

Special Education Advisory Panel
Board of Education

July 20, 2020

Dear Superintendent Hoffman:

The Special Education Advisory Panel is tasked with advisement regarding students with disabilities to the Board of Education. The Panel appreciates and respects the effort made on behalf of all Arizona public school students to remain safe while still receiving educational services during this incredibly challenging time dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The Panel has met to discuss the consideration and representation of students with disabilities in regard to the reopening of Arizona schools. The following input includes recommendations and requests from the members of the Special Education Advisory Panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A. Special Education Advisory Panel recommends opening the “Road Map for Reopening Schools” in order to consider revisions to better include students with disabilities. The Panel's suggestions for revisions include the following:
1. Ensure more robust and appropriate provision of programming and deliver of online classes to all students with disabilities participating in hybrid and distance-learning platforms
 - a) Offer all classes, not just electives
 - b) Address all grade levels, not just high school
 - c) Differentiation in online offerings must be available for students with disabilities
 - d) While accommodations/modifications and services are determined by a student’s Individualized Education Program team, instructional programming must ensure the full implementation of the student’s Individualized Education Program (including but not limited to one-to-one supports, various related services, assistive technology, extracurricular activities, etc.)
 - e) Considerations for additional, safe instructional options for students with disabilities according to his/her Individualized Education Program and least restrictive environment.
 - a) Consider and prioritize in-person resources for delivery of Least restrictive environment
 - b) Clarify the difference between instructional time and service time
 - f) Explore creative and innovative options to provide specially designed instruction for students with disabilities who are not well served in remote instruction, i.e. small group instruction, at home instruction (following public education agency and Centers for Disease Control guidelines for safety)
 - g) Provide training to personnel regarding Individualized Education Program services (i.e. related and supplemental services) meant to support progress on Individualized Education Program goals
 - h) Consider increased and enhanced communication and outreach efforts to families regarding the various enrollment options and models offered by local education agencies
 - i) Flexibility articulated to schools regarding requirements for hygiene and mask protocols based on individual needs.

REQUESTS:

1. Special Education Advisory Panel respectfully requests the allocation of additional funding from the Governor for Special Education staffing necessary to adequately address the needs of students with disabilities during this time (e.g. reduce class sizes, reduce stress and work demand, social and emotional supports including curriculum and additional counseling/mental-health staff).

2. Special Education Advisory Panel respectfully requests categorization and inclusion of Teaching staff as essential workers and entitled to benefits under the CARES Act from the Governor.
3. Special Education Advisory Panel respectfully asks that the Department of Education improve access to professional development and training offerings be made available virtually (i.e. "Teaching Reading Effectively").
4. Special Education Advisory Panel respectfully requests that agencies, organizations, and decision-makers seek and include the advisement of Special Education Advisory Panel on matters related to students with disabilities.
5. Special Education Advisory Panel respectfully requests supporting increased and enhanced parent training by Arizona's Parent Training and Information Center to assist families in acquiring a free and appropriate public education to address their child's individualized and unique needs.
6. Special Education Advisory Panel respectfully requests that a survey targeting Special Education Directors be completed to collect data and input on newly established needs related to the provision of special education services to public school students with an Individualized Education Program during the effect of the Governor's Order.
7. Encourage local education agencies to create new roles such as a "Parent Liaison" or "Case Manager" to assist families of students with disabilities navigate the instructional options, to provide training and support regarding meeting the unique needs of their children during this time, and to attend Individualized Education Program meetings with families.

It is our sincere hope and intent to better support all students with disabilities and their families during this challenging time. We respectfully invite the Superintendent, representatives of the Arizona Department of Education, and Governor Ducey to seek further discussion with Special Education Advisory Panel regarding this advisement. Thank you for your consideration and willingness to support Arizona students with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Members of the Special Education Advisory Panel