

July 15, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

I hope that you and your families are having a good summer break. We are enjoying seeing some of our students in Extended School Year (ESY) in the morning, in which they participate in remote learning per their IEP, and many others in our “Additional Summer Learning” sessions, which are open to any student with an IEP.

#### Updates on Summer Planning for Re-Opening

##### *Working Groups for Planning*

At this time, the Special Education District Team is hard at work with hiring, required CDE activities, and working groups dedicated to planning for the opening of school. AUSD has convened three working groups that are specifically dedicated to special education. Those teams are comprised of teacher leaders, administrators from the district and school sites, and parents. The special education working groups are:

1. Mild Moderate Elementary
2. Mild Moderate Secondary
3. Moderate/Severe

Parents have been invited to the working groups to share their insights as well as assist with communication when needed. From the working groups, a plan for instruction and the provision of related services is being developed and will be announced near the beginning of August. It is our intent to be as aligned to students’ IEPs as possible.

##### *Instructional Programs Next Year*

As announced at the June 23 Board of Education meeting, the District is currently planning to provide both a “Flexible Learning Program” and a “Remote Learning Program” in 2020-21. The Flexible Learning Program will provide in-person instruction - with precautions - on a part-time basis to students. If health officials mandate a suspension of in-person instruction, students in the Flexible Learning Program will revert to distance learning. The Remote Learning Program is 100 percent distance learning; students will receive instruction through the Acellus on-line learning program, with the support of AUSD teachers and an adult in the family. Extensive information on these two programs - including FAQs, board presentations, and copies of all letters sent to families in recent weeks - are available on the [Planning for 2020-21 web page](#).

Additionally, we are re-examining these programs for our moderate to severe students due to the intensity of their needs and their limited capability to learn remotely. The details of the schedule are negotiable and being worked out in collaboration with our teachers union.

Please also note that Town Halls dedicated to Special Education finalization and implementation of schedules will be held on the date listed below. We hope that as many parents of students with IEPs can attend as possible. We will also post the recording to this meeting as we did for the prior “Town Hall” meetings. Those recordings, as well as the presentations and letters to families, are available on our [COVID-19 Special Education Resources](#) page.

Town Hall for Moderate Severe

Thursday, 7/23, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/93320434377?pwd=TnFMYlF5UjZDRWxvNUdXMy9qc1piQT09>

Town Hall for Mild to moderate

Thursday, 7/30, 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/97237161086?pwd=Y05nQmRBbWlWl1orYlMyTTBvQk1DZz09>

### Frequently Asked Questions about the 2020-21 Special Education Program

We have received a number of questions about our Special Education programs next year. We are still in the planning process, but are answering as many as we can to keep our families up to date. We are committed to updates every few weeks, including questions and answers, as our plans develop.

#### **1. I missed the Town Halls in June. Are they available to watch?**

Yes. Recordings of our Special Education Town Halls are available on our [COVID-19 Special Education Resources web page](#) on the special education webpage under “Corona Virus information” as well as Letters written to special education families since the onset of COVID-19.

#### **2. Students with disabilities are challenged by virtual distance learning. Can they receive in-person instruction?**

Yes, students will have this opportunity as long as the county health officials permit it. Students in AUSD’s Flexible Learning Program will receive part-time, in-person instruction, with an “A” group attending in the morning and a “B” group attending in the afternoon. Students in the Remote Learning Program will do their learning entirely from home. For the in-person instruction, Alameda County Department of Public Health guidelines for the protection of the students and staff will apply. Moderate/Severe student needs are being reviewed as mentioned.

#### **3. How will related services be provided?**

At this time, scheduling of related services is being planned in the working group sessions. Specifics will be forwarded to parents in early August. Under current health orders, students’ “social pods” or “bubbles” need to be protected. As our staff work on a number of campuses, we will need to continue to provide some services via “teletherapy.” However, we are also reviewing where we can keep providers at one site to see if we can provide in-person services safely within social pods.

#### **4. My child’s IEP was not held due to the school closure. When will the IEP meeting be held?**

Some case managers have been holding IEPs this summer. All educators in our district, however, have a contracted right to take time off during the summer. When we return in August, we will work as quickly as we can to make up missed meetings in chronological order and for priority reasons (e.g., a change of placement). IEP meetings will need to continue virtually. The District understands that students’ service delivery and support needs to be clearly understood by parents for the remote and flexible models.

#### **5. My child’s testing is not yet completed. When will evaluations be completed?**

Evaluations, like IEP meetings, needed to be paused as we could not uphold testing norms in a virtual environment. We received this guidance from several organizations, including the California Department of Education, the California Association of School Psychologists, National Association of School Psychologists, and the American Speech and Hearing Association. We know that some districts are now exploring ways to administer testing using precautions such as “personal protective equipment” (PPE), and some test companies are exploring ways to run assessments virtually. At the current time, however, in-person evaluation is contingent upon guidance received from the Alameda County Department of Public Health. Simultaneously, our district is interviewing school psychologists who can help us catch up on assessments. When the SLPs and other related service providers return, a plan for their evaluations will also be developed.

**6. How will paraprofessionals be used to support my child's instruction?**

*For those students who receive "intensive adult supports" per their IEP, paraprofessional support will be available within the social pods of a classroom. Paraprofessionals will support students with their in-person instruction and those related services that still need to be delivered remotely, due to the need to maintain the integrity of social pods while in class. Paraprofessionals, like any staff, will follow guidelines for PPE, but will not be able to socially distance themselves from students due to the nature of their work. For remote instruction, paraprofessionals were trained during their Learning Conference in June to assist students in break-out rooms and one-to-one. All paraprofessional support occurs under the guidance of the Education Specialist and Related Services provider. For safety and liability reasons for both staff and students, paraprofessionals cannot be assigned to home settings.*

**7. Will after care be provided?**

*AUSD has convened a working group to partner with our childcare providers in determining programs and schedules for next year. These details have not yet been developed, but the group is actively exploring options.*

In summary, it is our goal to forward more specific plans for instruction, related services delivery, finalization of testing, and IEP meetings in early August. The Special Education Department administrators are guiding the Working Groups through the planning process currently underway. The team is working diligently at this time to provide services and instruction that align as closely as possible to the IEP. We expect the services and instruction to be more IEP aligned and more robust than we were able to provide last Spring. In the meantime, feel free to forward questions to our team administrators:

Mary Busby, Secondary and Adult Transition Special Education Coordinator  
Betty Lin, Pre-K and Elementary Special Education Coordinator  
Pam Kazee, Director

Finally, as the fiscal stewards for all students, we request that you reach out to us with concerns. For some situations, it may be best to arrange an ADR meeting. Engaging in "Alternate Dispute Resolution" processes prior to involving attorneys can be much less costly for all parties, especially during this time of a pandemic when so many are undergoing financial hardships.

Have a wonderful summer with family. Another letter will be forthcoming in a few weeks to update the progress of the working groups.

Sincerely,



Pam Kazee  
Director of Special Education

CC: Pasquale Scuderi, Superintendent of Schools  
Kirsten Zazo, Chief Student Support Services Officer  
Sarah Stone, Chief Teaching and Learning Officer

