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Northern Lights Academy

School Closure and Distance Learning Plan

May 5, 2020

According to the State of Minnesota, each school district was required to close for a dismissal period between March 18th and March 27th, 2020, in order to have time to develop distance learning plans for all students, to be in place by March 30, 2020, in the event of a long-term school closure. Distance learning means that each student will have access to appropriate educational materials and receive daily interaction with his/her licensed teacher(s). MN Governor Tim Walz then extended his executive order of schools to engage in distance learning, through the end of this 2019-20 school year. The Northern Lights Academy (NLA) will implement the following School Closure and Distance Learning Plan as/when required by the state of MN.

Distance Learning Plan

Students attending the Northern Lights Academy all receive special education services and have Individualized Education Plans. An individualized distance learning plan will be developed by NLA staff to meet the individual needs for each student based on curriculum standards as well as the goals and objectives on each student's IEP.

Each student will receive a packet of appropriate instructional materials and the supplies necessary to complete the assigned tasks for each day of the ordered school closure. A method of delivery of materials will be outlined in each student's individual learning plan.

Teacher responsibilities:

- Complete the Individualized Distance Learning Plans in consultation with parents/guardians, school social worker, related service providers, tribal representatives, and other team members.
- Prepare materials for each student based on the student's IEP and grade level standards for each day of the school closure.
- Make daily contact with each student according to the individualized distance learning plans.
- Provide on-line resources for parents/guardians who have requested additional resources. On-line activities will not be required work.
- Be available via phone, email. Google Meet, Zoom, google hangout for student assistance and consultation Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 3:00 pm.
- Document all learning activities provided and communications with students and parents. Documentation could be done in SpEd Forms Communication Log, through a Google Document, or other similar mechanism. Some

teachers have indicated they will have a google folder for every student to keep track of plans, activities and communication-great idea!

- Collect Data
 - Work samples, work completed, Progress on grade level standards - assign grades
 - Progress towards IEP goals and objectives
 - Plan for measuring a student's skill level upon student return in order to determine if changes need to be made to their IEP.
- Complete Due Process according to guidance from the Northern Lights Special Education Cooperative (NLSEC) and MDE

Student responsibilities:

- Complete assigned tasks
- Interact with teachers and school staff according to the Individualized Distance Learning Plans
- Return completed tasks according to the Individualized Distance Learning Plans

Northern Lights Academy Individualized Distance Learning Plan

Draft - March 17, 2020

Student Name:

Student's Grade:

Resident/Referring District:

NLA Case Manager:

Start Date: _____ to continue through school days that are designated to be distance learning days.

Types of Service:

Description of instructional materials to be provided to the student:

Description of how materials will be delivered to the student and picked up from the student:

Description of DAILY contact and consultation with students and parents/guardians:
(time, duration, method, staff member, etc.)

Attendance will be based on the student's completion of work and participation during the daily communication with his/her teacher. If the daily communication is a consultation with a parent/guardian, the teacher will ask about the child's work completion. If a child is not completing assigned tasks and not participating in the daily communication, a phone or virtual meeting will be held with the parent to help solve how to support the child in making progress. Attendance and all attempts to encourage attendance, as well as solve attendance issues will be documented. If those efforts are unsuccessful, an IEP team meeting will be held to revisit the IEP and Individualized Distance Learning Plan to determine other supports necessary for the student to make progress. The IEP meeting would be held virtually or by phone.

Truancy will be determined on a case by case basis in consultation with the county the child resides.

Individualized Method of Working on IEP Goals and Objectives

Goal 1:

Method of working on the goal:

Data collection during distance learning plan:

Goal 2:

Method of working on the goal:

Data collection during distance learning plan:

Goal 3:

Method of working on the goal:

Data collection during distance learning plan:

Description of Related Services and the plan for the student to receive the services:

Accommodations:

Thank you in advance for your patience and cooperation!

This is the first time we have developed a plan for distance learning. We recognize that there may be parts of the plan that are not as successful as we would like them to be. NLA staff will continue to check in with students and parents/guardians to determine how the plan is working. When issues arise, the NLA staff will help facilitate problem solving and will adjust the plan to better service the individual student. When a change in plan is necessary, it will be documented and parents/guardians will receive an updated copy of the plan.

Care for Children of Families of Emergency Workers

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding the Care for Children of Families of Emergency Workers. The Northern Lights Academy is following these steps in order to comply with this portion of the School Closure Plan:

- Communicate with each parent/guardian by email and/or by phone to explain the option for emergency child care and to determine which school aged children need emergency child care.
- Work with families to verify which students are eligible for emergency child care, either by obtaining a letter from the employer or by viewing a parent/guardian's employment badge.
- Work with the resident/referring district to determine if the resident/referring district is going to send the student to the NLA or if the resident/referring district is going to provide the emergency child care.
- Work with the resident/referring district and parents/guardians to get transportation in place for any student who will have emergency child care at the NLA.
- Work with parents/guardians of students attending emergency child care to determine if the student needs extended care - both before school hours care and after school hours care.
- Ensure that parents/guardians understand that there is no cost to them for this care.
- Screen all children entering the building for emergency child care for symptoms of illness per the guidance from the MN Dept of Health.
- Provide supervision and activities for children in need of emergency child care.
 - Care will be supervised by NLA paraprofessionals.
 - Activities will take place in several designated spaces within NLA.
 - Children will be divided into small groups if there are more than 3 students in order to provide social distancing.
 - Children will be encouraged to wash hands frequently and use tissues when coughing or sneezing.
 - Children will be provided a variety of activities to engage in during the day. Examples include: reading time, game time, gym time, puzzles, drawing and other craft type activities. Children will also have time to work on school work that was assigned by a licensed teacher if necessary. NLA staff will coordinate with parents/guardians regarding the need for school work time. (No licensed teachers will be working with students.)
- Provide meals for the children in need of emergency child care.

Nutrition

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding the provision of nutrition for any student in need. During regularly scheduled school days when school is in session, NLA works with the Cloquet Schools to provide meals for students. During a school closure, the Northern Lights Academy is following these steps in order to comply with this portion of the School Closure Plan:

- Communicate with each parent/guardian by email and/or by phone to explain that meals are available for any student in need, regardless of whether they qualify for free and reduced meals or not. Determine which students need meals based on whether the parent/guardian reports a need for meals. During the conversation with parents/guardians, NLA staff will gather any information regarding food allergies and restrictions in order to work with foodservice to meet the needs of students with allergies and restrictions.
- NLA will ensure that children will receive meals as needed during scheduled school days during a school closure.
 - For students near Cloquet who need meals, breakfast and lunch bagged meals from Cloquet Foodservice will be delivered to each student's home at the same time each day by NLA staff. Staff call prior to arriving to make sure someone is able to get the meals. When they drop off meals, NLA staff do not come face to face with students or their family members.
 - For students not near Cloquet, NLA will provide the name and number of the person to contact in their resident/referring district. NLA staff will follow up with parents/guardians to ensure they were

successful and the student will be receiving meals.

- NLA will document the number of meals NLA students need each day and will report to Cloquet Foodservice the number of meals needed on a daily basis for the meals delivered by NLA staff. Since the meals will be reported by the Cloquet district or by the student's resident/referring district, NLA will not apply for a waiver and will not complete the state reporting.

Student and Family Engagement

Added May 5, 2020

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding the engagement of students and families. The staff at NLA is using the following procedures to engage students and families:

- Case managers set up the method of daily contact with each student and his/her parents/guardians during the initial planning period and school closure. Case managers offered the use of phone calls, text messages, emails and video conferencing. Parents/guardians made choices based on which method would work best for their child and their family's schedule and needs. Parents/guardians also chose what time of day worked best for the contacts.
- During Distance Learning, case managers check in regularly with parents/guardians to revise the plan as needed when things are not working or when another option would improve the process. Revisions have been made regarding the method of contact as well as the time of day for the daily contact.
- The Northern Lights Academy school social worker also set up weekly and bi-weekly contact with each of the NLA students and parents/guardians and continues to revise the method of contact and the day(s) of the week/time of the day for the contact. The NLA social worker is responsible for providing mental health supports as well as helping parents/families to connect with community supports when needed.
- The NLA Assistant Director of Special Education (the administrator for NLA) will check in with parents/guardians and other community members to determine if there are additional things the school can be doing to provide necessary support for the students enrolled in the NLA and their families.
- If case managers are unsuccessful at assisting a student and providing access to services, the NLA administrator will work with the school team and other community resources to make contact with the student and his/her parents/guardians to problem solve and figure out a way for the student to access the services. When a solution is determined, the student's individualized distance learning plan will be revised to include the solution.

Instructional Materials Delivery and Pick Up

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding instructional materials delivery and pick up. The Northern Lights Academy is using the following procedures for the delivery and pick up of educational materials and supplies:

- During the development of each student's individualized distance learning plan, special education case managers/teachers discuss with parents/guardians and document the method of delivery and pick up of materials. Methods of delivery/pick up may include the following based on parent/guardian preference:
 - For students living within a 30 min radius of the NLA, delivery and pick up of instructional materials and supplies will be by NLA staff on Mondays during the drop off of meals.
 - For students living beyond 30 minutes, NLA staff will deliver instructional materials and supplies to the resident/referring district. The resident/referring district will follow their method of distribution to get materials to the student and to pick up materials when assigned tasks are completed.
 - Other possible options include:
 - Emailing materials (if a parent requests to receive them by email)
 - Sending home materials if a student is also attending emergency child care

- Parent pick up of materials by arrangement with NLA administration

Health and Wellness

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding Health and Wellness of students, staff, families, community, volunteers and contractors.

Talking to Children about COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

Before school was closed on March 18, 2020, the NLA Social Worker facilitated lessons using the Brain Pop video on the COVID-19 virus and a youtube video on handwashing prior to the school closure starting. NLA staff were available to talk with students during school prior to the school closure to discuss their fears and anxiety and to answer questions.

The NLA School Social Worker and other staff will be available to communicate with students who need to talk more about COVID-19 on an as needed basis during a school closure or on distance learning days. This communication could be via phone, email, note writing, journaling, etc.

Mental Health and Well-being

NLA special education teachers will check in with students and their parents/guardians regarding their mental health. If there are concerns, the special education teacher will contact the NLA social worker. The social worker will assist students and families in determining what supports are necessary to help address the concern. Services from the NLA social worker will be part of each student's individualized distance learning plan. Skills work will be included in the instructional materials each student receives and works on daily. The social worker will also communicate at least twice per week with each student and/or a parent/guardian of the student to check in. The social worker will also be available daily from 8:00am to 3:00pm by phone and email if a student and/or parent/guardian is in need.

The NLA social worker will communicate (email/phone) weekly to discuss current mental health services with NLA students. The NLA social worker will assist outside agencies as needed with communication with parents/guardians.

NLA special education staff will check in with each other on a daily basis regarding each other's mental health. The NLA staff already are a tight community and check in with each other due to the nature of a setting IV school and the closeness of its staff. If at any time a staff member has a concern regarding the mental health of another staff member, he/she will contact either the NLA social worker or the NLA administration to share the concern. If needed, staff will brainstorm with the person regarding addressing the concern.

If there is a need for NLA to address mental health concerns within the community, volunteers or contractors, the NLA administration will contact additional resources to find support to address the concerns.

Physical Health

The Northern Lights Academy follows the guidance and direction of the Cloquet School Nurse regarding physical health in regards to students, staff, families and the community. Students who be attending Emergency Child Care

Attendance and Truancy

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding Attendance and Truancy. Attendance and truancy is addressed in each student's Individualized Distance Learning Plan. The NLA district policy regarding attendance and truancy will be reviewed and amended to include attendance and truancy as it related to distance learning during a future NLA board meeting.

Attendance will be based on the student's completion of work and participation during the daily communication with his/her teacher. If the daily communication is a consultation with a parent/guardian, the teacher will ask about the child's work completion. If a child is not completing assigned tasks and not participating in the daily communication, a phone or virtual meeting will be held with the parent to help solve how to support the child in making progress. Attendance and all attempts to encourage attendance, as well as solve attendance issues will be documented. If those efforts are unsuccessful, an IEP team meeting will be held to revisit the IEP and Individualized Distance Learning Plan to determine other supports necessary for the student to make progress. The IEP meeting would be held virtually or by phone. Truancy will be determined on a case by case basis in consultation with the county in which the child resides.

Added May 5, 2020: MN Dept of Education provided guidance regarding the following procedures should a student be considered absent (no contact with the student for 15 consecutive days):

- Case managers make multiple attempts (3 or more) daily using several different methods of contact (phone calls, texts, emails, and video conference invites)
- The school social worker will make multiple attempts using several different methods of contact.
- The NLA administrator will make attempts to contact the student and his/her parents/guardians. The administrator will also make contact with other community resources to attempt to connect the student and his/her parents with school services.
- In the event the student is absent for 15 days, the school will complete the Excessive Absences Individual Student Application in order to request to waive the withdrawal for the individual student if the absences are related to the student's inability to access distance learning. The school will then continue to work with parents/guardians to find a solution for the inability to access services. If the student's absences are not due to the lack of access, the school will drop the student from enrollment per school finance statutes.

Special Education Services

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding special education services during school closure and distance learning periods. The Northern Lights Academy is a level IV special education school and all students have an IEP-Individual Education Plan. There is also an Individualized Distance Learning Plan that is developed for each student.

Due Process Procedural Information during Distance Learning:

- Timelines: Due Process timelines will be "on hold" during the 8-day dismissal period, just as they would for a snow day (i.e. these days won't count toward a 30-day eval timeline)
- Timelines will resume on March 30th.
 - If a district is unable to meet a timeline because of a COVID-19 related concern, the district will document a statement such as: "The annual IEP was not able to be held within the mandatory timeline due to the COVID-19 pandemic."
 - IEPs: The distance learning plans for students do not require changes to the student's IEP. Teams are expected to do their best to support a student to continue to make progress toward the general education standards and their goals, through an alternative mode of delivery of services. Full IEP minutes are not required to be met, but a comprehensive distance learning plan for students that will help them continue to make progress is required.
 - When the Distance Learning period starts as anticipated as early as March 30th, timelines resume, and initial or annual IEPs are being written or revised, they should be written as if students will be attending in school, receiving services as they typically would. The Individualized Distance Learning Plan will be attached to the IEP.
 - Prior Written Notice Language Explaining Proposed Services (Initial or Annual IEPs): Under the "Additional factors relevant to the district's proposed or refused action" where your team is proposing either an annual IEP or an initial IEP you can include the following statement to address the COVID19/Distance Learning situation." The proposed IEP is being written to reflect school based services

that would be/will be offered once school is back in session. In the meantime the student's individualized, comprehensive distance learning plan will be provided based on student needs per requirements of the individual district and the Minnesota Department of Education."

- Meetings: During the 8-day closure, MDE is recommending that staff postpone IEP meetings until distance learning starts and continue the focus on developing comprehensive distance learning plans. IEP teams are allowed to complete due process activities virtually during distance learning periods, including IEP team meetings. Don't forget to include outside agencies in the applicable meetings. For team sign-in or signatures, document attendance by phone or virtual for applicable team members.
- Signatures: When signatures are required from parents for various due process reasons, electronic signatures or an email from a parent kept on file are acceptable.
- Evaluation:
 - During distance learning time, districts should use assessment activities and evaluations available online if possible.
 - During distance learning days, if evaluation components can be completed online, the team may move forward with the evaluation. However, MDE has stated that "activities that are not reasonable to carry out if a school is closed or a student is ill" can be delayed until school reconvenes. Similarly, when distance learning days are declared because of concerns related to COVID-19 exposure, an evaluation can be delayed if face-to-face assessment is required.
 - For those evaluation procedures that require use of manipulatives, etc., we need to continue to be creative and watch for more guidance from MDE on what to do in these situations
 - Observations - a write-up of what has been observed in school would be a possible method of completion.
 - Evaluation plans may need to be revised due to not being able to test a student or complete observations face to face.
- **Face to face contact with students is not allowed during school closure or distance learning days due to the public crisis.**
- If the team is completing a re-evaluation, consider doing a record review of portions versus conducting new testing, same with observations.
- Continue to communicate with families and teams and document the communication.

English Learners

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding English Learners. The school district remains responsible for educating English learners. At the present time, the NLA does not have any English learners.

Students Experiencing Homelessness and Housing Instability

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding Students Experiencing Homelessness and Housing Instability. NLA student's special education teacher will continue to be in daily contact (phone, email, virtual meetings) with each student and his/her parents/guardians. The teacher will gather information from a parent/guardian if there is a change in a student's housing situation. This information will be reported to the NLA District Homeless Liaison who will follow the NLA Families in Transition plan. If there is a concern that a student may be homeless or experiencing housing instability and the special education teacher is not able to reach a parent, the NLA administration will contact other supports to assist with contacting parents/guardians. Other supports may include: Indian Home School Liaisons, resident/referring district administration, county health and human services, etc. All efforts to follow the NLA Families in Transition Plan will be documented by the NLA District Homeless Liaison and NLA administration.

Early Learning

The Northern Lights Academy is a Kindergarten through 8th grade school. Early Learning does not apply to the NLA school closure and distance learning plan.

Assessment

The Northern Lights Academy is continuing to follow updated guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding state assessments.

Tribal Considerations

The Northern Lights Academy is following the guidance from the MN Dept of Education regarding Tribal Considerations.

NLA Administration has consulted with the Director of Indian Education of the Cloquet School District regarding the School Closure and Distance Learning Plan. The plan will also be submitted to the Tribal Liaison in the Office of Indian Education on or before March 24, 2020 in order for the Tribal Nations to review them for equitable services to American Indian students.

The Director of Indian Education shared that a American Indian Home - School Liaison will be available to assist with American Indian students throughout Distance Learning when needs arise. The Liaison is available to contact students and parents/guardians, encourage students to engage in learning activities, check in on mental health, assist when a child experiences home instability, and other possible ways. The NLA special education teachers will have regular contact with the Liaison in order to prevent any issues or to problem solve issues as soon as possible.

Broadband Access

The Northern Lights Academy collected information from individual families about broadband access and technology equipment prior to the finalization of this distance learning plan. For the reason that some families do not have broadband access or equipment, the NLA has developed an equitable distance learning plan that doesn't require technology to ensure that all students can continue to learn.