

Benton-Stearns Education District #6383

Distance Learning Plan

March 30, 2020



Overview of Benton-Stearns Education District

Benton-Stearns Education District (BSED) is an education district with six member districts in central Minnesota, including Foley, Holdingford, Kimball, Rocori, Sartell-St. Stephen and Sauk Rapids-Rice school districts. BSED provides Part C Early Intervention services to students and families within the six members districts. BSED provides Setting IV programs (Voyagers) and 18-21 transition services (New Frontiers) to students enrolled and placed in these programs.

BSED employs specialized staff who provide direct and indirect services and supports to students and staff within the six member school buildings and programs including: Occupational and Physical Therapists, Teacher for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Audiologist, School Psychologists, Teacher for the Blind/Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Specialist and Teacher for the Physically Impaired. BSED Special Education Supervisors work in collaboration with district administrators with the implementation of the total special education system (TSES).

Distance Learning Defined: Students engaging in distance learning have access to appropriate educational materials and receive daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s). It is important to note that distance learning does not always mean e-learning or online learning. It is critical to provide this learning in a format that can be equitably accessed by all students. The BSED Distance Learning Plan will primarily address the students who attend the Voyagers and New Frontiers programs, as well as early intervention Part C service provision.

Access to appropriate educational materials, including technology

Early Intervention – Staff are working with individual families to determine their preferred mode of service delivery (technology platform or phone calls). At this time, all families have access to the internet and have email addresses. Staff will also scan and send resources as needed through email or USPS.

Voyagers and New Frontiers - We are using a combination of paper/pencil materials and Google Classroom for our distance learning experience. Parents were surveyed for available technology devices and access to the internet. All students were given email addresses in order to interface with our Google Classroom. Parents have been provided email access to the student information system, JMC, for easier parent communication. Students without technology were issued iPads for the duration of distance learning.

The initial delivery of materials will include binders of information and instruction for parents along with the first week of instructional materials. An iPad will be included in supplies for any student without a device. Some parents are picking up materials at the school. For students whose parents are not able to pick up items, the school will deliver them to the home. Parents were asked to select an area for contact free drop off.

Students will have opportunities for classroom instruction as well as personalized learning; one on one support as needed. Live lessons, recorded lessons, FaceTime, email, phone calls are some of the examples that will be utilized to support students and families at different levels.

The learning model will be secure in student data. Student work samples, grades, private information will not be in view of the camera or verbally shared when other people are in the chat. Private student/family data will only be shared with the student/family it pertains to; separate from instruction.

Related service providers including School Social Workers, School Psychologists, OTs and PTs, D/HH teacher, Audiologist, Assistive Technology specialist, PI consultant and Vision Consultant will be using e-platforms such as google meet, zoom or other platform to provide consultation to teams and interact with students and parents, along with phone calls and email

Related service providers work closely with member district staff to consult on individual student cases and determine progress and effectiveness of instruction. Services will be provided based on the Individual Distance Learning Plan and materials will be delivered to family's homes through member district transportation or directly by the related service provider. They will communicate with families through phone and email and families are also able to connect with providers regarding questions or input.

Daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s)

Early Intervention – Teachers will not interact daily with each family/student but will follow the amount of service as defined in each individual IFSP's. Teachers will use video chat methods to coach parents and to observe children as they are able. As we know young children often will not cooperate during a specific video chat, in those situations' parents may choose to video their child and share it with staff to review and consult.

Voyagers and New Frontiers – Distance learning lessons are planned for daily interaction, teachers continue to work and will be available throughout the day. Materials will be presented one week at a time. Lessons will be available for the entire week via Google Classroom. To support learners with reading difficulties, teachers are providing the option for materials to be read to them by uploading video recordings to the Google Classroom. We will also have daily office hours for students to call, email, or Google Meet with educational staff. Paraprofessionals will be able to offer support by participation in the Google Classroom, Google Meet and Google Hangouts. They will also connect with students by email and by phone. In addition, paraprofessionals will host a virtual homework support classroom for students who need additional access to staff supports.

Mental health needs of students

Early Intervention - The early intervention staff will continue to provide service coordination to families, which includes supporting mental health needs. Families in need of additional community supports will be provided information where to access mental health supports and services.

Voyagers and New Frontiers - Students will continue to have contact with the school social workers through daily social skills lessons. The social workers will have weekly individualized scheduled Google Meetings or phone calls with students who accept or seek support. Students will also have access via email contact. Paraprofessionals are instructed to actively listen for potential mental health issues and to direct the information to the social work staff. Resources available in the community will be shared with families during the distance learning period, if extra support is needed.

Students with IEPs/504 Plans

Early Intervention - The early intervention teachers will continue their goal of coaching parents/caregivers to build their competence and confidence so that they may enhance their child's development in everyday activities. Coaching conversations will help staff gather data on progress from parents/caregivers. They may ask parents to collect simple data on progress of a skill or take a video of the child demonstrating a skill.

Referrals and Evaluations in Part C - Parents will be contacted and the team will discuss the best process for completing evaluations. Some referrals may not be completed within timelines if face to face interaction is required. If it is obvious the child is demonstrating a developmental delay or condition; an override or informed clinical opinion may be used to assure the child receives services in a timely manner.

Voyagers and New Frontiers-Teachers differentiate instruction based on needs. Academic support and coaching will be offered by licensed staff and paraprofessionals via our technology. Video recordings are offered for struggling readers and paraprofessionals will act as scribes when necessary. Students will be allowed to dictate answers to staff. Paraprofessionals will be assigned 1:1 for high needs students for academic support virtually. They will read, record, and encourage on task behavior and help with structuring the learning schedule. Paraprofessionals are members of the Google Classroom and will support the teachers. Related services will continue to be provided via Google Classroom and Meet, video uploads, and/or consultation with parents and teachers as directed in the IEP.

Case managers will connect with parents/guardians to discuss and review all IEPs and propose the distance learning model for service delivery. A Prior Written Notice will outline the distance learning plan for each student to outline the IEP service delivery model during Distance Learning and be sent home to parents/guardians.

IEP meetings will be held via conference call or an electronic meeting platform. Initial evaluations are never done at Voyagers and New Frontiers. Re-evaluations will be conducted using non face to face methods. Staff will use consultation with parents, technology when appropriate, and USPS if needed.

Recent trimester report card and progress reports were used as the basis for our baseline measurement for progress during the distance learning period.

Students access to internet as needed

Early Intervention - Teachers will work with each individual family to determine if they have internet access and assist them as needed. As a team, (the parents & teacher) will determine the best mode of communication for their services, based on individual family/child needs and access.

Voyagers and New Frontiers – Parents/guardians were surveyed for available internet access. The free available community resources were shared with parents who requested them. At this time all students have access, when appropriate, to the internet for distance learning.

Meal delivery and distribution

Early Intervention - Families will be provided with information for local food shelves and distribution locations across the community. Families with school age children will access food in the local district.

Voyagers and New Frontiers – Parent/guardians and students are supported through their resident district food distribution networks. Parents were provided the links to the resident district websites with instructions for food distribution. All students in need of meals during distance learning have access in their communities. We will assess food needs as distance learning unfolds to determine if additional snack and nutrition items need to be distributed to support student learning.

Support for English Learners

Early Intervention - We will continue to access interpreters and include them on virtual visits to support our families whose home language is other than English. We will assure all written material that is shared is provided in the home language as required by law.

Voyagers and New Frontiers – All students enrolled are English speaking at this time. If any parent needs access to materials and information in a language other than English the staff will contract with an interpreter to provide access.

Students experiencing homelessness

Early Intervention - As service coordinators, Early Intervention teachers and staff will continue to work with families on their individual needs to access resources in the community.

Voyagers and New Frontiers – All students and families currently have housing. If the need arises during distance learning the case manager and school social worker will work with the family/student to access resources in the community. Resident district homeless liaison will also be accessed to meet individual needs.

Early Learning B-3 Services

Our early intervention team is trained in EQIP - evidence based practices to embed learning into everyday routines. This is done through coaching the caregiver/parent. Through this model, staff learns the parent's learning style and provides information in the method they prefer (videos, handouts, verbally, modeling, etc.) Our method of delivery does not include providing materials but rather, using what the family already has in their home. This will continue through distance learning. Our Google Site has been developed to share activities and suggestions to families which they will embed into everyday activities/routines. The site includes categories of: Tips from teachers, Play, Movement, and Communication. In addition, staff will also provide individualized instruction to families regarding the child's outcomes.

Assessment

Early Intervention – The early intervention staff will continue using the HELP checklist to monitor student growth and development during distance learning. Staff may need to rely more heavily on parent observation and reporting to get updated information regarding student progress versus observing the skill first hand.

Voyagers and New Frontiers – Staff will assess students based on work completion, attendance, parental feedback with data collection. Progress on IEP goals and objectives will be measured upon return to face to face learning and compared to the Trimester baseline data. Grades will be given on academic work at the end of the trimester.

Regular communication with families

Early Intervention - Our teachers are in constant communication with families whether we are providing face to face or distance learning. During the initial intake process the case manager and parents determine the preferred mode of communication (Text, call, email, written) and the staff individualizes to meet the family needs. For memos and messages from the BSED organization, case managers will be given this information and distribute it to families in digital or paper format. The Google Site will also be a place to post information as well as the BSED website.

Voyagers and New Frontiers - Staff will communicate with families through the student information system, JMC, messaging center for all notifications. Individual teacher classroom phones will be forwarded to the cell or home phone on days when teachers are unable to be in the building. Educational staff will reach out through email and Google Meetings. A schedule and methods for reaching staff has been sent home with the students instructional materials. Directions for our distance learning procedures were sent home through the JMC push notification method.

Utilize partnerships to meet the needs of vulnerable students

Voyagers and New Frontiers -Our students will continue to have contact with the social workers through daily social skills lessons. The social workers will have weekly scheduled Google Meetings or phone calls with students who accept or seek support. Students will also have access via email contact. Paraprofessionals are instructed to actively listen for potential mental health issues and to direct the information to the social work staff. If educational staff are concerned about potential issues or crisis they will reach out to supervisory staff and follow reporting procedures.

When appropriate the licensed staff have permission/releases to exchange information with a student's county social workers, probation officers, and therapists. Information will continue to be exchanged during distance learning in order to coordinate care.

Support for staff

Early Intervention - Email will be a primary mode of communication. Staff will continue to have weekly team and program meetings, using Zoom or Google Meet. Through these meetings staff is provided with guidance on various platforms of technology as well as a shared resource folder with many

guidance documents and tip sheets on providing distance learning. Additional meetings have been held during the planning phase and will continue as needed.

Supervisor checks in individually with staff through a phone call every two weeks and more often as needed.

Voyagers and New Frontiers – All staff have daily 30 minute collaboration meetings scheduled for their respective teams. They are to continue to develop academic plans, share information learned each day and problem solve any issues that arise. Licensed staff will have one large team meeting per week. Paraprofessionals will also have a scheduled weekly team meeting. The supervisor will be involved in the scheduled meetings and will be available by phone, email and technology for support and direction.

At the beginning of distance learning, staff were provided tutorials and resources for teaching through nontraditional delivery methods. During the distance learning process, staff will be participating in their own learning by continuing with scheduled training via Infinitec, Ted Talks, book studies, etc. Licensed staff will be asked to set a personal learning goal and to develop a method to share with colleagues. Paraprofessionals will participate in a Google Classroom set up for them. Disability specific information will be shared through the Google Classroom.

BSED administration and supervisors will reach out to all employees by program or service within the 1st week of Distance Learning to inquire and reflect on the implementation of instruction, how technology is working for families, students and staff. Changes will be made as needed to be as effective as possible. BSED administration will stay connected with staff regularly via email and google hangout meetings for regular updates and wellbeing check ins.

Tracking attendance of students and staff

Early Intervention - Student attendance is reported in SpEd forms just as it is during face to face visits. In addition, the communication log in SpEd forms will be utilized to document all contacts made, attempted contacts and consultation with related service providers.

Voyagers and New Frontiers - Staff are scheduled daily for Google Classroom, homework hotline or in-building activities. Daily meetings are scheduled on the Google calendar. All staff are logging their contact with students and parents in the contact log. Email responses and completion of Infinitec training (certificate) will count towards attendance.

Student attendance will be measured through daily assignments, email and phone outreach. Student access to the homework hotline will also be logged and evaluated for effectiveness.

All BSED Staff

Licensed staff are expected to follow the school calendar for reporting to work each day during the distance learning period. Continued use of personnel activity logs will be used for daily work. Staff will use the contact log for documentation of student/case manager consultation and collaboration.

Staff will be expected to follow normal leave procedures if they are unable to complete their typical workday utilizing sick leave, personal leave or other leave in accordance with employee contracts and agreements.

Assessment and adjustment of distance learning plan during implementation

Early Intervention - Through weekly staff meetings and staff consultation calls current programming for each student will be discussed and determined if it is effective. Families will be given an opportunity to share concerns and questions with the program supervisor or case managers. Link on Google Site.

Voyagers and New Frontiers - Staff will debrief daily on scheduled Google Meetings. Information will be shared and adjustments to procedures will be made as necessary. The weekly licensed staff meeting will be used to problem solve and adjust programming. Weekly paraprofessional meetings will be used to gather data and to inform of any changes to procedures or individual programming. Feedback from parents will be taken into consideration. Parents have been provided necessary contact information with their initial learning material packets. Any changes affecting our process will be shared with parents in our JMC push notification system. All educational programming will remain individualized and will continue to be differentiated.

Rate of work completion, emails, phone logs, and Google meetings will be used to gather data. Contact logs will be shared in a Google Doc for analysis by licensed staff.

The BSED administrative team will review the Distance Learning Plan weekly to determine its effectiveness in implementation. Adjustments will be made as needed and the Plan will be reposted on the website. Programs and teams will have discussions at regular meetings on whether the Distance Learning Plan is meeting the needs of students and families. Adjustments will be made as needed to meet student and family needs.