



April 7, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We hope you and your family are well during this challenging time of school closure. We are thinking about you and how we can support your child during this time of change. This letter contains information about various aspects of special education. Please note that the individual nature of special education means information evolves as new guidance comes from federal, state, and local authorities, including the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

As information becomes available, and as we respond to your concerns and questions, our Co-Directors of Special Education for the Barnstable Public Schools, Eric Bruinooge and Catherine Zinni, will provide regular updates. These updates will be communicated via our Blackboard Connect system, and will also be posted to the BPS COVID-19 portion of our website at <https://www.barnstable.k12.ma.us/domain/1177>

Eric Bruinooge, Co-Director of Special Education for grades 6 and beyond is available by email at [bruinooge\\_eric@mybps.us](mailto:bruinooge_eric@mybps.us). Catherine Zinni, Co-Director of Special Education for grades PK-5 may be reached at [zinni\\_catherine@mybps.us](mailto:zinni_catherine@mybps.us).

We look forward to working with you and your child during this unprecedented time in education.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Meg Mayo-Brown*, Superintendent of Schools

#### **1. Communication between educators and students/student families**

- Expect communication from school staff through different methods such as phone calls, email, other online platforms. This includes service providers such as speech/language therapists, occupational therapists, school social workers, school counselors, and physical therapists.
- All educators, including special educators and related services providers, have regular office hours during which they are available for communication and support.
- Staff will contact you based on the information the school district has in its student information system. If you are not receiving communication, click [Update contact information](#) (<https://www.barnstable.k12.ma.us/domain/889>) to update your information through the district's online portal. You may also contact your school's principal through email so we can assist you with updating your phone numbers and email addresses.



## 2. Instruction and services

- Based on the emergency nature of the COVID-19 Pandemic and evolving DESE guidance, school districts across the state are developing remote learning plans. Barnstable's remote learning plan can be found at the Barnstable Public Schools website <https://www.barnstable.k12.ma.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=4878>
- During this period of school closure we are not able to provide all special education services in the same manner as they are typically provided due to limitations associated with access to technology, physical distancing expectations, and student privacy considerations.
- Our focus is on providing access to appropriate, accessible learning activities that engage students in practice and reinforcement of previously learned skills that are related to IEP goals and objectives.
- Educators can support your access to activities in many ways, including, but not be limited to, text to speech or print enlargement features used on a device at home, guidance from an educator to appropriate general education resources, sharing of district approved specialized online platforms designed for students with disabilities, or modeling of a skill through video or audio methods.
- Barnstable's legal notifications about technology use in remote learning are on the district page.

## 3. Accessibility to remote learning plans and materials

- Educators will be utilizing a combination of online and telephone outreach so we can provide access to as many students as possible during this unprecedented situation. Please check Barnstable public school's website [Barnstable Remote Learning .aspx?PageID=4878](https://www.barnstable.k12.ma.us/site/Default.aspx?PageID=4878) for weekly updates. These are organized by grade level and content. There are also more individualized accommodation resources available to families so students might be better able to access the grade level activities. Go to the Accessibility Resources tab to set up features within different devices, such as text to speech or enlarge print. For general support of students with disabilities, click the Family Resources tab to find information specific to visual schedule options, social/emotional wellbeing, and for students with developmental disabilities.
- English language learner families can go to the top of the Barnstable public schools website then click on TRANSLATE to select their language to read updates.

## 4. Evaluations: Initial and 3 year re-evaluations

- Student assessments that require students to be in a face-to-face environment during testing are not happening at this time. This is because we need to be mindful of the validity and reliability of these assessments and that the student is not physically available during the closure due to state of emergency social distancing guidelines.
- We expect to continue our assessment process once school re-opens.



#### **5. Timelines related to services and documents**

- According to DESE, if a student's IEP has expired during the school closure, the student's IEP remains valid and in effect even after the expiration date.
- At this time, we are awaiting further DESE guidance about how to meet the federal and state timelines for meetings. However, while schools are closed, school day timelines are currently frozen from the last day of school before the state of emergency closing. This may change again if school closures continue.

#### **6. Residential and day placements**

- Pat Cosgrove is our Out of District Coordinator for families of students who receive special education services at residential and day programs. Her contact email is [cosgrove\\_patricia@mybps.us](mailto:cosgrove_patricia@mybps.us). Please contact her if you have not had any communication from your child's placement school.
- You should be checking for email from that school's staff or website so your child can access that specific school's remote learning plan and communication methods.

#### **7. Basic safety and support needs while out of school**

- Emergency services call 911
- Non-emergency resources call 211
- Crisis support, text HOME to 741741 to communicate with The Crisis Text Line
- Parental Stress Hotline call (800) 632-8188

#### **8. DESE resources**

- <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html>