



July 29, 2020

Dear Norfolk Public Schools' Parents/Guardians and Students,

I hope that you and your families remain safe and in good health and spirits. As shared in a previous communication, opportunities to resume some Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) meetings prior to the end of June were identified by the Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services. Those opportunities included:

- high school graduates eligible to receive standard or advanced diplomas; those eligible for locally verified credits; post-graduate candidates; and students aging out of the special education program requiring referrals and support for post-graduate opportunities;
- students transitioning between pre-kindergarten to PreK4/Kindergarten, elementary to middle school, and middle to high school recommended for a change in their least restrictive environment prior to school closure;
- students attending private day schools, residential facilities, or SECEP; and
- extended school year (ESY) IEP meetings to name a few.

In recent weeks, the Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services has worked diligently to establish expectations and procedures for continuing all IDEA meetings that were postponed during the mandated closure of schools. Concerns for the safety of students and staff remain paramount in these decisions as is the school division's ability to maintain the integrity and effectiveness of special education processes. At this time, the department has communicated with schools for all IDEA meetings to resume. The expectation is that all IDEA meetings will be held and brought current by December 1, 2020. In doing so, please be aware that schools will work through this process based on the priority level of the meeting type and circumstance. In order of priority, all parents/guardians can expect communication from your students' school(s) to move forward throughout the summer and fall. Immediate meeting priorities will include:

- IDEA meetings already held and requiring parent consent signatures only;
- Eligibility determination meetings with all testing completed;
- Initial IEP meetings required as a follow-up to already held eligibility determination meetings;
- Transfer IEP meetings;
- Annual IEP review meetings due through September 30, 2020; and
- IEP meetings that include related services evaluations or placement change recommendations where the observation and evaluation components have already been completed.

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## Norfolk Public Schools

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IDEA meetings and processes that require the completion of student evaluations will resume by appointment. School staff will contact parents/guardians to schedule appointments at mutually agreeable times, in designated school locations, under social distancing guidelines, and with appropriate health mitigation practices in place. I ask that you continue to partner with us as we work through this process. Schools, in collaboration with the Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services, will effectively move forward until all students' IDEA meetings are complete.

In regard to the School Board of the City of Norfolk's recent decision to begin the 2020-2021 school year virtually, the Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services will continue collaborating with other departments to meet the needs of students with disabilities. We are carefully working on a number of considerations, including but not limited to the following:

- coordination of special education teachers, paraprofessionals, related service professionals, and other staff to provide a virtual learning experience with increased opportunities for teacher/staff directed instruction;
- clear expectations around the roles of various special education staff, their effective use, and communication standards with parents/guardians during a virtual learning experience to benefit students with disabilities;
- exploration of teletherapy options to provide speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, and other appropriate related services to our students during a virtual school environment; and
- opportunities to support parents/guardians in maximizing the virtual learning experience for our students through workshops, information sessions with the Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services, and parent/guardian peer groups.

As details and options are refined, I will continue to communicate with parents/guardians. Meanwhile, please do not hesitate to reach out to me with questions or suggestions. I or an assigned administrator from the Department of Learning Support-Special Education Services will follow-up with you in a timely manner.

Sincerely,

Dr. Glenda Walter, Senior Director  
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