

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

A student's Individual Education Program (IEP) will be adhered to the greatest extent possible. All Special Class students (15:1) will attend classes in person on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Elementary students (grades K-5) will access all curriculum and materials in person on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday paired with distance learning. Secondary special class students (15:1 class) will attend school on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday paired with distance learning. Consultant Teacher Direct (CTD) and Resource Room (RR) students will meet in person on the hybrid schedule paired with distance learning.

Engagement

The CSE/CPSE will continue to follow best practices in communicating in a parent friendly fashion when in meetings and when interpreting results of testing at meetings. All parents will be invited to participate in all conversations regarding student functioning.

Collaboration

The Mount Sinai School District will continue to work closely with preschool agencies and Out-of-District programs to identify the specific service plans for each center-based program/related service agency. The District will continue to ensure that we are following the IEP to the greatest extent possible when working with local schools and programs.

Access

The Mount Sinai School District will continue to provide students with their necessary accommodations, modifications, supplementary aids and services and technology.

Documentation

The Mount Sinai School District will continue to document attendance and student participation for live instructional days as well during video conferencing sessions. When services are denied by families, providers will continue to document the requests/absences. These requests (inclusive of communication with families) will be honored and documented.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)

The District will educate students in their least restrictive environment. As such, students who are placed in split programs (i.e., Special Class and Consultant Teacher Direct) will continue to be enrolled in their appropriate and approved programs. The IEP will continue to reflect the process (management section) of how instruction is provided in conjunction with the LRE deemed appropriate.

IEP Implementation

The District's plan allows for students to receive in person programming to the greatest extent possible. Special education students who have the most significant level of need are scheduled to attend four days per week in person. Related service groups are created based on classroom rosters, to the greatest extent possible. Providers will create groups to service from one class when possible. The goal is to have students in groups which are appropriate based on their level of need while at the same time maintaining static grouping.

Provision of Services

All elementary students and secondary students in special classes (15:1) will be onsite four days per week. Most related services will be provided in person. Secondary students in CTD or RR may require services to be provided both in person and virtually to provide the required frequency of the related services.

Progress Monitoring

Teachers will utilize specific data to support the academic progress of their students both in person and virtually. Teachers and providers are required to identify data collection methods that will determine the level of service students need. This data will assist in identifying student need/level of functioning and to guide recommendations moving forward. This data will provide documentation of continued student progress to guide decisions about levels of service. The current State guidance indicates that "until schools return to normal conditions, the same flexibility with respect to IEP implementation for delivery of services during school closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak continues to apply to the programs and services whether delivered in-person and/or remotely (e.g., flexibility with respect to the mode and/or manner; group or individual sessions; specific group size for related services, frequency, duration and location of related services, and special class size ratio etc.)."

Best Practices - Contingency Plans

If a student is ill and unable to attend school, or if in-person instruction must be suspended, Mount Sinai will offer virtual or remote services for students within a reasonable amount of time. This is aligned with NYS Department of Education Guidance (Q & A, June 2020). IEPs will not be amended. The District will continue to work to the greatest extent possible to provide services as closely related to the IEP. The special education office will continue to monitor the provision of services and the students' progress. Additionally, if the State requires an amendment to the IEP to modify the provisions of service, the special education office will work collaboratively with the CSE, including the parent, to make appropriate changes.

Compensatory Services

According to the NYS Education Department, compensatory services are provided to students with disabilities to remedy a school district's failure to provide a student with a disability with appropriate services during a time when

a student was entitled to FAPE and was denied appropriate services. Compensatory services may not necessarily be provided in the same mode of education and/or services that were not received during the period of entitlement to FAPE. With regard to changes related to the COVID pandemic, students are not automatically entitled to compensatory services due to the way services were provided and if they did not mirror the way they were meant to be within the IEP. When closed due to the Executive Order, schools may not have been able to provide all instruction and related services in the same manner as they typically provide. As such, alternative delivery, even when in a different mode, frequency or duration, would not necessarily result in a denial of FAPE.

IEP Implementation Documentation

IEP progress reports will be specific in regard to how services are provided and the child's progress. Comments will continue to be required stating the specific circumstances of the students' provision of services.

Child Find

The special education department will collaborate with families to initiate referrals to CPSE/CSE. The department will work with the county regarding students who are transitioning from Early Intervention to preschool so there is no lapse in services. In addition, schools continue to meet with their child study teams (or instructional support teams) to ensure students are getting evaluated and supported as needed.

Referral

The referral process for initiating an evaluation by the Committee of Special Education will remain the same. Parents/guardians and/or school personnel may refer students to the Committee of Special Education if they are concerned that a student is not making adequate progress. Parents/guardians can find guidance on the Mount Sinai website at *A Parent's Guide to Special Education*. Parent and staff referrals will be processed as per the Commissioner's Regulations.

Initial and Reevaluations

Initial evaluations and reevaluation testing are currently being completed and will continue while students are in the building. In the event of a school closure, a records review will be used for all reevaluations.

Eligibility Determinations

Video conferencing will continue to be utilized for all CPSE/CSE meetings and will continue while students are in the building. This includes initial eligibility meetings, program reviews and annual reviews. The results will be discussed at video conferencing CSE/CPSE meetings.

Communication and Meaningful Outreach

The special education department will continue to participate in Special Education Parent Teacher Organization (SEPTO) video conferencing meetings

where information will be disseminated along with communication to parents/guardians on a regular basis. Staff are required to have on-going discussions with parents/guardians to keep them informed and in contact with the school to foster the home to school connection.

Procedural Safeguards/PWNS

The District will continue to forward procedural safeguards via US mail and email. This information is sent home following the same guidelines as indicated by the regulations of the commissioner. The District will continue to meet via video conferencing as well as amend the IEPs with parental consent, when appropriate, to limit undue delays with student programming as per state regulations.

Accommodations

Teachers will continue to use multisensory teaching and learning methods. All students will engage in onsite learning and distant learning opportunities. All staff working with students that have an IEP will be expected to know and implement all accommodations listed on the IEP. Accommodations such as extended time, separate location, etc. will continue to be provided both onsite and during distance learning classes, to the greatest extent possible, as appropriate.

Supplementary Aids

Students' IEPs are followed to the greatest extent possible with regard to supplementary aids. Children will have access to supplementary aids which assist in their learning.

Technology

All students who have the need for assistive technology on their IEP have continued access. The District has provided parents with technology assistance for challenging IT situations. The District has also supported students who are in Out of District Placements with IT supports. The District will continue to be responsive to technology requests/concerns.