



Somerset County Educational Services Commission

991 Route 22 West, Suite 301, Bridgewater, NJ 08807

www.somersetcountyesc.org

Emergency Virtual or Remote Instruction 2021-2022

Board Approved: 12/01/2021

Central Office: 908-707-0070

School Address: 7 Finderne Avenue, Bridgewater, NJ 08807

Somerset Elementary Academy: 908-707-0070 x 200

Somerset Secondary Academy: 908-707-0070 x 200

Career Center: 908-707-0070 x 200

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Overview

In April 2020, Governor Murphy issued an executive order that became P.L.2020, c.27. This law provides for the continuity of instruction in the event of a public-health related district closure so that LEAs can utilize virtual or remote instruction to satisfy the 180-day requirement pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9. In order to provide transparency and ensure that New Jersey students continue to receive high quality, standards-based instruction, each school district, charter school, renaissance school project and Approved Private School for Students with Disabilities (APSSDs) must annually submit its proposed program for virtual or remote instruction (plan) to the Commissioner of Education. This plan would be implemented during a district closure lasting more than three consecutive school days due to a declared state of emergency, declared public health emergency, or a directive by the appropriate health agency or officer to institute a public health-related closure.

Mission Statement

The mission of the SCESC is to provide our diverse student population with opportunities to increase their academic and behavioral growth in a safe learning environment, ultimately establishing a foundation for them to become lifelong learners. In collaboration with parents/guardians, sending school districts, and any other relevant stakeholders, preparing our students with the necessary 21st Century learning skills will lead to successful post-secondary endeavors.

Guiding Principles

Somerset County Educational Services Commissions strives to provide a safe learning environment with a focus on equity, while working with all stakeholders, for all students. This plan was created to implement a schedule for emergency virtual/remote instruction for the 2021-2022 school year. In accordance with N.J.S.A. 18A:7F-9, a public school district academic year consists of at least 180 instructional school days. Each student will receive access to at least four hours of instructional time per school day, or one continuous session of two and one-half hours for kindergarten students.

VIRTUAL/REMOTE INSTRUCTION

The impacts of lost in-person instructional time and social emotional development should be anticipated, and schools will need to be prepared to adjust curricula and instructional practices accordingly without the expectation that all lost academic progress can be caught up. Plans to make up for lost academic progress because of school closures should be balanced by a recognition of the likely continued distress of educators and students that may persist when schools reopen. If the academic expectations are unrealistic, school may likely become a source of further distress for students (and educators) at a time when they need additional support. It is also critical to maintain a balanced curriculum with continued physical education and other learning experiences rather than an exclusive emphasis on core subject areas. All school related trips, athletic competitions, and other extracurricular activities will be cancelled for the duration of the school closure.

Professional development activities will focus on providing staff with an enhanced skillset to provide engaging online learning opportunities. The use of additional instructional practices and the implementation of additional online software applications will be part of the training.

Delivery of Virtual/Remote Instruction

When the school building is closed, staff and students will work remotely for synchronist instruction. Students will be expected to follow their school program's schedule, excluding homeroom (Somerset Academy/Career Center 8:40 AM - 1:26 PM or New Dawn Academy 9:21 AM - 2:48 PM, Monday- Friday), and attend classes regularly during distance learning. Daily "live" checks-in/Meet with teachers to keep students engaged in school activities. The middle and elementary students will have daily "live" interactions which contributed to more interaction among students in grades kindergarten through eighth.

Each student is provided a Chromebook and access to the internet if access is not available at home. With the use of wireless hotspots we are able to provide access for students who do not have connectivity in their homes. Each teacher has created a Google Classroom for students to login to retrieve and complete assignments. The Google platform is also utilized for virtual meetings for teachers and students.

Elementary School students Google Classroom will be used to provide activities and assignments for students. Morning meetings for students to engage with their peers to promote social skills will be conducted via Google Meet. The focus in k-5 is to continue development of literacy and mathematical skills.

Software Applications - Google G Suite, Newsela, IXL, Readworks, Flocabulary

Middle School students will be provided subject specific assignments created around students abilities in a model to increase skill levels with a focus on literacy and mathematics. Students will be encouraged to log in daily and complete assignments and attend virtual meetings to talk with teachers and their peers.

Software Applications - Google G Suite, Newsela, IXL, Readworks, Flocabulary

High School students will be utilizing Google Classroom and log in daily to complete assignments and attend virtual meetings with the teacher. Subject specific assignments will be posted each day.

Software Applications - Google G Suite, IXL, Readworks, Flocabulary, Edpuzzle

Students with Disabilities

Every child and adolescent with a disability is entitled to a free and appropriate education and is entitled to special education services based on their individualized education program (IEP). It may not be feasible, depending on the needs of the individual child and adolescent, to adhere both to distancing guidelines and the criteria outlined in a specific IEP. Attempts to meet the needs of the individual child and may require creative solutions, often on a case-by-case basis.

Google Classroom provides teachers with the ability to differentiate assignments to meet IEP modification and accommodations as well as the different levels of students. Teachers will link students' interest to assignment to further engage students in learning. Several students are currently assigned one-to-one aides, these aides will provide daily personalized instruction to students and guidance as students complete assignments. Staff use Google Hangout to hold virtual meetings with students to provide direct instruction throughout the school day. Teachers and staff members create a daily log that is submitted every Friday detailing instruction and other interaction with students or parents/guardians. Case managers also attend student focused staffing/PLC meetings.

Related Services

Related services will be provided remotely by a Board approved vendor. (e.g.: speech/OT/PT, etc.) The records are shared with case managers and the supervisor of counselors.

- Students who are receiving speech services will receive ongoing instruction through an online FERPA compliant platform for teletherapy and students were mailed supplemental materials.
- Counseling services will continue through phone, video conference, or email communication.
- New Dawn Academy students will continue to receive counseling services through University Behavioral Health Care through Theraplatform, a HIPAA compliant platform for teletherapy.

Virtual IEP Meetings

IEP meetings will be held through Google Hangout or other video and telephone conferencing providers which comply with FERPA. The sending district's student case manager will lead the IEP meetings. SCESC counselors and teachers will provide a summary, goals and objectives. They will also be present at these meetings to provide input as needed.

English Language Learners

Our current student population does not have any students considered ELL, although some students need additional assistance. Two teacher aides speak Spanish as their native language and will be assigned to students who can benefit from the additional assistance. This service is provided daily and the aides document all interactions. Google Classroom and Google Meet will be utilized to provide direct instruction/assistance between students and staff. Additionally, one teacher and the School Nurse also speak Spanish and can assist in telephone conversations and at meetings. Sending districts utilize translators during virtual and telephone meetings for IEP meetings.

Meal Service

As a receiving district, SCESC school personnel will ensure that every student receives meals from their sending district. Personnel will work with the Department of Agriculture to review meal options. In the event meals need to be delivered, social distance protocols for all parties will be followed to limit physical contact.

Monitoring of Distance Learning

Student progress will be monitored through the use of IXL and Newsela. Staff members contact students, parents/guardians multiple times per week if a student is not participating in online instruction. Staff members will communicate with parents/guardians through email, telephone calls, and text messaging to ensure students have access to assignments as well as provide progress on any missing activity. Counselors and teachers will complete biweekly check in's with specified parents/guardians to ensure that those students are engaged in learning activities and progressing in their assignments.

Student Attendance

Through the use of GoGuardian teachers and counselors will track students who do not join Google Class or school activities on a daily basis. Attendance will be monitored via participation in sessions and submission of completed work. Through the use of PLC meetings, staff will review if any students are not attending regularly and inform our counseling staff and administration in order to reach out to the students and their families to engage students in the learning process.

If a student misses more than two day of remote learning, contact with the family will be made to determine needs. The school counselors and administrators are responsible for making this contact.

Student Attendance Policy 5200

In accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25, every parent, guardian, or other person having control and custody of a child between the ages of six and sixteen shall cause the child to regularly attend school. The Board of Directors requires students enrolled in the school district attend school regularly in accordance with the laws of the State.

In accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6 and for the purposes of this Policy and Regulation 5200, a student’s absence from school will be excused or unexcused that counts toward truancy.

Students that are absent from school for any reason will be responsible for the completion of assignments missed because of their absence. A student who is absent from school for observing a religious holiday shall not be deprived of any award, eligibility, or opportunity to compete for any award, or deprived of the right to take an alternate test or examination that was missed because of the absence provided there is a written excuse of such absence signed by the parent.

Prolonged or repeated absences, excused or unexcused, from school or from class, deprive students of the educational and classroom experiences deemed essential to learning and may result in retention at grade level or loss of credit or removal from a course that would count toward the high school diploma in accordance with policies of this Board.

Unexcused absences from school or from classes within the school day may subject a student to consequences that may include the denial of a student’s participation in co-curricular activities and/or athletic competition. Repeated absences from school interfere with efforts of this Board and its staff in the maintenance of good order and the continuity of classroom instruction and such absences may result in the removal of the student from a class or course of study.

The Superintendent shall calculate and monitor the average daily attendance rate for the district and for each school in the district. Whenever the average daily attendance rate does not meet the New Jersey Department of Education requirement the Superintendent or designee shall develop a district improvement plan to improve student attendance pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:30-5.2.

Technology Needs

Each student is provided a Chromebook and access to the internet if access is not available at home. With the use of wireless hotspots we are able to provide access for students who do not have connectivity in their homes. Chromebooks and hotspots can be picked up by parents or mailed home to families. If devices are mailed home, teachers/counselors will contact families to confirm they have received the items. The Technology Services Manager will be available to provide guidance to resolve any issue that may arise.