Spring 2020

Dear families of students receiving special education services,

We hope you are as well as can be given our challenging circumstances. We want you to know that we have been in close communication with special educators across each of our schools and programs, and we are holding all of you in our thoughts during this unprecedented time.

Bellingham Public Schools, following guidance from Washington State, has established priorities for our work that begin with the #1 priority of maintaining health and safety. With that in mind, our special education teaching staff has been reaching out to families, checking in and finding out what you need and how you are doing. This outreach, human to human, is ongoing. We are working throughout the district to find the right balance of outreach without overwhelming families with too many contacts. If you want more contact with your child’s teacher or other member of the IEP team, please reach out to them by e-mail.

In addition to health and safety, providing food and supporting childcare, one of our district priorities has been developing innovative ways to support student learning. This week, special education staff are working to support ongoing education through the learning menus and activities that will be going out to students.

We are asking our special educators to support the big ideas of the learning menus -- providing connections, reinforcing learning, providing extensions from previously learned material and giving ongoing feedback. For some of our students this will look like collaborating with classroom teachers to adapt or modify the learning menus to meet individual needs. For others, the modifications will be significant and be based more on IEP goals than the learning menus.

While this is the outline of our support today, we recognize that this will continue to evolve and change in the days and weeks ahead. We will stay in communication with you through your case managers, as well as through emails like this one. For more general information about the closure, see the district’s FAQ at: bellinghamschools.org/covid19

We appreciate your partnership. Stay safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Mike Haberman
Helpful resources for families of students receiving special education services:

- **Bellingham Public Schools Covid 19 Resources** - https://bellinghamschools.org/about/departments/resources/
  Learn about the school district’s work to provide food, support technology needs, and support childcare for essential personnel during the school closure. Also, find answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

- **Developmental Disabilities Administration** - https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dda
  Families should be aware that in-home care through DDA (Personal Care and Respite Care) are still accessible during the school closure, and in some cases, additional care hours may be available. Contact your DDA case manager for more information, or visit the DDA website above to apply.

- **The Arc or Whatcom County** - http://arcwhatcom.org/wp/en/
  The Arc provides information, resources, and support for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families through their Parent Coalition, Parent to Parent, Down Syndrome Outreach, and Self-Advocacy programs. While their offices are closed at this time, they continue to provide for support for families. You can reach them via parentcoalition@arcwhatcom.org, Facebook, or at the website above.

- **Whatcom Taking Action** – www.whatcomtakingaction.org
  Whatcom Taking Action provides helpful handouts (including this one on social media resources) and other information for families of children with special health care needs on their website and Facebook page. They also provide system navigation and connection to local services through the Single Entry Access to Services (SEAS) line 360-715-7485.