

Dear Families:

On March 13, 2020, in an effort to aggressively slow the spread of COVID-19, Governor Jay Inslee ordered the closure of all schools in the state of Washington for a minimum of six weeks, through April 24, 2020.

Wenatchee School District recognizes the significant impact an extended school closure will have on our entire community including students, families, and staff. Furthermore, we acknowledge the anxiety this may cause our parents and students, especially those who depend on us for special education instruction and related services. To that end, we have prepared a list of frequently asked questions to help address many of the common concerns regarding how special education services will be impacted by the extended school closure.

Thank you for working with us as our entire community responds to COVID-19.

Wenatchee School District  
Special Education Department

## **Wenatchee School District COVID-19 Response Impact on Special Education Services FAQ**

**Question 1:** During the extended closure of the Wenatchee School District (District), will my student still receive their Individualized Education Program (IEP) services?

**Answer:** No. If a school closure causes educational services for all students to pause within the District, then the District is generally not required to provide services to the affected students eligible for special education services during that same period of time.

The District will remain responsible for the free appropriate public education (FAPE) of its students eligible for special education services with an IEP. After the extended closure ends, the District will be reviewing how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to students eligible for special education services. This might include an IEP Team meeting to discuss compensatory education and extended school year services, but such decisions will be made on a case by case basis.

**Question 2:** Will the District provide mandatory online or distance learning during the extended school closure?

**Answer:** At this time, no. In alignment with recommendations from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the District has no current plans to provide online or distance

learning during the extended school closure. This includes both general and special education students.

OSPI has released recommendations regarding learning in the event of a prolonged absence or school closure. OSPI does not recommend an online distance learning model unless a district can ensure that all students will have equal access to learning. Our District has a diverse student population and many of our students do not have regular access to technology or the internet. Moreover, an online distance learning model would not be cohesive with many special education students' IEP services.

However, if the District does decide to provide distance learning only to certain grade levels—for example, only to seniors so they can accrue credits towards their graduation, then OSPI has recommended that IEP services also be provided to special education students in those grades.

**Question 3:** Does the extended school closure prohibit meetings such as evaluation/eligibility meetings, IEP meetings, student assessments, or child find screenings?

**Answer:** No. There is no prohibition against holding meetings at a school, or conducting individual student assessments, provided that appropriate social distancing methods are used. OSPI has issued guidance that directs districts to also consider ways to use distance technology (e.g., Zoom, conference calls) to the extent possible to provide child find, hold initial and annual IEP meetings, and/or evaluation/eligibility meetings, if staff and parents are available but not able/do not wish to attend in person.

**Question 4:** Can I request my IEP meeting be held telephonically?

**Answer:** Yes. The District understands that parents may want to limit their exposure to public places, including the schools. As explained in the Answer to Question 3, OSPI has issued guidance that that directs districts to consider ways to use distance technology to the extent possible to hold IEP and other meetings. To that end, the District encourages parents to schedule IEP meetings via telephone or video conference. The District is confident that both options still provide parents with a meaningful opportunity to participate in the IEP meeting. If you would like to attend an IEP meeting via telephone or video conference, please contact your IEP Team leader to discuss whether staff is available to do so.

**Question 5:** What if my student's annual IEP review deadline is during the extended school closure?

**Answer:** At this time the District has no guidance from the United States Department of Education regarding whether deadlines due during an extended school closure will be waived or extended.

**Question 6:** How does the extended school closure impact IDEA dispute resolution options, activities, and timelines?

**Answer:** There is no waiver from IDEA dispute resolution options and timelines, including state Citizen Complaints and Due Process Hearings. OSPI has stated that it will continue to respond to submissions from parents, the community, and school districts in a timely manner, and will consider whether extenuating circumstances demand changes in activities and timelines. In the event changes are needed, they will be documented and shared with the involved parties.

**Question 7:** How will the District make up the missed days due to the extended school closure?

**Answer:** Per state law, students are required to have 180 days of classroom instruction per year. OSPI has issued guidance which provides that districts that close in response to COVID-19 should make every effort to make up missed time, including using scheduled vacation days and planned school closure days. However, OSPI will grant emergency waivers to allow districts to end the school year on Friday, June 19 at the latest.

**Question 8:** Where can I turn for more information regarding the District's response to COVID-19?

**Answer:** We are committed to keeping you updated with information as soon as it becomes available. Please continue to check the Wenatchee School District Website for announcements related to COVID-19 and the actions the District is taking. The District's website is located at: <https://www.wenatcheeschools.org>.