

# Emerson | Instructional Continuity Plan

## Guidelines for the Emerson COVID-19 District Health-Related Closure Plan

By order of Governor Murphy and in conjunction with the NJ Department of Education, Emerson's public schools have shifted from on-site to at-home learning for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. As a result, the virtual school option, in place since March 2020, will continue until June 18th, the last day of school. This solution will continue to make use of the strong technology-based backbone of the school district, the pre-planning by the staff, and student home-based Internet access. The Emerson Public School District will continue to offer meaningful and continuous home instruction for students during a written, declared public health emergency in the event that we are told that schools must close, and have it still "count" under State requirements for the 180 day mandate. [State guideline memo, March 5, 2020]

### **Equitable Access to Instruction:**

The plan that follows includes equitable and differentiated access to instruction for all students. All students with varied and age appropriate needs are addressed.

#### Demographic Profile:

- Total enrollment: 1098 students
- State-funded preschool (N/A)
- Homeless: \*
- Migrant LSE: \*
- Students with Disabilities: 205 students
- English Language Learners: 26 students

#### Delivery of Virtual and Remote Instruction

In recognition of the increased demands upon two-worker families, chronic health conditions in student homes, and the general stress of managing the onset of a global pandemic, Emerson has utilized a primarily asynchronous model of instruction. This enables our families to work with their children at a time and a place in which family stress is not exacerbated by the ticking clock or the waiting teacher.

100% of Emerson students have a device conducive to learning. Three families without wifi access for their district Chromebooks have been identified and provided with access to a district Optimum account and/or helped to get individual access by the district as part of our 1:1 programs.

Younger elementary students (Pre-K to grade 2) were originally given hard-copy resources and plans, but now access them through the district website using a parent smartphone or other family-owned device. Teachers are regularly in contact with every family by telephone and email to ensure that all families have a working device and that 100% of students have been able to access the materials posted.

Students at the older grade levels (3-12) will continue to use their well-established, at-home devices and wireless technology to access a variety of platforms and learning modules. We will continue to measure and address the ongoing digital divide by communicating frequently with parents, including regular phone calls to families.

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## **Differentiation and Struggling Learners:**

Differentiation for all learners is provided by teachers at every level during distance learning. Teachers frequently incorporate “choice board” activities that provide a variety of ways for students to work towards the same learning goal. Additionally, Google Classroom allows for teachers to assign individual tasks to individual students based on their needs. Teachers at the lower elementary level are able to email parents directly with lesson plans tailored to the needs of specific individual students.

Teachers are checking for understanding and assessing mastery of NJSLS using a variety of methods. Students submit work to their teachers via email and/or Google Classroom. Student assignments that demonstrate proficiency range from written work to multimedia creations to photos and videos taken of hands-on projects and performances. Students at the grades 7-12 level will be compiling key evidence of learning into a hyperdoc portfolio aligned to the major NJSLS learning goals of each of their courses.

All I&RS plans are still being implemented. I&RS teams will continue to convene virtually via teleconferencing to review plans and student needs. Struggling students are identified by teacher or parent referral to the building principal and counseling department based on their participation in distance learning (or lack thereof) and the quality of work completed. Support continues to be provided by Basic Skills Instruction teachers, as well as paraprofessionals, social workers, and counselors.

## **Social-Emotional Learning and Mental Health Wellness**

Dr. Sandy Vazquez (Director of Special Services) and Ms. Kelly Riedel (Director of Counseling) continuously share expectations with their respective departments through meetings and the development of a Distance Learning Doc through Google Chrome. Through this collaboration the departments develop ways to be productive and engage with students during this time. Counselors and child study team members document work-flow with their supervisors and establish available office hours for students and/or parents to communicate with them. Counselors and CST members are responsible for staying in touch with students whom we know might find this type of learning a challenge, all contact is well-documented. School counselors virtually conduct course selection meetings with parents and students along with junior conferences, etc.

Social Emotional Learning and Mental Health Wellness is offered through individual and group counseling by school psychologists, social workers, school counselors and a school-based mental health clinician through West Bergen Mental Healthcare through telepractice. Additionally, a “warm line” has been established for students, families and staff to access mental health services. Mindfulness individual and group sessions are offered by the district’s occupational therapist, Mrs. Christine Moran.

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## **Addressing Special Education Needs:**

**The provision of remote/virtual instruction to implement Individual Education Plans (IEPs) for students with disabilities to the greatest extent possible includes the following:**

- Students in grades 3-12 have a chromebook to access distance learning activities including Google Classrooms, Google Hangouts and various APPs per IEPs. Students in grades PK-2 have iPads or a home computer to access Google Hangout for circle time and other learning activities.
- Collaborative teachers co-plan the lessons with their partners, making appropriate modifications
- Collaborative teachers proactively reach out to students with IEPs in their class to provide additional support and appropriate modifications and accommodations.
- Instructional assistants are in touch with their assigned students to provide support.
- Resource program teachers plan with their grade level colleagues and make appropriate modifications for their students to be shared with students and parents.
- Special program teachers (SEEDS, LLD) work with CST, Dr. Sandy Vazquez (Director of Special Services), and the case managers to plan appropriate, supported, and scaffolded activities for those students
- Teachers create instructional videos so that students and parents may re-visit videos for repetition purposes.
- Speech and language, occupational and physical therapy along with counseling are provided through telepractice with the use of Google Meet.
- The district's Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) provides support to students, parents, and staff virtually through Google Meet and via phone and email communication. Social skills groups are offered through Google Meet on a weekly basis by the district's BCBA, social worker and speech and language specialist in accordance to student IEPs.

**The methods to document IEP implementation including the tracking of services, student progress as well as provision of accommodations and modifications:**

- IEPs are accessible digitally through Frontline IEP to monitor goals and document progress.
- Collaborative teachers co-plan the lessons with their partners, making appropriate modifications
- Collaborative teachers proactively reach out to students with IEPs in their class to provide additional support and appropriate modifications and accommodations.
- Resource program teachers plan with their grade level colleagues and make appropriate modifications for their students to be shared with students and parents.
- Regression/Recoupment Form has been developed.

**Case managers follow up with families to ensure services are implemented in accordance with IEPs to the greatest extent possible through the following practices:**

- Case managers communicate regularly with parents and staff on student's progress. Additionally, they are in consistent communication with parents and staff members for students enrolled in out-of-district programs.
- Case managers coordinate virtual conferences with parents, teachers and administrators through Google Meet to provide assistance and collaborate on any concerns that arise.

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## **Procedures for virtual IEP meetings, evaluation and other meetings to identify, evaluate and/or reevaluate students with disabilities:**

- As required by N.J.A.C. 6A:14, Annual Review, Initial Planning, Re-evaluation and Eligibility Determination Meetings have been held with parents in accordance to the timelines through Google Meet (audio/virtual conference).
- Evaluations except for social histories, private providers and functional assessments through the results of NSJLA, DRA and curriculum assessments have been suspended to avoid jeopardizing the integrity of assessments. All evaluations will be scheduled and conducted once schools reopen.
- A document of timelines of referrals and evaluations is maintained.

## **Addressing ELL and Bilingual Needs**

Our dedicated ESL teacher continues to work directly with her identified students on a daily basis, providing one class period of face to face virtual instruction via Google Meets as well as consultations by email.

As part of our Title 1-funded ASPIRE program, we stipend a bilingual Parent Liaison to communicate directly with our ELL families. Most contact is via telephone or text message, but he also provides translated materials as needed. Our liaison helps students and families troubleshoot challenges as they arise, regarding access to technology or instruction.

Teachers continue to provide differentiation and modifications to our ELL learners, much as they did during on-site instruction. Additionally, we have used our Title III funds to gain access to a variety of online supports specifically targeting the needs of our ELL students, including access to the Brain POP ELL program for all ELLs, access to Brain POP in Spanish for our Spanish-speaking ELLs, and access to texts via Raz-Kids at higher grade levels which do not currently have access for all general education students.

## **Safe Delivery of Meals:**

We have been working with our food service vendor, Pomptonian. Pomptonian has been following safe food preparation protocols and providing bagged meals, which district employees deliver to identified families at their homes in a contact-free manner. The district has also communicated recent changes at the state and federal level regarding qualifying to reduced-cost meals, and has offered direct district point-of-contact to facilitate application and eventual access to these, and similar, programs.

## **Length of Virtual or Remote Instruction Day:**

The remote learning plan is designed to maximize student growth and learning to the greatest extent possible. The expectation is for students to complete a full day of school that keeps grade level and content area instruction expectations in-tact.

Per the direction offered to staff members, teachers were expected to offer a minimum of 300 minutes of instruction per day. This instruction took the form of independent assignments, feedback to students on work submitted via Google Classroom, pre-recorded video lessons, one-to-one as well as group contact during video-based "Teacher Office Hours" and emails sent both individually and to student groups. This was a districtwide expectation for all content areas.

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All instructional staff prepare lessons and learning activities that are communicated to students via the district's Google Classroom Learning System for grades 3-12 and Google Sites in grades PK-2. This has been part of the district-based teaching practice for the past 5+ years and it is well known to our students, teachers, and parents. Due to the flexible nature of the at-home school day, learning will be asynchronous and completed over the course of the day. While staff members may want to designate specific times to offer student feedback, and a schedule of "office hours" availability has been put in place at the 7-12 level, there is no set time at which classes must meet online. Each class has an engagement section and/or a reflection/collaboration piece optimally lasting approx. 15-20 minutes per day and the amount of time spent on course-related work should be equivalent to a regular class period. Students have the lesson available to them at or prior to 8:00am each morning. Weekly planning and projects are highly encouraged, but scaffolded for students into daily time management suggestions.

Teachers are available to communicate with students/parents throughout the day via email, document-based comments, screencasting, and video. Additionally, it is reasonable to expect that if a student communicates with the teacher via email that the teacher would respond either during their regular class time or within a reasonable amount of time via email during the school day. The goal of the day is student-teacher interaction and peer-to-peer collaboration, as the vast majority of our staff so often do already.

All lessons are aligned with district-approved curriculum and New Jersey Student Learning Standards. All lessons will have a student learning objective as per district instructional guidelines. All lessons will have means to check for student understanding of that objective and offer specific student feedback.

Examples of tools that could be used for a daily lesson may include:

- Collaborative writing in a **Google Doc** with teacher feedback.
- An **EdPuzzle video** where students provide feedback and receive feedback.
- A class or small group **FlipGrid** video discussion.
- Using **Padlet** for a classroom brainstorm or posting.
- Using the discussion features in **Google Classroom**.
- Using the video conference feature in **Google Hangouts**.
- Have the teacher demonstrate a task (i.e. experiment, solving a math problem) via Youtube video or **Screencastify** and then have students have a reflective dialogue with the teacher and/or peers about their results in **Google Classroom** or a **Google Doc**.
- Have the class create a class **Google Slides** explaining a concept or presenting claims and evidence (each student makes a slide) and the teacher provides feedback on the task.
- Create a **Google Form** with questions for students to assess or poll. (videos & images can be added)
- Shared class notes using **Google Docs** based on a teacher presentation.
- Online read alouds and questioning via **Raz Kids**
- Online program to create assessments for skills via **EduLastic**
- Interactive math program individualized to student pace via **IXL** and/or **XtraMath**
- Everyday Math games practice via **Connect Ed**
- Connected Mathematics practice via **MathXL**
- **Online textbooks** with interactive features for middle and high school courses

Physical Education classes not currently in health will shift to a health focus. Physical Education/Health teachers will take a grade level focus that is in the curriculum and focus lessons on hygiene and germ transmission prevention as well as lessons that complement the work they have already done with mindfulness, stress

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reduction, and mental health awareness. Students should also be encouraged to log physical activity/exercise at home if they are otherwise healthy as a supplemental activity.

The focus of Fine and Performing Arts classes should be individual performance and creation. Give students the opportunity to try something different and use the power of digital tools and collaboration to make this happen. Students can create and post performance videos of music, a visual arts work, or a meal cooked and share with their teacher for feedback. For example, music teachers can have students use their Chromebooks and Google Hangouts to collaborate and record or play/sing from their own homes.

## **Attendance Plan**

To ensure that students get credit for attendance, we are using our district-approved protocol in the Genesis system, via which parents are able to mark their students absent on days when they are not able to access or participate in distance learning.

For the 2019-2020 year, we have waived the “seat time” requirements for individual course credit, but will continue to monitor daily attendance. Parents have the ability to enter student absences through the SMS which is monitored daily to track student attendance for illness or other reasons. Students who are not participating in any instruction as evidenced by not engaging in lessons/activities through Google classroom are flagged for attendance purposes and follow-up is made by counselors and/or attendance personnel. In matters of persistent attendance concerns, welfare checks, truancy measures or consultations with DCPD are conducted. Systems of student review and intervention remain in place and while promotion will happen for all students, we have begun to make special note of students who may have experienced severe, as opposed to typical, regression found during this unique time and place. 12th graders who do not meet our graduation requirements have been pre-identified long before the at-home model was put in place, and we have been working with them at length during this time.

We have a strong system in place to follow up with families when a student is not participating in online instruction and/or submitting assignments. At each building, principals are keeping a spreadsheet to document contact to these families by teachers, counselors, social workers, CST members and administrators via email and phone-calls. If classroom teachers are not successful in their initial attempts to contact students and families directly to encourage, they will add student names to the building spreadsheet so that additional support personnel can contact the family and assist them in working through any challenges.

## **Facilities Plan:**

Recognizing that our custodial, buildings and grounds, and maintenance staff are vital to our facilities, the district has maintained a socially-distant, medically cognizant plan to continue to apply disinfectant, clean where needed, and keep our buildings prepared for the eventual return of students. We have been thoughtful about only calling upon this staff to complete essential work necessary during this time, and have refrained from projects or other activities that are unnecessary.

## **Summer Programming Plan:**

Extended School Year (ESY) programs for students with disabilities in accordance to students IEPs will be delivered using online platforms as described above for students with special needs. Related services will also continue to be provided remotely. This delivery will occur in conjunction with our Region II colleague districts so as to align instructional practices and utilize collaborative partnerships. The ESY Program will be held remotely beginning Monday, June 29th, 2020 and ending Friday, July 24th, 2020. The district will be closed on July 3rd and

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ESY programming will resume on July 6th, 2020. The Preschool Disabled ESY Program will be scheduled from 9:00 - 11:00am. All other programs will be scheduled from 9:00 - 12:00pm.

If a student were to indicate a need for credit recovery the district would employ current existing virtual programs such as Educere. This online program has been used extensively in the past and to great success. Regarding learning loss during the at-home education model, the district will speak with parents who have been the primary point-of-contact for their children during this time. This may include surveys to gather quantitative data. Alongside that, the district will be working with outside vendors to use computer-based assessments to gather student proficiency feedback.

Our preliminary plans for the Class of 2020 graduation ceremony include contracting with vendors to do a professionally compiled virtual graduation ceremony for online video streaming. We are keeping an eye on reports from around the country for ideas to supplement the online ceremony while maintaining appropriate social distancing and adhering to whatever the latest guidelines will be in June.

We do not typically offer STEM programs or Title 1 extended learning programs or 21st Century programs during the summer, so will continue to not offer these in summer 2020.

## **Bias and Stigma associated with COVID-19**

Understanding that COVID-19 could bring unwanted bias or stigma upon certain ethnic and religious groups, our district will be hyper-aware of student behavior and utilize prevention, response, and educational strategies to prevent or combat bias and stigma associated with the virus.

## **Conclusion**

In sum, the Emerson Public School District virtual days have worked well thus far, because although shutting a school down for a public health emergency may be new to us, the tools and strategies that we will be employing are not. We have been a 1:1 district for 5 years and all teachers in grades 3-12 currently use Google Docs and Google Classroom extensively in their instruction. Our staff has acquired and employs skills that makes us a leading district in terms of our innovation and readiness to employ this meaningful instruction. We are more than happy to share our plans and recommendations with other districts and leaders as warranted.

This plan is available on our district website at

<http://www.emersonschools.org/?L=2&PN=MainPage&DivisionID=%2720080%27&DepartmentID=%272721%27&SubDepartmentID=%27%27&TabNo=2>

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