

Minnesota New Country School

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Approved:

610 DISTANCE LEARNING DURING A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

PURPOSE

This school has established a distance learning plan to ensure that students receive equitable educational opportunities during a school closure as a result of a public health emergency.

GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The school will implement a distance learning plan that allows for the continued education of all students, including students receiving special education services, multilingual learners, students experiencing homelessness, and students who rely on meals served at school. Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are encouraged to contact the school if they have extenuating circumstances. The school will make all efforts to help students and families during a mandated school closure in a public health emergency.

DEFINITIONS

- Distance Learning means that a student receives daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s) and appropriate educational materials.
- Emergency Workers includes healthcare personnel, emergency medical services personnel (full-time), law enforcement personnel, firefighter personnel, personnel providing correctional services, public health employees, and court personnel as defined by directives from the Minnesota Governor when the public health emergency is declared.
- Extended care means childcare provided before and after regular school hours.

CARE FOR CHILDREN OF FAMILIES OF EMERGENCY WORKERS

The school recognizes the importance of emergency workers during a public health emergency and fully supports assisting those members of the school community by providing education and care to their children.

1. The school will provide care to, at a minimum, enrolled students aged 12 and under who are children of emergency workers critical to Minnesota's response to a public health emergency.
2. The school may verify eligibility of students for this service. This may include securing a letter from the employer or showing an employment badge.
3. At the request of the Governor, the school may also provide extended care to students of emergency workers and other response and recovery personnel.

K-12 EDUCATION

1. Declaration
 - a. A distance learning day(s) will be declared by the Minnesota Governor to protect the health of the community during a public health emergency.
2. Notification
 - a. The school will notify parent(s)/guardian(s) of a distance learning day(s) at least two hours prior to the normal school start time that students need to follow the distance learning lesson plans for the day(s). Materials will be distributed to students based on the distance learning plan and contact information for connecting with the licensed teacher(s) will be listed in the plan.
 - b. The school will post the distance learning plan on its website.
3. Teacher Access
 - a. Students will receive daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s). Teachers will be accessible during normal school hours to assist students and parent(s)/guardian(s).
 - b. Teachers will monitor student progress and provide feedback to students through regular meetings and/or alternate communications (email, text messaging, learning management systems).
 - c. If using an online learning management system, the school will ensure it can effectively provide differentiated instruction as well as one-on-one support for students who need it.

4. Attendance
 - a. All students should follow the school's attendance policy for excused absences.
 - b. Student attendance will be taken and recorded using a method approved by the school.
 - c. Before recording a student absent, teachers will attempt to contact the student to confirm attendance and/or performance of the work.
 - d. The school may change or waive any attendance requirements on a case-by-case basis. The school encourages parent(s)/guardian(s) to contact the school if they encounter or expect to encounter any difficulties participating in distance learning as described by this policy and the distance learning plan.
5. Content
 - a. The school will provide materials for students to continue their learning. This may take the form of worksheets, textbooks, telephone instruction, online resources, or other methods.
 - b. Teachers will implement lessons that integrate as seamlessly as possible into the regular instruction that has been occurring.
6. Access to Technology
 - a. If using electronic equipment to implement the distance learning policy, the school will identify and accommodate students and families meeting one or more of the following criteria:
 - i. Students without internet access at home.
 - ii. Students without access to digital devices.
 - iii. Families with an insufficient amount of technology for the number of children in the household.
 - iv. Students that cannot access technology due to the rules of a childcare provider.
 - v. Students that cannot use technology due to religious reasons.
7. Special Education Services
 - a. The school will ensure that students with disabilities will continue to receive specialized instruction and related services through a distance learning model to meet their identified needs.
 - b. The school will ensure equitable access to specialized instruction and related services for students with disabilities to maintain access to general education standards and continue to demonstrate progress toward the general education standards and IEP goals.
 - c. The school will develop a process to communicate with parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding their child(ren)'s services, which may include amending IEP's to address the student's needs in a flexible or distance learning model.
 - d. The school will develop a protocol to communicate with school administrators and educators in order to prepare staff to plan for the needs of students eligible for special education, child find activities, evaluations/reevaluations, and IEP implementation.
8. English Language Learners
 - a. The school will continue to serve English learners during distance learning days.
 - b. To the extent possible, classes will reflect the language proficiency of the students.
 - c. In order to keep families informed, the school will continue methods of communication with parent(s)/guardian(s) of students that do not use English as a primary language.
9. Students Experiencing Homelessness or Housing Instability
 - a. The school understands that students facing homelessness may be particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts of the Public health emergency. The school will work with students experiencing homelessness or housing instability to minimize the impact that their situation has on their educational experience. This includes the following measures:
 - i. Monitoring participation and engagement in distance learning as a distinct group, to help guide whether additional staff support, engagement, or assistance are needed for students experiencing homelessness. This includes monitoring for
 1. Attendance
 2. Participation
 - ii. Monitoring emerging guidance or recommendations on supporting homeless students and implementing changes as appropriate.
 - iii. Maintaining regular contact with local public health departments, county or Tribal human services departments, and Continuum of Care planning bodies on ongoing or emerging needs and to connect to resources that can assist students and parent(s)/guardian(s) experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.
 - iv. Coordinating with organizations and community members to secure access to appropriate educational spaces for studying during distance learning days.

I. Cooperation with Tribal Communities

The school will communicate with local Tribal leaders as needed to best identify and meet students' needs.

II. Activities

All in-person school-sponsored activities that are scheduled during the statewide school closure are suspended until in-person school resumes.

III. Nutrition

The school is committed to providing meals for all children who need them, regardless of ability to pay.

1. Distribution

- a. Students may receive two (2) meals per day, which will be distributed at the same time.
- b. The school may use one (1) or more food distribution centers as necessary.
- c. Distribution will be done in a manner that avoids large gatherings and allows for social distancing.
- d. Only parent(s)/guardian(s) and students may pick up meals.
 - i. Staff may ask for a method of identification to confirm eligibility.
 - ii. Children do not need to be accompanied by an adult to receive food.
- e. Distribution sites will be supervised to maximize student and staff safety.
- f. Students may not eat inside the school.
- g. The school will allow an ample and reasonable amount of time for meal pick-up.
- h. The school may use multiple methods of distribution such as drive-up; walk-up; satellite locations, such as libraries, churches, park districts, and youth centers; home delivery via bus routes; and other options.

2. Nutrition

- a. The school will ensure that all students' nutritional needs are addressed.
 - i. Meals for students with allergies and other food restrictions will be provided.
 - ii. Food will be marked appropriately. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and students picking up special meals should inform staff upon pickup.

3. Communication

- a. The school will use multiple methods of communication to inform students and parent(s)/guardian(s) of available food service, including time, location, and method of distribution.

STAFF

Before implementing this policy, the school will provide training to staff on distance learning practices. All staff, including non-salaried, hourly staff, will be compensated (pay and/or benefits) based on the directives from the Minnesota Governor when the public health emergency is declared.

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION

This policy will begin effective when determined by MN Government Officials and will remain in effect as long as state law allows and emergency declarations are in effect.

NOTIFICATION

This policy will be posted on the school website.

Legal References and Additional Resources

- *MN Executive Order 20-02 (Authorizing and Directing the Commissioner of Education to Temporarily Close Schools to Plan for a Safe Educational Environment)*
- *MN Q-and-A on School Closure – 03.15.2020*
- *MN § 12.21 subd. 3, para. (11) (Governor)*
- *MN § 120B.11 (School District Process for Reviewing Curriculum, Instruction, and Student Achievement; Striving for the World's Best Workforce)*
- *MN § 126C.05, subd. 11 (Definition of Pupil Units)*
- *20 U.S.C. § 6301, et seq. (Every Student Succeeds Act)*
- *42 U.S.C. § 11301, et. seq. (McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001)*