

Northfield Special Services Frequently Asked Questions 2020-21

Q. If students choose the distance learning only option (Portage) , who will their teacher be? Will the case manager be doing both in person and distance learning to meet the needs of all students on their caseloads?

A. An IEP Case Manager will be assigned from the Portage program to coordinate services and provide instruction. When available or needed, different instructors may be providing various content areas. Once we have enrollment numbers and staff assignments made we will determine if a special education teacher is able to provide both in-person and Portage lessons.

Q. How will distance learning be done differently this time around for kids on IEPs?

A. We learned a lot about Distance Learning last spring. We have gathered input from parents, staff and students to help make improvements. We also learned that some students thrived in the Distance Learning model. We will take what we learned and continue to make improvements. Some materials and approaches will continue to be used, while others will be changed. Specialized instruction varies from student to student and we will make every effort to find a fit for your child(ren).

Q. Will a mask be required for special needs children?

A. Face coverings must be worn by students grades K-12 and staff at all times indoors unless they meet the criteria for being exempt. Documentation from your child's physician stating the student has a medical condition or a disability that prevents them from wearing the mask is required.

Our special education staff will help students with learning new routines and increasing tolerance for face coverings as appropriate. We will be sharing strategies for parents to also try while helping children prepare for the school year.

Q. Will those that need breaks from masks be able to?

A. Opportunities to take a break from a face covering will occur during recess and lunch, additional breaks will need to be worked out with the classroom teacher and special education team to determine if there are times the student may be able to be alone in an area to do so. Also, we are

making every effort to spend time outdoors when weather permits. Students may remove their masks when eating or drinking.

Q. How will the special education students receive their services like speech, dape, etc. Especially for speech. How will this work if having to wear a mask. And doing over zoom is not the same as in person.

A. Please refer to the Special Services Grid for examples for each model. At this time we are reviewing how staff who work with students in multiple buildings will serve students across the district. We want to control the exposure across buildings and groups of students. Some services such as Speech, where students and staff are in very close proximity and the risk is very high, will need to wear higher levels of PPE. such as a face shield, goggles and use of a plexiglass divider. Students and staff may also be provided clear masks so that the therapist and student can see the mouth for appropriate instruction and practice. Some speech and language services can be successfully provided through teletherapy allowing better visual cuing with fewer barriers.

Q Will kids that are in need of extra help be able to attend school vs online (During D.L.?)

A. If a school or the district is required to be in the Distance Learning Model or students are enrolled in the Portage option, they will not be able to be allowed in the school building for any services.. During the Hybrid model students who are placed in a setting II/III program where they receive the majority of their services through a highly structured program will be eligible to come in school for up to 4 days per week. Wednesdays during a Hybrid model will be a disinfecting day for the building. At this time we do not have the capacity to serve other students in school when they are assigned to distance learning. We must meet the 50% capacity rule and also keep cohorts of students consistent at each level.

Q. What are the plans to help transition students to new schools and structure this fall?

A. Our Special Education Case Managers, Guidance counselors and/or 504 Coordinators, will arrange for any individual needs for students with disabilities who would benefit from a tour or time in the building to help with transitions. Our Special Education teams plan for transition activities usually in the spring for students who may have more difficulty adjusting. If this did not occur for your child you may also call our Special Services Office at any time to discuss your concerns or requests. We will assist in communicating with the appropriate team members. 507-645-3410 Also, the MS and HS Principals will be sharing information on any plans for transition visits/activities for all 6th and 9th grade students.

Q. I have an incoming 8th grader, with a new 504 (?) and no idea how to proceed.

A. Each building has a designated 504 Coordinator and you may call the school office to make that connection or our special services office at any time. At the MS, the Guidance Counselors are the 504 contact for students assigned alphabetically. All 504 plans, including Health Plans, are reviewed in the fall and a 504 Coordinator will be in contact sometime during the first weeks staff are back to work. The week of September 8-11 is a time set aside for these types of connections and planning with families..