

NORTHWESTERN REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

REOPENING INSTRUCTIONAL PLAN

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam ended the school year for all Virginia public and private schools by issuing an order closing schools on March 13, 2020. During that time, Northwestern Regional Educational Programs (NREP) offered distance learning as a means to support students during the extended closure. With nearly no preparation, very little experience of offering distance learning at any scale, and the inability to gather key staff together for professional learning, NREP offered students learning opportunities using both digital and paper resources.

Introduction

Throughout the summer, leadership from Frederick County Public Schools, as well as, the superintendents and special education directors from Clarke County Public Schools and Winchester Public Schools worked to create a plan for the reopening of NREP for the 2020-21 school. The committee established a plan that focused first and foremost on the health and well-being of students, families, and staff. Additionally, guidelines from Virginia's Recover, Redesign, Restart plan, the Centers for Disease Control, the Lord Fairfax Health District, and the American Academy of Pediatrics were considered. As with all special education programming, final instructional models for all students will be the decision of each individual IEP team.

Instructional Models

- In-Person Learning up to Four Days per week (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday)
- Distance Learning (Online)

In-Person Learning Model

In an in-person learning model, all students are physically present in school with their peers and teachers physically present. Instruction will be delivered in person on days designated as Student Group A or Student Group B days in the hybrid model for Frederick County Public Schools. Instruction will not be delivered on most Wednesdays and school holidays, other student days off as designated in the 2020-21 school calendar, and school closures. Students working on transition back to their home schools may need to follow the hybrid model established by their

individual school division. If Frederick County Public Schools, as the fiscal agent for NREP, goes total distance learning for all students, all NREP students will receive instruction through a distance learning model. If the other divisions move to a distance learning model and NREP remains open, it will be up to the individual LEAs to determine how to transport the students to NREP or provide them with services through the local LEA.

Distance Learning Model

In a distance learning model, students learn online in both a synchronous and asynchronous system. Synchronous learning occurs when the teacher schedules a virtual meeting for all students, and a concept is taught and practiced together. Asynchronous learning occurs when assignments are available online, and students may access those assignments at their convenience, and complete them based on the timeline provided for the specific assignment. Instruction will be delivered in person or through online learning experiences on days designated as school days. Instruction will not be delivered on school holidays, other student days off as designated in the school calendar, and school closures.

In order to accommodate those students and families for whom health and safety concerns restrict participation in in-person learning, distance learning will be made available. Those families electing the online learning option are committed to that choice until the end of the first semester unless a change in circumstances is announced by Northwestern Regional Educational Programs.

Learning Experiences

Many familiar aspects of learning will be in place whether students are served in-person, online, or a blend of the two. Content will be new and based on the grade/course level of the student and goals addressed in the student's IEP. Depending on the course and grade level, the pace of the learning may be adjusted. However, students will learn new content just as they would in a normal year. Learning experiences will be dynamic, engaging, and relevant. Students will receive frequent feedback on their work and they will have opportunities to reflect on their learning. Assessments, grading, and IEP progress reporting will be ways to communicate student progress, just as it always has been.

Regardless of the instructional model (in-person, or distance learning), students will be required to complete daily learning experiences according to the schedule set by their instructor(s). Some learning experiences will include "same-time" learning, during which teachers deliver instruction in a "live" (virtual or in-person, depending on the model) setting and all students practice and apply content together.

Other learning experiences will provide content in which students work on their own within the time constraints set by their teacher. These lessons may involve reading, viewing or listening to content, and responding individually. Students in grades K-12 will be issued a Chromebook that enables them to access online content. In the In-Person Learning Model, use of the Chromebook for K-5 students will be limited to the classroom, while students in grades 6-12 may have the ability to take their Chromebooks home. In the Distance Learning Model, students in grades K-12 will be issued a Chromebook for home use. To address weak or non-existent Internet service, students will learn how to access digital content offline so they can continue their learning while at home. Digital citizenship and how to engage in online learning will be explicitly taught to students so they have a clear understanding of expectations, procedures, and norms when they are participating in learning away from the school building. For consistency and ease of use, a single, online portal will enable students to access materials and resources in the same place (Google Classroom) regardless of their school, grade level, or course.

During in-person learning, students will follow a daily schedule and attend all classes. Participation in the art, physical education, music, library, therapies, and other resource/elective classes is essential for students. To the extent possible, efforts will be made to implement procedures to minimize transitions and reduce mixing of student groups. However, those procedures should not impact students' abilities to participate in their classes.

IEP teams for all NREP students will be meeting as needed to discuss plans for the respective student's education for the upcoming school year. IEPs will be developed to meet each student's unique needs and individual circumstances. IEPs will be implemented consistent with the School Board's Instructional and Health Plans, and IEPs will consider both in-person and distance learning.

The Spring 2020 extended closure of schools may have created learning gaps of the previous years' content for some students. Using data is essential to knowing what those gaps are and making a plan to address them. School teams and key central office instructional leaders will work collaboratively to implement effective means of determining student learning and the need for remediation and intervention. The emphasis shall be on teaching, not assessing, our students. Ongoing, formative assessment, combined with minimal formal assessments if needed, shall provide the data needed to identify learning needs.

In addition to having impacts on the physical health and well-being of students, teachers, and families, the COVID-19 Pandemic may also have had an impact on the emotional well-being, behavior, and/or mental health of some students and adults. NREP is committed to making social-emotional well-being, behavioral

supports, and mental health our top priority regardless of how we reopen our schools. An intentional and systematic approach to establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships between and among students, staff, and families will be essential to the success of any reopening plan. Practices such as morning meetings/messages, consistent schedules and structures that are explicitly taught and reinforced, the identification of a single point of contact to ensure all students have an adult with whom they can connect, and building a sense of community within schools and classrooms will be paramount. Additionally, school staff ensure referrals to appropriate community resources as needed. Some structures and approaches, such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports as well as tiered behavioral supports, are familiar to the NREP community. Other approaches, such as Social/Emotional Learning curricula, are familiar to some but may be new to others. Implementation will be appropriate to the knowledge base of the school community, with appropriate professional learning for staff, students, and families based on individual need.

Age-appropriate explicit instruction for students on safety procedures and precautions (as outlined in the Health and Safety Plan), as well as respectful interactions with peers and adults, will be implemented and consistently reinforced.

To maximize student learning and safety, families, and the larger community must be involved and engaged. A common learning platform for students has been identified (Google Classroom). Additional learning tools may be used, but the access of those tools should be through the single entry point. This single portal of information will assist parents in helping their students, and will allow for more effective communication between home and school. Additionally, teachers will set up office hours as their teaching schedule permits throughout the week, including on their planning day (Wednesday).

Parents requested help and support in navigating the tools their students need for instruction. To meet this need, FCPS is developing support systems to help parents understand and assist their children with the various digital instructional tools students use to access, practice, and demonstrate understanding of the content they are learning.

Partnerships with businesses and organizations within each local community are being established in an effort to better serve our students and families, and ensure relevant, meaningful learning experiences.