

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

MARCH 23, 2020



“Through collaboration with member districts, the SLV BOCES brings a culture of excellence to education. The SLV BOCES empowers schools, families, and communities by providing services, support, and leadership to promote student achievement and success in life for all.”

SPECIAL EDUCATION DURING SCHOOL CLOSURE

Wow! So many changes so quickly. I will try to get out information to you all as I learn along the way. As directors we are receiving guidance and I am not sure anyone knows all the answers so things will change along the way.

Objective: To recognize ways we can support students who receive special education services during school closures when “the doors to learning are still open.”

Things to Remember

- This is new and no one has ever gone through this. Its uncharted territory.
- Everyone is battling different fears, including parents.
- This won't be easy for all students/families, nor will it be easy for teachers/providers who have kids at home, so we'll need to rely on one another for support to figure out how to team and navigate.
- Things will not be perfect, and they will likely be messy.
- Not all kids or families have the capacity, or a limited capacity, to be home for weeks, which can put parents and students at-risk. Let's not forget to be mindful, thoughtful and compassionate.

At this time, we would ask that you do the following:

- Analyze the individual needs of each student to create a specific plan. This should be done intentionally and we should be strategic in developing a plan for each student.
- Follow plan with individual district on online learning options. In the event a school is closed and no one is getting services, schools wouldn't be obligated to provide services to students with special needs (this statement is still being challenged). If schools are doing online or distance learning, they must make opportunities available to all students – even those with significant needs. It doesn't have to be a one-size fits all approach. But a good faith effort needs to be made; such as work projects for students and special ed teachers should be available to work with parents on projects that address a student's IEP. Solid good faith efforts need to be made and documented.

Upcoming Events:March

March 23- Zoom Office Hour 11:30-12:30

April

April 3- Staff Meeting/MTSS Team

April 14- SAC

April 13- Office Closed

April 21- Steering Committee

April 30- ES Teacher meeting 12:30-3:30

“Only those with tenacity can march forward in March”

— Ernest Agyemang Yeboah

SP ED SCHOOL CLOSURE CONT.

- Work with the general education teachers in your specific buildings to see how those services will be provided. Instruction (both general education and special education) must be differentiated.
 - Determine what services general education is providing and how this can be supported by special education.
- Possibly create a resource document for parents so they have supports through this time. Such as resources of online learning sites.
- Document contact with parents and what materials were sent home and provided online for instructional purposes.

**IEP Meetings**

There are multiple questions regarding IEP meetings that are scheduled and due during the closure. We continue to wait for further guidance regarding this process and will put out guidance as soon as we have direction from the state and federal departments. If it is a typical annual I see no reason to cancel because IEP meetings can be done via Zoom as well as conference calls. Please remember this can possibly last through the rest of this school year so putting off IEP meetings is not in the student's best interest. Using technology to support IEP meetings is our best option.

Evaluations

We are still in the process of gathering information from the Federal Government and State in regard to ongoing evaluations for students. Evaluations that require face-to-face will need to be delayed until school reopens or further guidance is provided. Evaluations and reevaluations that do not require face-to-face assessment or observations may take place while schools are closed if the parent agrees. Once again we can rely on technology.

The Office of Special Education has also been asked to provide guidance on how to code evaluations that fall outside the prescribed timelines. Please use code 61 (NOT VALID) and "COVID-19 School Closure" as the reason to identify those evaluations which are delayed due to school closures.

There are still many unanswered questions but I will try my best to keep communication flowing. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions. Nita McAuliffe nmcauliffe@slvboces.org or 719-87-5417.

Lastly, I wanted to celebrate our February Star Employees for the San Luis Valley BOCES. It is Bernice Gutierrez, paraprofessional at Monte Vista High School and Christine Jones-Daboll, speech therapist. Thank you both for your commitment to the Valley and for all your hard work.