



## Sisters School District Plan for Distance Learning for Students with Disabilities

April 13, 2020

Dear Sisters Parents,

The past month has presented an ever changing landscape in education. Less than 10 days ago we received notice from the Oregon Department of Education, ODE, that during the extended school closures due to COVID 19, the role of special education was to support access to the general education curriculum and instruction through distance learning, and that direct services would not be a priority. On Friday April 10, ODE changed direction; now special education services will, to the extent reasonable and possible, focus on delivering services to support access and progress in the general education curriculum as outlined in the Sisters Distance Learning Plan, as well as services to support progress toward IEP goals.

These are unusual circumstances based on a health emergency beyond the District's control; however our goals to support your child towards their individual growth have not changed. For most students on an IEP, services will be delivered in partnership with classroom teacher(s) through the Distance Learning Plan. Your children have an annual IEP, so the District will not, as a general rule, make changes to IEPs during the school closure. This closure does not constitute a change of placement, and the IEP will be implemented within the District Learning Plan under ODE guidance and direction.

For some students, who experience a greater impact from a disability, the case manager will reach out to you to set up a time to collaborate and work to design a plan that makes sense for your child. After attempting to implement a student's IEP, the IEP team may recognize that the distance learning context doesn't provide adequate support and/or instruction, and student growth stops or regresses. In these instances, the IEP team would meet and investigate the possible need for compensatory education at a later date. These meetings will be held virtually and will require your participation. Given the current circumstances, we will focus on the most important services for your child.

ODE has determined the maximum hours of distance learning per day that vary by grade level. The recommended hours are less than traditionally provided. Therefore, it may not be feasible or

necessary to provide the full range of services and supports currently stated in your child's 504 or IEP. Over the duration of the closure we will continue to collaborate with you and your child's teacher(s) to monitor their progress and adjust services as needed.

During the school closure, we have been working closely with ODE to design the best ways to offer distance learning opportunities, as well as considering ways to support students with disabilities. We have been training staff and will continue to support them and you in order to provide the best opportunities we can for accessing and making progress in the general education curriculum.

### **Staff Instructional Support Responsibilities**

Case managers and teachers will be contacting you within the first couple of weeks to determine what supports you and your student might need to access the general education curriculum in Distance Learning.

### **IEPs**

Case managers have been reviewing IEPs to consider how to best support your child during this extraordinary time. In some cases the case manager and staff may determine that there will be significant challenges to provide the services needed to confer meaningful benefit for your child. In these cases the case manager will reach out to you for consultation and to consider an amendment to the IEP.

### **Initial Evaluations and 3-Year Reevaluations**

It is our intent to hold meetings for any initial evaluation and/or 3-year reevaluation for which assessments have been completed. If the assessments have not been completed, the IEP team will convene to determine if the assessment is necessary for eligibility or determine if it is necessary to extend the timeline of the evaluation.

What is clear, is that Sisters is a strong community that promotes resilience within and among us. Resilience is defined as the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, or significant source of stress. Together, I believe we can be resilient, be innovative, and build a deeper appreciation for each other and our schools and community.

Thank you for your patience and understanding as we work to meet your child's educational needs during this time. Our priority is to support you and your child through these times.

Respectfully,

Martha Hinman  
Director of Student Services  
Sisters School District