



March 23, 2020

Dear Portsmouth Families of Students Receiving Special Education Services,

As you now know, the Portsmouth School Department, along with all other schools in Rhode Island, are closed through April 3, 2020, due to the Coronavirus. Thank you for your patience as we navigate through uncharted territory.

These are unprecedented times and the information and guidelines from local, state and federal authorities have resulted in decisions and actions that will continue to evolve and adapt to the quickly changing environment in our state. Beginning today, March 23, students and teachers will embark on a new way of teaching and learning through distance learning. During the week of March 16 when schools were on "April Vacation", our Portsmouth teachers worked exceptionally hard to prepare for our students to begin learning today. Our special education staff worked individually and collectively to develop learning activities for students assigned to their caseloads. Each service provider who works with your child is ready to reach out to assist with learning using various platforms such as Google Meet, Zoom, Telephone, and e-mail. Their efforts in outreach to students will be to answer questions, offer additional resources and encourage students to complete work to keep their brains academically active. I acknowledge that there will be challenges and "bumps in the road" to work out but, your children's special education staff are committed to make their best efforts on behalf of students with disabilities. I assure you that during these two weeks of distance learning, my office will monitor staff activities, successes and challenges to assist with future planning if it is needed beyond April 3, 2020.

It is important for you to know that at this time, Evaluation/Re-Evaluation Meetings and IEP Meetings will be canceled through April 3, 2020. Our special education staff needs to focus on student learning and to adapt to this new way of teaching. I also anticipate that our families also need to focus on new schedules and distance learning overall. Further, during this time my office will be working to operationalize "virtual meetings" should school closures extend beyond April 3, 2020.

Lastly, please be sure to read Dr. Kenworthy's recent correspondences regarding Distance Learning in the district. If you still have not arranged for a device for your child, please contact your building principal.

I offer my best to all families and I hope that you stay safe and healthy during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Colwell".

Lisa C. Colwell, Ed.D.
Director of Pupil Personnel Services