



**Woburn Public Schools**  
**Special Education Office**  
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March 17, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian(s),

During this unprecedented period of school closure due to COVID-19, I am reaching out to communicate the efforts that the Woburn Public Schools are taking to support our students and families. Guidance has been provided by the Center for Disease Control, World Health Organization, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Woburn Board of Health, Commissioner of Education Jeffrey Riley, and Commissioner of Special Education Russell Johnston, with respect to providing education supports and services, both for general education and special education students during this period of school closure. **Please note, events and guidance are changing rapidly during this time as we all struggle to fully understand the magnitude of this pandemic, duration of closure, and the steps that we must take to ensure safety for all.**

During the closure, in line with the March 17, 2020 guidance from the Massachusetts Commissioner of Special Education, special education IEP services will not be provided. The Woburn Public Schools is, however, making available Distance Learning Enrichment as well as other educational supports via our website. Through our website we will make every effort to provide materials that are appropriate for all learners to the extent possible. Educational activities are suggested in an effort to assist families with providing structure to the day and to keep our students engaged in academic content. Both our general educators and special educators are available via email, and I welcome you to reach out if we can be of any assistance with any learning activity. Depending upon their availability, some counselors may be available to students to communicate in google hangouts, email, or phone. While this situation is far from ideal, we will make every effort to maintain a connection with all learners to enable a smooth re-entry when the Woburn Public Schools re-open.

Additionally, at this time all IEP and 504 meetings that are scheduled during the period of closure will be rescheduled. All evaluation timelines have ceased, and any mediations will be rescheduled. There will be no tutoring, home services, evaluations, or progress reports. We are not able to receive reports, copy files, and process any paperwork or reimbursements. When school is back in session, we will work collaboratively and efficiently with families to ensure that evaluations and IEP services and timelines resume in accordance with the guidance from both the state and federal Departments of Education. Please review the attached FAQ's.

Please note that while the Woburn Special Education Office is closed, I welcome you to reach out to me for any further information or assistance at [mryan@woburnps.com](mailto:mryan@woburnps.com). This is an unimaginable situation, and we will do our best to communicate as things evolve; please continue to check [www.woburnpublicschools.com](http://www.woburnpublicschools.com) for updates. Best wishes for good health as we navigate the next few weeks together as a community.

Warmly,

*Maureen E. Ryan*

Maureen E. Ryan, M.Ed.

Director of Special Education

# COVID-19 Pandemic: Navigating Special Education

## Frequently Asked Questions as of March 17, 2020

**\*Information will be updated as DESE guidance changes**

*\*Provided from the DESE on March 17th*

***Q: During the period of time a district is closed related to COVID-19, must the district provide special education services to students with disabilities?***

*When a school district is closed during this ongoing public health emergency and does not provide any educational services to the general student population during the period of closure, the school district is not required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time. Districts should be communicating with parents and guardians during and after a school closure regarding their child's IEP services. This ongoing communication will help educators, administrators, and parents/guardians understand any impact of the closure on students' access to a free appropriate public education. After an extended closure, districts should review how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to students and convene individual IEP team meetings, as necessary, in order to make an individualized determination as to whether additional services are needed for individual students.*

The Woburn Public Schools, via the district's website, has planned for educational enrichment and activities for all learners in a manner that will maximize equity across the district. No assignments will teach new content or be graded; this is not "online" or "remote" learning, but rather enrichment activities. As noted above, the district is not required to provide services to students with disabilities during closure.

Our special education teachers and general education teachers will work collaboratively to plan the enrichment activities in a manner that promotes optimal accessibility for all learners. Weekly check-ins via phone or email will be available from our special education staff to assist families in providing appropriate enrichment suggestions during this period of closure.

*\*Provided from the DESE on March 17th*

***Q: What are the district's obligations to provide FAPE to students with disabilities during extended school closures related to this health emergency?***

*A district is not required to provide services to students with disabilities during extended school closures if the district does not provide any educational services to students during this period of time. Once school resumes, the district should review how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to individual students and convene IEP team meetings as necessary in order to make an individualized determination as to whether a student needs additional services.*

As noted above, the district is not required to provide special education services during the period of closure. Our service providers will collaborate with our educators and provide input on enrichment activities. Additionally, our service providers will be working to provide additional resources for enrichment that will be available on the website.

*\*Provided from the DESE on March 17th*

***Q: Are all students eligible for compensatory services following these extended school closures?***

*Whether a student with disabilities is entitled to receive additional services because of the school's closure is an individualized determination to be made by the IEP team. Teams should consider factors such as the student's academic progress to date towards their IEP goals, the nature of the service(s) missed, the frequency of the service(s) missed, reports from providers, previous educational history, history and concerns of substantial regression. Team decisions must be documented in accordance with IEP procedures, e.g., N1.*

Subsequent to the production of this document, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has further provided clarification on the issue of compensatory services relative to school closure due to COVID-19. Compensatory services are based on the premise that a school district has failed to provide services as outlined in a student's IEP. During this current COVID-19 pandemic and school closure, because there is no mandate for "remote or online" learning, the DESE has indicated that there is no justification or basis for compensatory claims. Instead, the DESE has asked all districts to be thoughtful when school is back in session, and for IEP teams to consider whether a student needs "additional services" to move forward and to make effective progress with a re-entry.

*\*Provided from the DESE on March 17th*

***Q: How can the district meet special education evaluation timelines if schools are closed?***

*The Department recognizes that school closures may impact the ability of school districts to meet the 30-day timeline for conduct evaluations in addition to the 45 school working day timeline to develop an IEP after receipt of a parent's written consent to evaluation or reevaluation. (603 CMR 28.04(2) and 603 CMR 28.05(1).) More specific information will be forthcoming.*

Due to the closure, the DESE has been very clear that all timelines have stopped as of March 13, 2020, and will not resume until school re-opens. Because our buildings are closed we are unable to access documents or process special education related requests.

*\*Provided from the DESE on March 17th*

***Q: Will mediations that are scheduled with the BSEA occur during the period of school closures?***

*Effective March 15, 2020, the Bureau of Special Education Appeals will not hold mediations in person until further notice. Opportunities for remote participation will be offered, as feasible. The BSEA will contact parties as the date of the scheduled proceeding approaches to make necessary arrangements.*

The Woburn Public Schools will work closely with the BSEA in the instance that they move forward scheduling remote mediations.

*\*Provided from the DESE on March 17th*

***Q: Will the MCAS testing windows and the deadline for the MCAS-Alt submissions be extended?***

*The Department has not made any changes to the MCAS testing schedule or the deadlines for MCAS-Alt submissions at this time but is evaluating appropriate extensions or changes of the assessment windows, or additional action that may be needed. More guidance will be forthcoming.*

At this time the DESE has not made a decision with respect to extending the MCAS-Alt submission deadlines.

*\*Provided from the DESE on March 17th*

***Q: A student's IEP expires during the school closure period. Will it still be in effect?***

*Yes. The current IEP will remain in effect until a new IEP is developed, irrespective of the expired date reflected in the IEP forms.*

All student IEPs will remain “active” during this period of closure, although again please note that there is no requirement for special education services to be provided during school closure.

*\*Provided from the DESE on March 17th*

***Q: How can the district hold an IEP Team meeting if school is closed or Team members can't meet face-to-face?***

*We recognize that under the Governor's Order, public school districts are not currently operating. While IEP teams are not required to meet in person while schools are closed, the district may elect to conduct some business virtually. If possible, school districts could convene IEP Team meetings virtually using technologies such as Zoom or phone conferences. Districts must consider whether all IEP team members have access to necessary technology and accommodations to allow remote participation during periods of school closure.*

At this time we will not be holding IEP meetings virtually. As this situation evolves we will continue to explore this topic.