

April 23, 2020

Rockville Centre UFSD Special Education and Related Service Update #5

Dear Parents,

Warm wishes to you and your families. We hope you and your families experienced a meaningful Passover and Easter celebration despite the unique circumstances. As Rockville Centre continues to provide remote learning and support services for students with disabilities, we are provided with periodic guidance and updates from state and federal officials, which we will continue to pass on to our families. Please see the information below related to the provision of Special Education services in Rockville Centre through the next period of our extended closure, as well as updates to State and Federal guidance.

Distance Learning

All special education and related services will continue to be offered routinely and according to IEP mandates and student needs. **Special Education teachers will work closely with general education classroom and content teachers as they begin to provide more interactive learning to all students.** Special education teachers will take note of the assignments and instruction that is provided by general education and content teachers and provide support accordingly. Specialized reading, counseling, speech, OT and PT services will continue according to the schedule you have established.

Some of you have expressed concerns about balancing the multiple teacher interactions, and navigating the platforms presented to your child during this remote learning period. We understand these concerns and are working on ameliorating the problem. While interactive instruction on the special education and related services front has been ongoing, it has evolved and is relatively new on the classroom and content teacher front. I have spoken with the Middle School and High School Special Education teachers and they are aware of the challenges your children are facing and are working with their general education counterparts and administrators to smooth out the process. The teachers are working on resolving each child's issues on an individual basis, while teaching practical organizational and life skills in the process. We will make every effort to keep you informed and respond to any specific concerns.

We encourage you to continue to reach out to your child's special education teacher, building administrators or to us at central office if your child needs more support, technology assistance and help coordinating the many resources that have been provided to you during the closure. And thank you for your patience.

Summer Programs and Services

There have been many questions regarding the provision of Summer Services and programs, and how they may change, or be affected by the current school closure. We are working very hard on planning our Summer Program, including special education services, mindful of the additional support many of our students may require and our need to consider options for alternative programs. Of course, final decisions cannot be made until we get a better idea of the

extent of our closure and other restrictions resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Please be assured that we are working on this and will provide information on Summer programming as decisions are made. Personally, I hope the plans include plenty of sunshine!

Reevaluations

Reevaluations of students with disabilities are required by law every three years. Although not required, we conduct updated psychoeducational testing as a part of this evaluation. As we have previously reported such evaluations, which require in person face to face interactions, cannot be conducted. Therefore, any child due for a reevaluation who was not evaluated before the closure will be reevaluated through a complete records review based on documentation from previous testing, academic progress, progress monitoring of goals, and other evaluations. Psychologists will also consult with teachers, related service providers, and other team members as part of the comprehensive review. The summaries of the reevaluations conducted in this way will be discussed with you at the annual reviews and documented in IEPs. While consent is not necessary for this records review, your building psychologists will be discussing the process and results with you.

There may be some students, for a variety of reasons, for whom we require more extensive testing, including face to face evaluations. In these cases, a records review will be conducted, but we will follow up with in person evaluations when we return to our buildings. If you have any questions about the reevaluation process, please consult your school's building psychologist, Dr. Orly Gadon, ogadon@rvcschools.org, or Ms. Elaine Jung, ejung@rvcschools.org.

Using Technology to Access the Curriculum and Provide Remote Testing Accommodations

We have received questions regarding remote testing accommodations for students with disabilities whose IEPs recommend such accommodations. To this point our students have not been administered traditional quizzes and timed tests in the remote setting. However, student work has and will be assessed and there are accommodations that are available in the remote setting. Extended time and separate location accommodations are universally accessible in the remote setting. Other accommodations such as directions or questions read, and answers recorded (scribes) can be replicated through the use of technology.

Our Assistive Technology consultant has provided directions for accessing speech to text (recording responses) and text to voice (reading printed materials) technologies, which are attached to this correspondence. Use of this technology can replicate those accommodations typically provided in the school setting.

These same technology tips will help students access their curriculum on a day to day basis, even if the work is not part of an assessment. If you have any questions regarding access to these accommodations, please contact your child's special education teacher or our Assistive Technology consultant, Ms. Erin Sheehan, es@access7online.com.

Please note that the High School Counseling Department will be sending out important information regarding testing accommodations for the AP exams. If you have any questions

regarding the use of testing accommodations during these assessments, please contact Ms. Laurie Levy, llevy@rvschools.org.

As previously suggested, if you are experiencing any difficulty with student devices provided by the District, which require the attention of our tech department (broken screens, required apps, malfunctioning devices, etc), please contact your special education teacher and he or she will submit a tech help request to address the issue.

Pen Pal Project

The officers and advisors of Best Buddies were approached by a South Side High School student, Sofia DiMarco, who organized a Pen Pal program for the students in our High School and Middle School CORE program. Please see Sofia's vision below!

"My name is Sofia DiMarco and I am vice president of the freshman class at South Side High School. I hope you all are healthy and safe during this crazy time. I have an idea that can help bring the community together. Over the past week, I have organized a program called Buddy Mail. Each child of the core program would get one or more pen pals. Then, they can exchange letters throughout this quarantine and beyond. There would be about two kids assigned to each buddy, ensuring that they would get a letter. If the Buddies are comfortable, they can respond with a letter of their own, a drawing, or even a picture of what their quarantine looks like. I am willing to do all of the heavy lifting to manage and maintain this project. I would be writing letters when they are missing, keeping in touch with everyone, managing the content sent and received, and of course sending letters of my own to my buddies. I would hope that letters were sent every two weeks, but that is not set in stone. The Best Buddies program has a very special place in my heart and I love doing anything that could help them and everyone else. I spent most of my free time and all of my advisory all three years of middle school with them. I made unbreakable bonds and best friends who I will remember forever. Especially that this is a time where I know everyone is feeling lonely or isolated, I believe that this is a great, positive outlet that will benefit everyone. This can also continue after quarantine, because I know everyone will create new connections and make new friends. This will also help us get more people involved in the Best Buddies Program and Centre Stage! Attached here is a video that explains the process in depth. Make sure to send pictures with your received mail, so I can make a movie-montage at the end! I hope you all can make a connection with me and my new project, and I am looking forward to reading all your responses!"

Parents of students in in this program have received information, via email, about being a part of the Pen Pal program and asked to reply directly to Sofia. However, we hope to include all students enrolled in our CORE program in this initiative and would like to provide contact information for all students in the High School and Middle School CORE program directly to Sofia and the Best Buddies Club. **If you do NOT wish to participate in the program, please contact my Assistant, Mary Marin, mmarin@rvschools.org to decline your consent.**

Thank you Best Buddies and Sofia!

Warm Regards,

Dr. Noreen Leahy

Assistant Superintendent

Pupil Personnel Services and Special Education