July 18, 2020

Dear NMSBVI Families

I know that you are concerned about the upcoming school year and have been waiting for news on how NMSBVI will provide educational and therapeutic services. I thank you for your patience during this time! NMSBVI will take a cautious approach and postpone opening in person instruction until at least September 8th.   We will provide full remote class instruction at the start of the school year.  For the students who do not have access to technology, we will work individually with those families and will provide technology or work to find a solution.  We will assess the state of the pandemic nearing Sept. 7 and we will make a decision about next steps at that time.

Throughout the summer we have watched carefully how the virus is impacting our NM communities and have stayed current with guidance from the Public Education Department.  After receiving feedback from you and our NMSBVI COVID19 Task Force, we designed a model for the Fall semester of school to keep your children as safe as possible while continuing their education.  When we reopen, this model, our Flexible Learning System, will give your child the option of fully continuing with remote learning, having a customized combination of remote learning with periodic in-person instruction, or participating in a traditional model of in-person instruction. Again, with the rise in cases of COVID-19 in our state, we have made the decision to postpone the launch of this Flexible Learning System until at least Sept. 8.

The New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired holds the health and safety of our students, families and staff at the top of our list of priorities. NMSBVI also stresses the importance of education for all of our students. There is an even greater need to stress education across all areas including academics, social-emotional well-being and safety and hygiene. In response to this, NMSBVI has prepared a Flexible Learning System in order to ensure that all of those priorities are addressed through our Reentry Plan for Fall, 2020.

NMSBVI is following the guidelines presented by the New Mexico Department of Education, the Center for Disease Control, the New Mexico Special Education Division and the New Mexico Department of Health as we consider re-opening. We are also acknowledging the needs of our families, who expressed a need for choices in the coming year. As always, NMSBVI is driven by our mission:

*NMSBVI, an innovative leader and unifying entity in the field of educating students birth-high school who are blind or visually impaired, will identify and ensure quality education through collaborative relationships with students, families, and local/ state/national partners to provide outstanding advocacy, training, resources, and support services, thus ensuring that all students who are blind or visually impaired will become independent, productive members of their communities.*

When we are able to begin our reentry, NMSBVI has created a partial reentry plan in line with the NMPED’s Reentry Guidance that was issued on June 20,2020. (<https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/20NMPED_ReentryGuide_Hybrid.pdf>). The guide recommends a phased approach to reentry. NMSBVI is offering a traditional learning model, a hybrid model and a full virtual model. Families have three options for school during Fall, 2020: Traditional School, Hybrid Learning, and Virtual Learning. Please know that all options will include rigorous programming that will require full participation from students and families. Students will be required to complete assignments and will be graded per standard policy during this time. Attendance will also be mandatory, whether a student attends virtually or in person.

**Goals:**

* Enact adequate COVID-Safe Practices to operate the school.
* Have the confidence of families and staff.
* Follow directives of the Governor.
* Use state and internal data to assess effectiveness.

 **Strategies:**

* Distancing (Classrooms, Food Services, Dormitories, limiting Assemblies and other gatherings)
* Disinfection (Regular cleaning and disinfecting, handwashing “recesses”, cleaning stations at each building’s entrance”, increased frequency of disinfecting common surfaces)
* Education (Hand washing, COVID19, Masks and Face Coverings, Strict Stay at Home When Sick Procedures)
* Daily screenings
* Protocol for student or staff with positive case (School Closure, Quarantine, Disinfection)
* Phase in of student access (Dorms, Schedules, Distance Learning for students from communities where schools have not yet opened or students who are in the high risk category for COVID19 and/or who choose to stay at home)
* Phase in of public access (Ditzler Auditorium, Gym, Field, Natatorium)
* Communication (Coronavirus; State data; NMSBVI data)

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| **FLEXIBLE LEARNING SYSTEM** |  |
| **TRADITIONAL LEARNING:****Learning at school with a traditional schedule** | Traditional learning in school for day students and school on campus for dorm students who live in areas where their public school has opened. High Risk students can participate with parent and doctor permission. Social Distancing will be strictly adhered to within the classrooms and dormitories. A Blended Learning Model will be utilized. This will include both online teaching and face to face teaching while at school. Stations will be implemented so that student cohorts can remain small and separated and stations will be located throughout the schools. Full student participation(and attendance) is expected and students will be expected to complete assignments. Grades will be given according to progress of the student and/ or evidence of acquired skills through student assignments, data collection, etc. |
| **HYBRID LEARNING**:**Mostly remote learning, with individualized face to face learning at school on a periodic basis. (Designed for High Risk Students and Families/ students who choose a mostly “at home” model)** | Students and families can choose to continue to receive services from their homes. These services will be provided through an online platform and through specific online curricula with both live, virtual sessions and pre-recorded learning sessions. This will be a rigorous educational program with required student assignments and projects. NMSBVI will assist families with technology when needed. This mode of learning will be individualized to each student’s and family’s needs. Students may also receive face to face instruction at the school in a designated room in order to support online learning. These services may include ancillary services, vision services, academic services and evaluations and assessments.Full student participation (and attendance) is expected and students will be expected to complete assignments. Grades will be given according to progress of the student and/ or evidence of acquired skills through student assignments, data collection, etc. |
| **All Virtual Learning:****Designed for High Risk Students and Families/ students who choose the at home model.** | Students and families can choose to continue receiving all services from their home. They will be provided through an online platform and through online curricula. This will be a rigorous educational program with required student assignments and projects. NMSBVI will assist families with technology when needed.Full student participation (and attendance) is expected and students will be expected to complete assignments. Grades will be given according to progress of the student and/ or evidence of acquired skills through student assignments, data collection, etc. |

Our registration process is now open. You are required to register prior to receiving our remote learning services. We have an online process, with some required paperwork. Please make sure that your child’s physician has completed the medical paperwork as soon as possible, as there are some specific questions related to the COVID19 pandemic and the student’s well-being. Please let us know which model you are requesting for your child, as that will help us with planning. Please also know that educational programming will be individualized for each student, according to their academic, therapeutic, and medical needs.

Please feel free to contact your child’s principal or myself with any questions or concerns. NMSBVI understands the stress and worry that you may be feeling and we are here to make sure you and your child understand your options and understand the safety protocols that are now in place at NMSBVI. NMSBVI will be posting more specific plans regarding schedules, platforms, resources, etc. in our **Flexible Learning Systems** document and has posted out COVID19 precautions protocols on our website. Our remote learning plan will also be posted as soon as possible.

***Please understand that this plan is subject to change according to state/ governor’s orders and requires Board approval.***

Thank you for your partnership. NMSBVI wishes you all very good health.

Best,

**Patricia Beecher**

**Superintendent**

**New Mexico School for the Blind and Visually Impaired**

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