



# Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School

Montachusett Reg. Vocational Technical School  
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September 4, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The Montachusett Regional School District is preparing for the start of the 2020-2021 school year. Due to the ongoing public health emergency and the regulations set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, all districts have been asked to assess the feasibility and prepare plans for school opening, the options included: All In, Hybrid, Full Remote. The Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School is seeking to implement a hybrid model to return to school. Moving into the new school year, DESE has indicated that districts are responsible for providing Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and implementing students' Individualized Educational Program (IEPs) as agreed upon. Delivery of services identified in the IEP, however, may look differently and therefore districts are also responsible for communicating with families and students about how and when services will be implemented. Students identified as "high needs" will have priority for full time in-person services, so long as it is safe to do so and that the local board of health supports in-person services and the opening of schools. The document below identifies questions and answers regarding Special Education services and Section 504 Accommodation Plans as they relate to the opening of school.

Below are FAQs: (please note that guidances and directives are evolving and changing)

**Q: What is the criteria for "Cohort C" special education services?**

This has been a question asked by many parents, administrators and educators. It would be our hope to have as many students back in school as possible. However, the safety and well-being of students, families, and staff has been and must continue to be our top priority as an educational community. Based on our classroom capacity, we will need to adhere closely to the guidelines outlined by DESE in an effort to ensure we are able to maintain the social distancing requirement.

Students qualifying for full time "Cohort C" are described below and such students must meet at the following criteria:

According to the [Guidance on Fall 2020 Special Education Services from DESE, dated July 9, 2020](#), students with significant and complex needs, as well as preschool children, will be prioritized for receiving in-person instruction. Students with complex and significant needs include:

- Students already identified as "high needs" through the IEP process on the IEP form entitled "Primary Disability/Level of Need-PL3." Such students must meet at least two of these criteria:
  - Services provided outside of the general education classroom;
  - Service providers are special education teachers and related service providers;
  - Special education services constitute more than 75% of the student's school day;

- Students who cannot engage in remote learning due to their disability-related needs;
- Students who primarily use aided and augmentative communication;
- Students who are homeless;
- Students in foster care or congregate care; and/or
- Students who are dually identified as English learners, SEI Level.

Using the above guidelines, Special Education personnel have worked to further analyze service delivery grids for each student. These categories indicate the amount of in-person learning time that would be required for students to receive the maximum in-person services, recognizing that health and safety guidelines may not allow for all students to receive the maximum. The District used this analysis of students' IEPs in conjunction with the DESE criteria for prioritizing in-person learning to develop proposed schedules for students with complex and significant needs, taking into account what is feasible within the health and safety guidelines.

**Q: What will service delivery for students with disabilities look like in the “new normal”?**

- Students will receive a consistent schedule of classes, services, interventions and therapies as outlined in the signed and accepted IEP
- Students will have structured learning time to access state standards
- Students will have frequent interaction with teachers, teaching assistants, related service providers (i.e. Psychologists, Speech and Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, Board Certified Behavior Analysts, Physical Therapists) and other trained staff to ensure participation

**Q: My child does not meet the criteria for the definition of “high needs,” however is a student with a disability. What will services look like for my child in a hybrid model?**

Students will receive services both in- person and remotely per the above-mentioned definitions. An emphasis will be placed on providing as many services “in-person” as are feasibly possible.

**Q: My child meets the criteria for “high needs” and receives most of their services in a substantially separate setting, however there is an element of inclusion in their IEP. How will inclusion service be provided if my child is expected to remain in their sub separate cohort?**

Due to the constraints of social distancing, IEP teams will make every effort to include students in inclusive settings, even if that is through remote access; every effort will be made to make that opportunity a reality for students.

**Q: What is the criteria by which students will be identified to get more in person services/schooling?**

**Less than 2 hours per week of services** - 2 days - follows hybrid/cohort model. Students in this model will receive their IEP services when they are either in person or remote. Service providers will be in contact to get parent feedback.

**2+ hours and under 25%** - 2 days - follows hybrid/cohort model. Students in this model may receive their IEP services both during in-person and remotely depending on their individual service delivery grid. If services are going to be delivered differently, parents will receive notification.

**>25% of day** - Students in this model may receive their IEP services both during in-person and remotely depending on their individual service delivery grid. If services are going to be delivered differently, parents will receive notification.

**>75% of day** - 4 days attendance, Students in this model will receive their IEP services during in-person and remotely depending on their individual service delivery grid.

**Q: How will parents be made aware of the service delivery for their child?**

IEP teams are working to develop cohorts and service delivery schedules for all students. While DESE requires that all agreed upon services in the IEP are implemented, it is understood given the current health and safety requirements, they will look different. Your student's Special Education team will be communicating with you about this.

**Q: If my child is to receive services remotely, what will that look like?**

Remote learning will be more robust than the experience from the spring of 2020. It is expected that students will receive an "instruction and services" model of remote learning through

- A regular and consistent schedule of classes, services, interventions and therapies
- Structured learning time to provide access to state standards
- Frequent interactions with teachers, therapists and support staff
- Synchronous lessons via teleconference and/or video conference
- Asynchronous lessons via recorded lessons

**Q: If a family opts to participate in remote learning will they still be eligible for IEP services through Monty Tech?**

If a parent chooses remote learning it is assumed that the parent prefers to keep their child out of in-person instruction. For students on IEPs, remote service delivery would include:

- A regular and consistent schedule of classes, services, interventions and therapies
- Structured learning time to provide access to state standards
- Frequent interactions with teachers, therapists and support staff
- Synchronous lessons via teleconference and/or video conference
- Asynchronous lessons via recorded lessons

**Q: If a parent opts for remote learning and their child is scheduled for an evaluation, how will that be addressed?**

Many evaluations must be conducted in whole or in part in-person. The psychologists and related service providers will complete as much of the evaluation as they can remotely, however, we may need to ask parents to bring students to the building to meet in person. When in person, safety protocols will be followed. The staff and student will wear masks or face shields where appropriate and be as distanced as possible. Additionally, Plexiglas dividers may be used when it is necessary for an evaluator to be less than 6 ft. apart from the student.

**Q: What will be the procedure for IEP and 504 meetings in the Fall of 2020?**

Given the requirements for social distancing provided by DESE, team meetings for both Special Education and Section 504 plans will be held remotely via teleconference, Google or Zoom. The Department of Student Support Services will be contacting parent/guardians prior to the TEAM meeting to ensure participation and address any concerns regarding the platform of the meeting.

**Q: My child was due for an evaluation in the spring of 2020 and due to school closure, that evaluation was not completed. What are the next steps?**

IEP teams will be prioritizing evaluations based on necessity for completion and date of consent. The District will continue to work with families to meet timelines. If that is not possible, special education administration or liaisons will work with families in an attempt to come to an agreement to waive or extend initial evaluations, re-evaluations or Team Meetings as needed.

**Q: How will eligibility and re-evaluations be conducted?**

Once school resumes, special education staff will be scheduling outstanding assessments in a timely manner.

**Q: How will outstanding team meetings be scheduled?**

We will continue to work with families to meet timelines or agree to extensions for Initial Evaluations, Re-evaluations, and IEP Team Meetings as needed. At the beginning of the year, Special Education Program Administrators will be reaching out to parents to discuss evaluations and rescheduling of team meetings from the spring.

**Q: If my child was starting the IEP planning process, how will that be handled moving forward since the end of year review couldn't take place last year?**

IEP meetings will likely be held remotely to limit the number of people in a building. Given the requirements for social distancing provided by DESE, all team meetings both Special Education and 504 will likely be held remotely via teleconference, Google or Zoom. The District will continue to work with families to meet timelines or agree to extensions for Initial Evaluations, Re-evaluations, and IEP Team Meetings as needed. At the beginning of the year, Special Education Program Administrators will be reaching out to parents to discuss evaluations and rescheduling of team meetings that did not occur in the Spring.

**Q: How will students who require class support receive it during Google/Zoom sessions?**

Students with IEPs will receive support in breakout rooms or through an additional invite provided by the classroom teacher/special education teacher/teaching assistant (depends upon platform Google, Zoom etc.).

**Q: What support will be in place to help parents of children who struggled with remote learning in the past due to difficulties with attention and focus?**

At the start of the school year, Special Education liaisons will be reaching out to parents to engage in collaborative conversations aimed at developing comprehensive services. Information from parents regarding their child's primary area(s) of need and ability to access remote learning will be considered and changes may be made. In addition, in a hybrid model, all teachers will be able to prepare students for their remote learning experiences when students are in-person. This will include teaching students the routines of how to use their technology, providing materials to support work at home, and preparing students for their remote activities.

**Q: How will social learning goals be addressed this fall?**

Special education liaisons will collaborate with parents/guardians in determining services to address individual social emotional goals. Some of the services provided could include social skills groups, small group social time, individual counseling, specific student behavior plans, check in/check out systems in addition to the general education supports that are planned.

**Q: Will Paraprofessionals be in the classroom with the teacher even in the hybrid model and smaller class size?**

Paraprofessional support will be consistent with the student's IEP.

**Q: Are Paraprofessionals going to be given the same training as teachers on how to conduct a Google /Zoom session?**

Yes, all staff will be participating in Professional Development (PD).

**Q: How will teachers, educational support professionals, as well as related service providers of students with complex needs, deliver services when close proximity and physical prompting is needed? Will they still be required to have a 3 or 6 foot space?**

Staff will wear a mask and/or shield and other PPE as warranted by situation protocol provided by DESE's Guidance on Fall 2020 Special Education services. Staff will be trained on the proper use of PPE. In these scenarios providers may need to be within a closer proximity.

**Q: Will students receive 504 accommodations during remote learning?**

Yes. A free appropriate public education ("FAPE") under Section 504 is the provision of equal access to the educational environment which continues during remote learning. Students with existing Section 504 plans are entitled to accommodations, and/or support that will allow for equal access to the provision of distance learning.

**Q: How will my student receive 504 accommodations during remote learning?**

All of a student's teachers are responsible for implementing the accommodations in the plan.

**Q: Will there be MCAS this year?**

DESE will be making the determination about the MCAS for the upcoming year.

**Q: Are there exceptions to wearing masks or face coverings?**

Exceptions to mask/face covering requirements must be made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors. Face shields may be an option for students with medical challenges who are unable to wear masks/face coverings.

**Q: Can parents send children to school without a mask/face covering if they do not have access to one?**

Masks/face coverings should be provided by the student/family, but all buildings have available face masks for students who need them.

**Q: Do parents need to send their students onto the bus with a mask?**

Yes. Bus company policy states that all students are required to wear masks.

The Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School district recognizes that this is a challenging time. We are diligently working to ensure all safety protocols are implemented and thoughtful plans are developed. I appreciate your patience as we work to connect with each of you to develop plans and respond to questions that apply to your specific circumstances. I look forward to having a successful school year and am very much looking forward to supporting your students as we transition back to school for the 2020-2021 school year.

Sincerely,

Victoria Zarozinski, Director of Student Support Services