

## Special Education Distance Learning

### Application North Dakota School for the Deaf

#### In Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Fall, 2020

Connie Hovendick, Superintendent

North Dakota School for the Deaf (NDSB) is a model residential school for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Students attend 5 days a week and are home weekends, holidays, summer, when ill and when there is no school because of blizzards. They have been at home since the Governor ordered schools closed in North Dakota in March, 2020.

Teachers of the Deaf have been in regular contact with the parents and students and packets were sent home March 17, 2020 providing assistance to parents during this school closure. NDSB is providing distance learning to the students who were enrolled at NDSB for the remainder of this school year. NDSB is preparing for students to return to school fall of 2020 beginning Sept 2. Our restart school plan will include procedures to return to providing schools education by following this distance learning plan if the situation requires it to keep students and staff safe.

Each student is on an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and will receive education that is individually developed to meet his/her needs with the family's input.

Contingency learning plans will be developed for each student last March. These contingency learning plans will be reviewed at the time each student's IEP is reviewed. The parents/guardians, case manager and service providers will collaborate on each IEP goal and determine how best to meet these goals through distance learning. Teams will take into consideration the student's hearing loss, preferred learning method, and ability for independent work, internet access, access to adult support, adaptations/accommodations, assistive technology needs, how progress will be monitored, and where services will take place. Ongoing communication with families throughout the closure will be delineated.

Documentation of the contingency learning plans will be completed and shared with parents on a Prior Written Notice of Special Education Action.

These forms will be sent digitally and by mail to each family.

### Communication Plan

- Letter will be emailed and sent to the parents weekly.
- Teachers of the Deaf will contact parents on an ongoing basis as delineated in the contingency learning plan.
- There will be virtual meetings with the teaching staff on Mondays and Thursday.
- There will be virtual PLC meetings weekly to monitor student progress.
- Students will be contacted using Seesaw, Google Docs, Facebook, Face time, Teams, Zoom or other sources as available at regular times as determined by the parents/guardians and teachers in accordance with their Contingency Learning Plans from their IEP's.

### Level of Continuation

The level of continuation will be determined based on the student's abilities and support. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing need direct instruction from a teacher of the deaf using the students chosen mode of communication. The Contingency Learning Plans will address how this will best be met while students are receiving services through distance learning.

Students will be able to view and participate in activities that are directly related to grade-level skills, with the needed accommodation and/or modifications but there may be minimal capacity for assessment or evaluation of work. Progress is expected with adaptive curriculum at each student's level and depending on the unique needs of each student.

### Ensuring Student Success through Robust Relationships

NDSD/RCDHH mission is to provide advocacy leadership and educational expertise for all individuals in North Dakota who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Families will be supported with a variety of methods. Families will be given training on the virtual platform that their child will be using. Seesaw and Google Docs depending the age of the child and the activity they are participating in. Technology will be provided for families as needed for their child to participate in the distance learning program.

Outreach specialists, Interpreters and Dorm staff will prepare educational and fun activities that can be done together through online sources and with family members. Social emotional, health and sign language activities will be provided.

## Health and Safety Considerations

All NDSD Employees are to

- Take precautions as directed
- Encourage hand washing
- Adults that show symptoms should stay home
- Students that are symptomatic should be kept away from well students and parents contacted
- Adults and students need to be fever free for 24 hours without medication to return to NDSD

During distance learning, the NDSD Health Services department has nursing staff that will be working with families to keep medical appointments, checking on medication needs, and supporting the families at a distance.

NDSD has reviewed the CDC guidelines and created appropriate protocols for cleaning, social distancing, accommodating for students who are at-risk when they return to school.

## Attendance Procedures

Attendance will be monitored through Distance Learning logins or phone check-ins. Teachers will monitor prolonged absences and disengagement and communicate with guardians to provide accommodations. Administration will be informed of any prolonged absences and work with families to find ways to provide distance learning for their children.

## Ensuring Equitable Services for Students and Families during Closure

- All students at NDSD are currently on IEP's and will receive services as noted on the contingency learning plans.
- Computers or iPads are available and have been sent home to all students depending on their grade level and need.
- Supplies and materials are sent to each family.

## Preparing for Distance Learning

Students receiving services through an IEP are unique and require special services in the event switching to distance learning. From a Supplemental Fact Sheet Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools developed by the US Department of Education, "the Department encourages parents, educators, and administrators to collaborate creatively to continue to meet the needs of

students with disabilities”.

NDSD will consider practices for distance instruction, including meetings held on digital platforms, and documentation to keep parents informed. In addition, NDSD will use low-tech strategies that can provide for an exchange of curriculum-based resources, instructional packets, projects, and written assignments.

Contingency learning plans will be developed between the parents/guardians and the IEP case manager to address each goal on the IEP.

NDSD will utilize computers, iPads, tablets, personal devices, paper packets, books, telephones, and other materials to deliver lessons to students.

NDSD will work with the families to ensure that students have regular personal contact with their school instructional and support staff.

### Staff Development

NDSD will use the support offered by EduTech. EduTech had training set up for April 1, which will be videotaped and then made available to all staff working from home. NDSD will have additional training days for the staff in August to prepare staff to teach virtually if it is required. It is important for staff to have high quality lessons that challenge the students and have an assessment component in them when teaching virtually.

NESC will provide ongoing teacher support for Distance Learning, including the course for credit offered in 4 modules. Support will also be available through virtual PLCs.

Training will be provided as new needs are identified.

National trainings will be provided training for distance learning for deaf and hard of hearing students as these develop. Close contact with other state schools for the deaf to share information on what is working and what does not work will be considered when providing services by distance learning.

### Student Development

NDSD will ensure access to language for each student in their mode of communication. Accommodations for students will be provided to meet the accessibility needs. This will increase monitoring of assistive devices and providing batteries, so the student has access to communication. Lessons will be presented visually with sign language.

Students will be given training on Seesaw, Google Docs and Microsoft Teams and other platforms as determined by their individual Contingency Learning Plans.

## Internet Access

NDSB contacted all families of students from NDSB and found two without internet access. NDSB is working with local and state providers to ensure access. Materials are being mailed to the homes of the students' so they will have the materials required for their lessons. Some of the students are not able to benefit from programs on the internet because of their disabilities and materials are being mailed to their homes that are appropriate to meet their needs.

## Access to All Classes/Courses

NDSB has curriculum guides that are aligned with ND standards. Many students will need accommodation and modification of the material to be successful with distance learning. The IEP case manager of each student is monitoring the course work to meet their unique needs. My Math, Steve Dunn Writing Curriculum and Reading from A to Z are some of the curriculums that are being followed.

## Elementary/Middle

NDSB serves deaf and hard of hearing students, preschool through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Case managers will have ongoing communication with parents/guardians of students as delineated on the contingency learning plan throughout distance learning.

NDSB shall provide services to students based on the needs outlined in each child's IEP. Educational services and accommodations decisions shall comply with guidance from the DOE and NDDPI.

Students will receive materials for reading, language, math and social and science each week. Weekly calendars will be given to parents and students for distance learning schedules. Teachers are using face time to visit with students and parents. Examples of parts of student plans:

- Weekly worksheets, activity ideas and materials (based on activities) will be sent home along with face-to-face time with Zoom or FaceTime with school provided iPads.
- Worksheets: These will follow a weekly letter and/or theme. I have and will continue to visit with mom about how to specifically implement the worksheets sent home, via phone calls, at least once per week, more often as needed. Worksheets will vary from letter of the week worksheets, cut and paste activities, math sheets that use stickers, etc.
- Social activities: Games and puzzles will be provided (instructions as needed per activity) so XX is able to practice taking turns, labeling

objects, etc.

- Zoom/FaceTime: Working with mom's schedule (and XX's attention span) the goal is for at least 1 hour per week of face time with student – more as able to tolerate/attend on school provided iPad.
- iPad: iPad that was provided to family has various age appropriate apps loaded on it to assist with early math concepts, letter recognition and matching, color recognition/patterning, etc.
- Printed materials distributed in advance with detailed instruction, followed by audio phone conferencing with teacher directed personal instruction and feedback.
- Assessment will be skills practice, written assignments, project completion photos, required interactions and timelines.
- Supplies mailed will include pencils/highlighters, glue, scissors, ruler, glue, multiplication chart, hearing aid batteries.
- Delivery by US mail with contact through phone, voicemail, text and weekly letters.

Deaf and hard of hearing students need to have visual and sign language whenever virtual meeting with teachers are held. In our weekly packets bingo cards & other graphs are used for students to choose activities and monitor completion of assignments. Students are journaling with teachers as part of their writing and language lessons. Increasing language is a high priority for deaf and hard of hearing students and we are using a variety of means to have them ask and answer questions and participate in conversations.

## High School

NDSB has outreach specialist available to provide consultation to all districts in ND for their high school students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Interpreters are available for Devils Lake high school students during distance learning.

## School Counseling

NDSB will provide counselor developed information on social emotional topics each week in the student's packets and follow up individually with each student.

## Assessments

Teachers will visit individually with each student weekly (or as determined by the Contingency Learning Plan) to check for understanding and monitor progress. This could be by phone or zoom depending on the students' level of understanding.

Completed assignments will be mailed back to the school or sent electronically.

### Grades

NDSD's grading practices have been altered to allow for Distance Learning grading on a pass/fail system. Students are being progressed monitored for growth distance learning.

### Academic progress monitoring

Teachers will begin meeting online to hold PLC and staff meetings to monitor student progress.

### Human Resources Processes, Protocols, and Policies

During any crisis including the current health crisis supporting our educators and support personnel is necessary to continue to provide quality and consistent educational services to our students. Continual evaluation and emergency planning for the business office and HR will be necessary for in school and distance learning.

As a North Dakota state agency, we will continue to follow all OMB HR policies, protocols, and processes that are in place (or will be in place) to operate with staff.

NDSD will pay all staff who report/work from home as needed during distance learning.