

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We hope this finds you, your child and family members well during these challenging and unprecedented times.

The Special Education Department has been working diligently since the suspension of in-class instruction March 16, 2020, to provide learning opportunities and related service supports for your students. Know that all of our school sites want to support your family and your students with basic needs and essential items that allow your student to engage with the learning opportunities. Do contact your site principal if you have questions or requests.

To date, we have accomplished the following:

- Week of March 23rd: We posted learning opportunity activities on the district webpage for parents and families to access in the interim until online Distance Learning could be provided: [AUSD Distance Learning Support for Parents and Guardians](#) and [AUSD Special Education Resources and Support](#).
  - During this time, teachers and staff also participated in training on online platforms (e.g. Google Classroom, Zoom), made parent contacts, and planned learning activities.
  - A system of support was started by the Special Education Department to support all staff who are delivering Distance Learning Opportunities to your student (i.e. teachers and related services personnel).
  - The Department continues to add to the “Distance Learning Support” linked above. Feel free to continue to access these resources.

Our next steps are:

- Week of April 6, 2020: Education specialists have begun online learning opportunities for students in collaboration with general education teachers and related support providers. A few points follow:
  - Please know that teachers may begin with guidance for students on how to use platforms prior to the provision of Distance Learning opportunities.
  - We hope that you were able to read the parent [FAQ on the distance learning opportunities guidance](#) from our Teaching and Learning Department on Distance Learning for parents. The Special Education and Teaching and Learning teams collaborated on these Distance Learning guidelines for staff and parents.
  - Prior to Spring Break, we began distribution of devices to families from the school sites in order for students to access Distance Learning. We are continuing to support families who need a device to access learning opportunities. Please contact your principal if your student has a need.

- Week of April 13, 2020: Related service and other support staff have been working to reach out to both staff and parents to discuss learning opportunity plans and schedule supports. These related services staff are planning to begin support with tailored supports based on your student's needs. These activities will reflect what the Education Specialists have been working on during the in-class learning opportunities. For students who have related services in their IEPs, related service providers will be in communication regarding supports. The list of supports include:
  - Speech and Language supports
  - Occupational Therapy supports
  - Physical Therapy supports
  - Deaf and Hard of Hearing supports
  - Visual Itinerant and Orientation and Mobility supports
  - Adaptive Physical Education activities
  - Counseling supports
  - Behaviorist supports

Following these start-up dates, the Special Education Department will continue to guide and support staff in the provision of Distance Learning Opportunities through consultation and support. Next, the Department is reviewing the most effective ways to provide remote IEP meetings given the limitations that we face. We are planning guidance for staff on how to conduct an IEP meeting confidentially, while following shelter-in-place guidelines. Due to school closure, IEP meetings will only address services and placement for when we resume in-class instruction. Since we are working on a schedule that is behind due to school closures, we will work on holding IEP meetings as quickly as we reasonably can and during times outside of the times established for Distance Learning Opportunities. In the meantime, you can request a meeting with your site principal and teacher if you have questions about supports that are in place during this suspension of in-class instruction.

Next, we wish to invite you to parent education opportunities held on Zoom. The links to the session will be provided on the COVID-19 family resource page 24 hours prior to the meeting and will also be archived following the session, as well as posted on the special education website. These sessions will be available on Thursdays from 3:00 to 3:30. Our first session will be on 4/16. We will record and archive the session to access later if this time does not work for you. The first two sessions will address:

- April 16, 2020: Tips for Supporting your Child in Distance Learning Opportunities - This session will include tips on structuring a schedule and engaging your student in distance learning. Our BCBAs (Board Certified Behavior Analysts) will present.
- April 23, 2020: This session will focus on the anxieties families are facing during COVID-19. Guidance will be provided by our school psychologists and BCBAs on family wellness and self-care.

We know that families are also wondering about whether ESY will be held now that the official announcement of in-class suspension has been extended through the end of the school year. District leadership is awaiting word from public health agencies on when normal activities can resume; therefore, we will make a decision regarding ESY and summer school by April 30th. ESY was scheduled to begin on Monday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, and

conclude on July 10th. As a department, we are still preparing for ESY as if we will be able to resume, but we are also preparing for alternatives such as a later start date or continuing with distance learning opportunities. Once a decision is made we will inform families immediately.

Finally, as is our obligation, we are providing you a formal “prior written notice” regarding the change in services due to the current public health crisis while students and staff are sheltered-in-place. This prior written notice is attached, along with your procedural rights. Do reach out if you have any questions.

Since we are working remotely, special education leadership may be contacted by e-mail as listed below. Christina Nieves and Mary Hallford, Administrative Assistants, are able to pick up phone messages directed to them two days per week (Tuesdays and Thursdays).

- Mary Busby, Special Education Coordinator for Middle School, High School and Adult Transition: [mbusby@alamedaunified.org](mailto:mbusby@alamedaunified.org)
- Betty Lin, Special Education Coordinator for Pre-School and Elementary School: [blin@alamedaunified.org](mailto:blin@alamedaunified.org)
- Pam Kazee, Director of Special Education: [pkazee@alamedaunified.org](mailto:pkazee@alamedaunified.org)

Sincerely,

*Pamela Kazee*

Pamela Kazee  
Director of Special Education

*Kirsten Zazo*

Kirsten Zazo  
Chief Student Support Services Officer

CC: Superintendent Scuderi  
AUSD Cabinet Members  
Special Education District Team