

NEC Remote Learning Plan: Expectations for Staff

Our primary goal at NEC is the safety, health, and well-being of all of our staff and students. This document addresses how we will provide remote learning when our schools are closed for a prolonged period of time during the pandemic of 2020.

To the extent possible, we will be following the guiding principles and recommendations for remote learning as outlined by Commissioner Jeff Riley in his memo on March 26, 2020, as well as the Special Education Guidance provided by USDE and DESE.

Summary of Statewide Expectations for General Education and Special Education:

- Remote learning cannot replace school.
- Health, safety, and emotional wellness are the number one priorities.
- Maintaining connections and engagement with students is our most important job.
- All districts and schools are expected to adopt a comprehensive “Remote learning model” by early April in keeping with the guidance from the Commissioner.
- Teachers are encouraged to use COVID-19 as part of the curriculum.....there are important lessons to be learned about science, sociology, history, math (understanding that curve!), etc.
- We must provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. DESE recognizes that these unprecedented circumstances may affect how all educational and related services and supports are provided. While USED (Federal Gov.) and DESE (MA State Gov.) will offer flexibility where possible, USED has emphasized many disability-related modifications and services may be effectively provided remotely or online.
- Schools may not be able to provide all services in the manner they are typically provided pursuant to students’ IEPs. The provision of FAPE may include, as appropriate, special education and related services provided remotely through resources and supports (such as strategies, projects and packets provided to students matched with regular and ongoing communication from special education team members) and services and instruction (such as virtual, online, or telephonic instruction). During this period of school closure, districts should make every effort to use creative strategies to provide special education instruction and services to the extent feasible.

We recognize that the level of instruction for remote learning will not be equivalent to what is taught in the traditional classroom setting. We need to be more sensitive than ever to the needs of our students and families. We recognize that parents and guardians will be in charge of their children’s learning, and they will likely have less familiarity with content and pedagogical knowledge; thus, students will have less explicit structure, support, and time for learning than they would receive in a typical school day in our buildings. To that end, we have shared the following factors for our staff to keep in mind as they engage in this new model of education:

- Students will be participating in self-directed learning in alternative educational settings with less structure, no teacher, and lots of other things happening in their lives.
- Parents/Guardians cannot be expected to take your place as instructors; they may not know the content and even if they know the content, they may not know the pedagogy.
- Parents/Guardians also may be juggling work or working from home, taking care of younger children or family members, or dealing with illnesses.
- Learning time will be significantly shorter, and we can expect that it will be reduced by at least half each day and week.

- We encourage educators to work together in teams and be mindful of the amount of work that is given to students and families.

Specific Plan for NEC:

- Every NEC student will receive an individualized learning plan for the month of April. This plan will include multiple opportunities each week for face-to-face instruction with teachers or specialists, individualized check-ins, a recommended daily schedule, and a comprehensive list of learning resources, activities, and projects.
 - In general, we should be focused on enrichment and on reinforcing skills that have already been learned and preventing substantial regression.
 - There are some special issues for high school students earning credit and/or graduating seniors. The DESE is recommending a credit/no credit approach for this semester with maximum flexibility around unique family situations.
- We know that not all students and families will have equal ability to access what we are offering, but we should be trying to at least have SOME CONTACT with every student.
- Every employee is expected to do their best to be available for remote staff or team meetings and to be part of these learning plans and/or supportive check-ins with students and families. We know that this will not look the same for everyone.
- Every Unit A professional is expected to be doing their best to utilize the tools that we are offering to create lessons, activities, or sessions.
 - We will be providing remote tutorials, drop-in support sessions, and “mini classes” to help you.
 - We are awaiting further guidance from DESE around “tele-therapy”....many of the usual restrictions required by professional organizations are being waived during this period, but we expect therapists/clinicians to be posting resources and checking in, at least weekly, with students on their caseloads.
 - We have provided a “confidentiality disclaimer” around use of remote learning in our letter to parents as advised by DESE and our attorney.
- Instructional Assistants/ Unit B Professionals are expected to work with their teams to provide student/family support or to support teachers in preparing for and implementing remote learning opportunities. This will vary by program.
- You may be asked to participate in a remote IEP. We will be assessing this on a case by case basis.
- Learning activities should support reinforcement and practice of previously taught curriculum, skills, and enrichment activities.
- Because of the demands on everyone’s schedules (teachers and families), learning may be synchronous (in real time) or asynchronous (not in real time).
- Activities should engage the **independent** learning level, and students should be able to work on those activities with minimal support from parents and caregivers.
- Only plan for about half (at most) of what we would expect students to do if they were in class.
- Assignments/activities should be given on a regular schedule, but new assignments do not need to be given every day. Some examples include:
 - Staff could post assignments every Monday morning with the expectation that students work on them a little bit every day that week, including explicit suggestions for how students can break large tasks into manageable daily sections.
 - Staff could give students a menu of options of possible activities and suggest they complete a certain number of tasks each week.
- Work should not be graded and will not count towards report cards, but feedback can and should be given for any submitted student work.

- Regular communication with students and parents is a priority. Communication can take many forms including group emails or posts to Google classroom or Classroom Dojo, phone calls, written feedback on students work, or check-ins with students using a video chat platform.
- The most important outcome is for students to feel cared for and supported by their teachers, and to be meaningfully engaged in learning activities for some portion of each day. We want teachers to stay in touch with students and their families during this difficult time, providing guidance, support and encouragement along the way.

Staff Hours and the Work Day

- School as we knew it a few weeks ago has completely changed. The length of our educators' work days will be flexible, customizable, and pared down considerably, as many of them are juggling the same responsibilities as our families. They are not expected to hold traditional school hours, nor are they expected to adhere to the traditional curriculum. It is not expected that educators will be working more than approximately half of their typical hours/ week.
- All staff are expected to check their emails and voicemails daily.
- All staff are expected to participate in remote team and staff meetings.
- Educators will also use their time at their discretion (unless otherwise noted) for the following:
 - Remote collaboration within their teams/grades/departments/mentors and protégés
 - Preparation of curriculum materials, assignments, and activities.
 - Virtual Staff Meetings with Principals or Departments at scheduled times
 - Professional development time for preparation regarding enrichment and remote learning opportunities.
 - Remote participation in IEP meetings.
 - Communication with students and families.
 - Read and respond to emails.
- When speaking with families, educators should use available options to maintain the privacy of personal contact information. Should an educator have concerns about speaking with a family regarding a particular matter or issue or if the educator needs assistance with volume of inquires; the educator shall call or email your principal or director for further assistance.
- Educators are not expected to work during the April Vacation week. Given concerns about family and student mental health at this stressful time, programs may set up systems for checking in and emotional support during the vacation period utilizing staff members who volunteer their time and/or are willing to flex their schedules accordingly.

NEC understands that this is largely “uncharted waters” and that educators will have other responsibilities throughout the day. The expectations are for everyone to do their best to maintain communication and connection with our students until normal operations can resume.