

Discovery Public School

Distance Learning Plan

District #4081

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Introduction

Purpose

Ensure that every student in the state of Minnesota receives an equitable education and has equal access to learning and instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Overview

Minnesota school districts and charters are preparing instructional plans that will allow meaningful, relevant learning to take place while schools are closed. Schools are expected to develop lessons utilizing a distance learning model for every level in grades public PreK-8 and each graduation requirement course for grades 9-12.

This is Discovery Public School's (DPS's) Distance Learning Plan. It is designed to meet the requirements laid out in the 03.20.20 - School Closure Guidance for School Districts and Charter Schools.pdf and 03.20.20 - Q-and-A on School Closure.pdf documents from the Minnesota Department of Education.

This plan may evolve due to changing circumstances.

Education and Distance Learning

Attendance and Truancy

The Discovery Public School of Faribault (DPS) attendance policies remain nearly the same as when students were present physically. Teachers will check attendance through virtual means and phone calls. Individual teachers will be responsible for recording credit and attendance for their classes and assignments. If there is any form of communication with the school, students will be marked present for the day. Truancy rules will not be applied as usual. Students who are not checking in daily will be contacted. For those not attending regularly, the director will contact parents. If unable to make contact, the director will contact social services or the police department for a wellness check as needed.

All students must connect with instructors for each assignment in order to be counted for attendance and credit. All students have access to internet and have devices to do this. The Distance Learning Plan will function through Google Classroom. Attendance will be tracked through Google Classroom, from which teachers will enter attendance results into JMC. Attendance calls will be made to parents by the Director as usual. Staffing check ins will be daily through established methods and work will be completed wherever the staff person is located. Staff attendance will be tracked by email daily and each week staff will meet using Google Hangout. The Director will track staff attendance as usual.

Attendance expectations have been carefully communicated to all students, parents and staff. Since students and staff have Gmail accounts future communications will be sent by email to each one. Phone calls and texting will also be used. Parents will receive messages through the JMC communications system by voicemail and text announcements and mail, as usual. Phone calls may also be used. All teachers have Google Voice phones setup so parents and students can contact teachers directly without

revealing the teachers' personal phone numbers. Communications between staff will happen by email, Google Hangout, Google Calendar, voicemail and texts.

Distance Learning

The DPS Distance Learning Plan will ensure that all enrolled students have equal access to the DPS learning program to continue their education this school year. The school is already set up for e-learning days with the MDE. The Distance Learning Plan will function through DPS's Google Classroom. The e-learning plan prepared all students to have access to technology instruction. In the last week all who needed a Chromebook have checked one out. Messages were sent to families to inform them about free internet available through Charter Communications and a few other vendors. DPS will continue to communicate with families regarding any connectivity concerns. If students are not able to complete work online the school will provide alternative materials to ensure all students receive instruction and materials. Google Classroom has text and other resources set up that can be converted to printed format as needed. Students are able to communicate during the day with their teachers via email, phone, or text.

Since students are not in a normal classroom setting, DPS asks parents to support student learning using the distance learning plan. This does not require continual parent attention, but students may need reminders and support to ensure that they continue through each day well engaged with their learning activities. If parents are limited in this role and/or struggle in some way, they are asked to communicate with the school as soon as possible. Teachers and staff are ready to support and adjust to help each student learn. Parents are also asked to please help the staff understand their individual situations, needs, or challenges so the school can support or adapt to make each students' learning successful. Staff are trained to be culturally respectful and responsive.

During the Distance Learning time, the expectation is that teachers and students communicate daily to support student engagement. Students should follow the current interaction plans with their teachers for classes, lessons, and other activities.

For students using standard DPS online distance learning, all teachers will be available by phone and email during school hours. Teachers and support staff will communicate and connect with each student daily. They will be able to address specific student needs. For students not using standard DPS online distance learning, materials will be provided and delivered using the bus delivery plan. Either way students will need to communicate with teachers daily.

Should there be any problems connecting with students, teachers and/or support staff will reach out to students in alternative ways and contact parents.

DPS will hold weekly staff meetings via Google Hangout where staff will discuss attendance as well as successes and challenges. Staff will share what strategies are working well and communicate if there are changes that need to be made moving forward.

The Instructional Leader will reach out to staff individually by email to offer support in the area of Curriculum and Technology, and to share any free opportunities that have been made available to teachers.

All staff submitted a Distance Learning Curriculum Plan for their classes to the Director and the Instructional Leader prior to working remotely. The Director and the Instructional Leader are included in each teacher's Google Classroom to monitor instruction. Feedback will be provided to teachers as needed.

Teachers have been using Google Resources throughout the school year and were trained more extensively on Google Classroom before they began working remotely. Leaders will make sure our teachers are able to use resources like Google Voice and Google Hangouts. We will provide training remotely at staff meetings when necessary.

Leaders will apply training that is applicable to distance learning or specific subjects that teachers can complete online. Depending on the specific training (whether it is subject specific or general training), staff can meet remotely to discuss insights and ideas related to the training.

During distance learning at DPS, many students will receive various services from specialty staff and contracted service providers. Previously enrolled students know who these people are and will continue with them for as long as is needed. This applies to students with Individualized Education Program plans (IEPs), as well as others who have or may have special situations or needs. The specialists will communicate in the same manner as teachers through Google Hangouts, phone calls and emails. Paraprofessionals will continue to support students by communicating by phone and Google Hangouts with each student. They are instructed to help students with assignments and other tasks as guided by the teacher. All support staff will interact with students by phone, internet chat, or other available resources that work best for the students. For contracted service providers specific communication protocols will be determined by administration and the contractors.

During this Distance Learning time the school will continue to protect all student and staff information that should remain non-public. This applies to online resources as well as other media. Staff are instructed to ensure that private information is not able to be shared or accessed. They will follow normal school procedures to maintain data security. Student, parent information and staff information are still in DPS secure systems such as Google tools and JMC. For phone calls teachers use Google Voice, which protects teachers' personal phone numbers.

DPS is committed to follow required and recommended health practices to protect each individual. This includes "social distancing" and sanitizing surfaces as much as possible. When any materials are to be picked up from the school the family should call ahead so these materials can be prepared. When pickup happens individuals will not be allowed into the building for the pickup. Someone will hand off the materials or resource to the family member, or vice versa.

When staff are in the building, they will remain well distanced (social distancing) and keep surfaces cleaned (sanitized). Staff will be allowed to work remotely to maintain safe distances or address health needs. If any staff person is unable do their job, designated and qualified staff would cover for that person.

Should any student be too sick to participate in distance learning or the family is unable to support the student for distance learning DPS staff will provide and work with them as much as possible, just as is done in normal school times. Absences and excuses will be noted.

DPS staff will meet weekly via Google Meet and will communicate daily via email. Leaders and staff will discuss successes and challenges and be open to making changes such as the form of communication, assessments, length of assignments, expectations of students, etc.

Teachers are expected to have some form of assessment built into their lesson plans, to determine whether students are learning the material. If students are struggling to demonstrate learning, complete the assignments in a reasonable amount of time, or if we notice attendance issues, leaders will reach out to both teacher and student to offer support specific to the situation.

DPS serves grades 6 to 12 and does not provide before or after school activities or care for students or for children of Emergency Health Workers.

Should the State require DPS to provide care for children of Emergency Health Workers, DPS will work to fulfill youth care needs, including help with distance learning while receiving care.

Special Education Services - IEP or 504 Plan

DPS will continue to support each student's IEP plan during distance learning. DPS has contracted a Special Education Director and has two Special Education teachers. All student IEP requirements will be met that can be met in this mode of learning or the next best approach will be used. Teachers will provide direct minutes via phone or video chat. IEP meetings will be held remotely by Google Hangouts. All legal requirements will be fulfilled. Teachers will check in with students and manage accommodations. Materials students need to meet IEP plans will be provided whether online or delivered. Interactions will include virtual meetings and phone conferences.

English Learners

Any new English Language Learner students will be given the same support as all the other students. School resources, materials, food and teacher contact will be provided without any limitations. DPS currently has no English Language Learners.

Students Experiencing Homelessness or Housing Instability

Should any student become homeless each will be given the same educational support as all other students. If special situations arise school resources, materials, food and teacher contact will be provided without any limitations.

DPS will also provide information to homeless families and work to support them to find suitable shelter in collaboration with other community organizations. DPS currently has no homeless students.

Early Learning

DPS only serves grades 9-12 so there is no Early Learning program. Since there is no Early Learning program, DPS does not report on requirements for this program.

Assessment

During the Distance Learning season some assessment methods will be modified, since it is not possible to have direct observation of students or to conduct proctored assessments. Student learning and progress will be assessed as part of daily and weekly lessons and assignments. These will be in the form

of quizzes, writing papers, chats, possibly Google Forms, and other activities. Teachers will also provide online chat conversations with students, either individually or in groups, to check for understanding. Students and parents will be informed of any adjustments or clarifications of assessments.

The Federal Department of Education has cancelled mandatory state academic assessments for this year. These are used to help measure individual, school and state progress on important academic standards. The goal is for all students to make good academic growth each year. DPS will measure academic progress through DPS program assessment tools. Results will be reported to students and parents in standard student reports.

Staff

Since the announcement to prepare for Distance Learning, DPS teachers were trained to use Google Hangouts, Zoom meetings, setting up their Google Voice phone lines and other plans to serve students using the Distance Learning plan. Paraprofessionals were also trained and prepared to effectively schedule and connect with various students to continue needed learning supports. Teachers and others have prepared and adapted curriculum and lessons for distance learning. Teachers developed curriculum plans to ensure students will receive the required instruction through this time. Teachers understand that they may need to come to school to prepare materials. Teachers are expected to be available by phone or email to interact with staff, students and families during the duration of the closure. Teachers and staff will meet weekly to discuss what is working and make adjustments as needed. All will support and maintain the school's mission and program focus while following distance learning.

Communications

Effective communication is central to effective learning and a quality school. To support this DPS has adapted its normal staff communication protocols between administration, the board and staff to ensure the school meets the educational needs of students and school operations.

DPS staff will communicate via Google Hangouts and email. Leaders have been added as teachers to all classes in Google Classroom to be able to monitor the quality of instruction and ensure that teachers are maintaining a schedule. A Distance Learning Curriculum Plan was developed by each teacher for each class and turned in to the leaders before beginning to work remotely.

Special education teachers and paras will communicate weekly via Google Hangout to discuss students and give updates. A schedule for Special education teacher/para contact was completed prior to teachers meeting remotely. This was shared with Dan. All IEP guidelines will be followed.

Paraprofessionals have also been added as teachers to all classes in Google Classroom and were trained by the Special education department on how to use technology to communicate with the students. They have access to the same assignments as the SPED students to provide support while meeting with students via phone or video chat.

DPS will communicate all information and notifications with parents by JMC and also by email as much as is feasible. Parents will be contacted as needed by phone. Communication with students will start with email, then Google Hangouts, as well as by phone. DPS will communicate with the general

community through its website. Communications with specific community organizations will be by the standard methods of email and phone calls.

DPS is following State of Minnesota, Federal and CDC notices that affect personal and community health as well as Faribault Public Schools (ISD #656) notices. DPS will forward information links and relevant documents to families and students.

DPS tracks all relevant updates from the state of MN, CDC, county, and city health departments. Relevant conference calls or webinars are attended. The school will communicate with authorities, including its authorizer, Audubon Center of the North Woods, about the status of the school and needs that emerge.

Should any staff or students become infected with Coronavirus the school will notify the MDE and MDH and appropriate personnel and agencies as required by the current orders. DPS will follow up based on instruction from the agencies. Should the school need to coordinate with other agencies it will establish communication links and proceed.

DPS reached out to the ISD #656 Community Education program to discuss access to free meals for DPS students. The Community Education program was happy to offer free meals to DPS students, as well as any students/children in the community who are under the age of 18. This is a volunteer program for all members of the Faribault Community. No money will change hands. We will pass along volunteer information to our staff as needed.

We receive updates on the Coronavirus from the Local Health Departments as well as MDE. We will share this information and any resources with our staff and student's families.

DPS will post on its website information regarding homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act. When a student or family become homeless or have unstable housing DPS asks them to communicate with the school about this. As stated earlier in the plan, DPS will work to provide information and collaboration with local organizations prepared to support housing needs.

Tribal Considerations

Should any student enroll at DPS who is registered as a member of a Native American tribe, DPS will communicate and coordinate with the Tribal authority or representative to support those students and tribe considerations.

DPS will also be culturally respectful and responsive to students reporting as American Indian and Alaska Native but not officially registered with a tribe.

Before and After Care

DPS has not provided before or after school programming and there will not be before or after school programming during the Distance Learning time. The after school extracurricular clubs have been put on hold during the school closure period.

Services

Care for Children of Families of Emergency Workers

DPS is committed to support our community's efforts to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Governor has required schools to support children of qualified emergency workers ages 12 and under. Since DPS serves students in grades 6-12 this requirement does not apply to DPS. If a family member is a qualified emergency worker and is in need of care for her/his child, we ask that they contact the school and we will help connect them to an organization that will meet their need. At this time no students are known to be children of qualified emergency workers.

Should the state require DPS to care for children of qualified emergency workers and transportation is needed DPS will arrange COVID-19 compliant transportation for those children.

Should the state require DPS to provide before and/or after school care for children of qualified emergency workers DPS will arrange such care for those children.

Nutrition

DPS arranged with ISD #656 for meals for this school year. As long as schools are closed ISD #656 will provide meals for any students under 18 regardless of whether or where they go to school. Meals for DPS students are distributed to the school and other designated locations in the community. Meals are delivered by school bus and the Grab and Go method of distribution is used at the stops. Parents can pick up meals without requiring students being present. Parents are notified of this service by DPS and by ISD #656. The school is being treated as part of the community for this service.

Meals and/or Instructional Material Pick-up

Instructional materials will be made available for students from the school facility. Materials will be prepared and communication with student to coordinate pickup. Alternative methods for delivery are available depending on the situation, such as mailing packets. Families should communicate with the school office if a problem or need persists.

DPS will work with students and families to ensure students have materials and resources to continue learning well. Examples of how DPS supports families are:

DPS conducted a technology survey and all students/parents reported having some form of internet access. We also offered a phone number for Charter Communications where all families are eligible for 60 days of free internet service.

DPS's Distance Learning Plan will primarily use e-learning as its method of instruction. However, if students require paper copies of work, we will accommodate them. Paper copies would be printed off at the school and mailed out or available for pick up at the school. If parents express the need for school materials/paperwork they will need to schedule a time to meet the School's Director or Office Manager at the building and pick up those materials. Families may also request that we mail the materials to them.

DPS loaned out Chromebooks to any families in need the week prior to the required school closure. Fifteen to twenty students utilized this option. DPS will respond to other needs such as potential changes in nutritional or housing needs due to loss of employment by family providers.

DPS will identify families with barriers to getting materials or meals through personal contact with families. Any barriers that are found will be addressed as efficiently and promptly as feasible.

For the most part the Faribault Public Schools Presents: All Kids Eat Free is the source of meals for DPS students. DPS will work with this program and provide information/updates to students and parents via automated message. Any student in the community under the age of 18 will have access to bag meals that provide Breakfast and Lunch.

Volunteers will hand out these meals at 7 community locations where school busses will park, and volunteers will deliver meals. One of the locations is right outside the DPS facility, convenient for students who live within walking distance. DPS will support families to communicate and plan with ISD #656 if their children have special nutritional needs or requirements.

The bag meals that students pick up are meant for daily use. Available pick up times are 10 - 12 AM daily. Because meals are provided daily, families will not need to store food.

Health and Wellness

Using regular communications methods DPS will post or send information resources to help families and staff talk with students about the COVID-19 outbreak and pandemic. Everyone is working hard to adapt to living and working with this issue and we need to help one another with this challenge. Some classes and lessons may help address student concerns and could support student learning and skills development with the pandemic in mind. Staff are available to talk with students as needed.

DPS is committed to help support student, family, and staff mental health in this season. Frequent communications with students and parents will help identify any needs. If a student does not check in within 48 hours, then a staff person will call to learn what might be needed. There may also be other wellbeing issues to address. Services will be provided as needed and will continue for those who are already receiving services.

DPS staff such as the school counselor and paraprofessionals will talk with students and families to discover if any mental health and wellbeing issues are developing. DPS will have group video chats to provide face-to-face contact among students and staff. Some of these will be fun activities to support likely social needs such as isolation. We will also work to support students in appropriate ways who are struggling with mental health or emotional issues.

DPS closed its facility 2 days before the mandated closure. We are limiting in-person contact as much as possible. Once distance learning planning weeks are completed teachers and most staff will not be required to come to the school facility. Carefully designed meetings at the facility will be conducted if necessary, to minimize or eliminate sharing of the virus. Otherwise conversations and meetings will be conducted remotely.

To protect people from the Coronavirus at DPS, staff will follow a schedule of cleaning and sanitizing frequently touched surfaces, particularly surfaces that people contact directly. Social distancing will be implemented across the facility at all times. All staff and students are instructed to follow the same rules to reduce the spread of the virus. Items that are handed off from one person to another will either be sanitized first, or hands and/or items will be sanitized afterwards. Other recommended practices will be implemented such as if a person has a fever or is coughing protective measures will be followed.

Any pick-ups of meals or materials must be prearranged so that they can take place at the front door in order to eliminate unnecessary traffic into the building.

We will send out updates/resources to staff and student's families regarding information on the virus and how it spreads. We have encouraged all staff to stay home and not visit the school building unless absolutely necessary. We have closed our office to the public except to distribute materials to students/families in need.

The building will be completely disinfected before staff or students return to the building.

Mental Health Support Resources

DPS will share additional community resources with families as we learn about them. For example, there are internet providers willing to provide free service, phone companies willing to waive data restrictions.

We will send out the following information provided by our Authorizer relating to Mental Health Self Care.

<https://www.changetochill.org/>

<https://healthpoweredkids.org/>

We will also email flyers to all families in both English and Spanish to describe the programs linked above. They are full of activities and resources to help students stay calm and healthy during this stressful time.

Another community resource that is available to families is Rice County Mental Health Services. We will also forward this information to families.

<https://www.co.rice.mn.us/483/Childrens-Mental-Health>

For students who are not connected to a mental health provider and need service, DPS will help coordinate these services during distance learning just as they would during a typical school day.

Students who have been working with Fernbrook Family Counseling during the school year will continue to receive those services. Fernbrook Family Counseling has two Counselors who meet with DPS students daily. Fernbrook will be using Microsoft TEAMS to video chat, and also calling and emailing students.

Other needs/requests for Mental Health Services will be handled on an individual basis. This would likely involve Rice County Social Services - Mental Health Dept.

Check in schedules will be set up with certain students to conduct updates on mental health and overall wellness and to watch for any changes that would cause concern. We will be in close contact with appropriate providers as we identify students of concern.

Families needing help to obtain medical assistance benefits can contact the DPS Office and get assistance in from the School's Office Manager. They may be referred to local organizations equipped and ready to help with these needs. Also, the DPS website has a website link to Medical Assistance help.

As in any school year, bullying will not be tolerated among and by DPS students and staff. The bullying policy remains in force. DPS staff will monitor online activities and communications to identify and reduce possible incidents of bullying. All students and staff are expected to practice respectful communication and treatment of others.

Operations

Funding

School maintains contract with Bergan KDV as the financial services provider. All staff will continue to be paid based on their work agreements. Timesheets will be completed as usual. All hourly staff are paid based on normal expectations. All staff will be paid as usual for a school year.

Broadband Access

Messages were sent to families to inform them about free internet available through Charter Communications and a few other vendors. DPS will continue to communicate with families regarding any connectivity concerns.