, which set forth the same. Also, to the extent that you wish to seek counsel or advice from a third-party regarding Pasco County Schools' course of action during this temporary state of emergency, please find attached hereto a list of free and/or low-cost legal services. Lastly, attached hereto is an informational fact sheet concerning COVID-19 and your child's education during this emergency.

Your collaboration and understanding as we all work together during this state of emergency is appreciated.

Sincerely,


Melissa K. Musselwhite

Attch: Procedural Safeguards
List of Free/Low Cost Legal Services
FACT SHEET: Exceptional Student Education and COVID-19

³ USDOE (March 2020) *Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak*, retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speeed/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>