

Continuity of Education Plan

Intermediate Unit	Berks County Intermediate Unit #14
Executive Director	Dr. Jill Hackman
Address	1111 Commons Blvd Reading, PA 19612
Email / Phone	jilhac@berksiu.org
Website	www.berksiu.org

Goal of Plan

The Berks County Intermediate Unit #14 will provide continuity of education across its Pre-K through Transition to Adult Life programs through a combination of both planned instruction and enrichment and review activities. The Berks County Intermediate Unit #14 will develop and provide, in good faith, appropriate and reasonable supports and services for students with diverse learning needs.

Overview of Plan

The Berks County Intermediate Unit (BCIU) provides programs and services to public school districts, nonpublic schools, and other human service organizations in Berks County, Pennsylvania. This continuity of education plan has been developed to meet the diverse needs of our students across alternative education, special education, early childhood, and social services. The plan is aligned with our mission to provide high-quality resources, innovative services and programs, and responsible leadership to enrich the educational and social services needs of our children.

The following educational services and programs are addressed in this plan:

- **Alternative Education Programs** include the BCIU Learning Academy at Thomas Ford, Educational Programs at the Berks County Jail, and Berks County Residential Center.
- **School-Age Special Education Programs** include classroom-based programs and itinerant educational and related services. **Classroom-based programs** include Transition to Adult Life Programs and Deaf and Hard of Hearing classrooms (K-12). **Itinerant services** encompass speech and language therapy, vision and hearing services, psychological services, orientation and mobility, sign language interpreters, behavioral support, and English language supports.
- **Early Childhood Programs** include Child Care, Pre-K Counts, Head Start, and Early Intervention.
- **Non-public School Services** include the provision of (K-4 and 9-12) to students in non-public schools with Act 89 and Title I services.

Expectations for Teaching and Learning

Given the diverse range of services and programs within the BCIU's scope, expectations for teaching and learning will be tailored for each educational program and in consideration of the individualized educational needs of students. The following principles will guide expectations for teaching and learning across the BCIU programs:

- **Enrichment and Review Activities** will be provided to students and families on a weekly basis. If needed, activities may be sent as separate daily communications to support families and students in providing sections of materials and management of time.
 - All Early Childhood Program teachers will provide enrichment and review activities to students and families to provide continuity of education. All developmental areas will be considered.
 - School-age programs will provide enrichment and review activities as appropriate for students based on guidance and decisions made by the student's home school district or non-public school.
- **Planned Instruction** will be provided, as appropriate, to students in school age programs based on the following considerations:
 - Alternative Education programs will consider a student's need for credits toward graduation and / or student participation in credit-recovery programs to prevent disengagement from school or drop-out status.
 - Special Education programs will provide planned instruction, as appropriate, for students based on guidance and decisions made by the student's home school district.
 - Non-public schools' programs will provide planned instruction in accordance with the non-public schools' continuity of education plan.
- **Special Education and Related Services** will be provided in good faith and as determined, as reasonable and appropriate, for students during the period of mandated closure.

To meet these expectations, BCIU programs will utilize the week of March 30, 2020, to provide professional development and planning time. Professional development will include training on use of virtual learning platforms and technologies, family engagement principles, and best practices in virtual learning for diverse learners. Each program will develop a professional development plan tailored to the needs of its educators, students, and families.

Communication Tools and Strategies

The following tools will be used to communicate with parents and families during the mandated closure:

BCIU and Program-Wide Communications

- Blackboard Connect Phone / Email Messages
- BCIU Facebook Page
- BCIU Website – Students and Families – www.berksiu.org

BCIU and Program-Wide Communications will focus on sharing updated information regarding the pandemic health emergency, school closures, and community / school resources. Information and resources will be updated and shared as received and appropriate.

Classroom and Student-Specific Communications

- Remind Applications
- Class Dojo Applications
- Email Communication
- Phone Communication
- Video Conferencing (e.g. Zoom, Google Meet)

Classroom and Student-Specific Communications will focus on sharing educational resources and learning activities with families, as well as individualized family supports. Teachers will be expected to communicate weekly with families to review each student's progress and needs for additional support. Teachers will be expected to provide daily learning activities, but may communicate those daily or weekly, as appropriate, for the program.

In addition to these methods of communication, programs may opt to utilize written communication to reach families who are unavailable via other means such as phone, email, etc.

Access (Devices, Platforms, Handouts)

The BCIU anticipates that access to technology—devices and platforms—may present challenges to communication and learning for many students. Teachers across programs will assess potential barriers to technology by communicating with parents and determining availability of access to virtual platforms for enrichment and review activities and / or planned instruction.

Enrichment and review activities will be provided to students and families through a combination of platforms and strategies. Class Dojo and Remind Apps will be used to communicate class-wide and with individual students and families. Printed materials, calendars, and activity guides will be provided when barriers to virtual learning modalities cannot be remedied.

Planned instruction will be provided to students and families through one-to-one, small, or large groups sessions utilizing tools such as Zoom or Google Sites. In the event students cannot access this technology, phone consultation and / or printed materials and toolkits will be provided to support ongoing learning.

The BCIU will provide families with information regarding means to access free or low-cost internet services as necessary. As appropriate, instructional sessions will be recorded for families to access on their own schedules. Loaner devices may be provided, if necessary, to meet standards of "free and appropriate public education" as per students' IEPs.

Staff General Expectations

The BCIU expects staff to work remotely, following their regular work schedules to the greatest extent possible under the current circumstances. Flexibility in schedules will be considered on an individualized basis and exceptions will be granted if employees cannot meet the program requirements and educational needs of families and students with adaptations or modifications.

On a weekly basis, it is expected that educators and educational support staff engage in work as follows to comply with program requirements and support families and students:

- Meet with school, classroom, and student-focused educational teams to collaborate, problem-solve, and develop learning activities for students.
- Communicate once a week with each parent / family to discuss individual student needs.
- Support families and students through sharing of learning activities, community resources, or referrals.
- Participate in IEP team meetings and maintain timelines for special education compliance.
- Develop and disseminate learning packets, materials, and resources.
- Engage in professional development activities to enhance virtual teaching skills and knowledge to support students and families through virtual means.
- Document services and consultative supports provided to families.
- Complete other tasks / assignments as directed by supervisor or director.

Expectations may change or evolve over time as programs build plans and roll out virtual learning platforms.

Student Expectations

The BCIU encourages all students and families to engage in consultation, check-ins, and learning activities provided, as appropriate, and to the extent possible. As most programs will be offering enrichment and review activities, every effort will be made to engage student participation. Planned instruction, individualized expectations for attendance, work completion, and engagement will be outlined specifically for the student and family. Teachers may provide synchronous or asynchronous learning activities to support student learning.

Attendance / Accountability

Teachers will maintain records of individual parent contacts information, student engagement in activities, and work completion, as appropriate, to the type of activities provided. For students in need of credit toward high school graduation or grade level promotion, work will be graded as an accountability measure.

Good Faith Efforts for Access and Equity for All Students

The BCIU has developed its plan in consideration of the needs of diverse learners and families across programs. The plan provides options to engage learners from Pre-K to 12 through use of virtual learning options, distribution of materials / printed resources, and one-to-one conferencing. Options for individual, small group, and large group instruction in synchronous or asynchronous means were also considered. Additional considerations for special education supports, English Learner supports, and Gifted Education are outlined in the following sections.

Special Education Supports

The BCIU will provide reasonable and appropriate special education supports to students through virtual or other means in a good faith, best effort to provide continuity of education for all students identified as requiring special education services during the period of mandated school closure.

BCIU educators and related service staff will initiate communication with families and students to assess current needs and concern and to gather input regarding priority areas of need. Educators will assess in-home supports and resources available to families to make decisions regarding learning platforms and materials needed. Recommendations for service for the interim period will be based on reports from this initial consultation, as well as progress data collected prior to the closure. IEP teams will develop an interim service plan and inform the family in writing about the services to be provided via online, virtual instruction, or other means. On-going consultation, review of available data, and adjustments will be made, as appropriate, within the parameters of the Governor's orders surrounding closures, access of materials, and face-to-face interactions. Upon return to school, the IEP team will reassess each student to determine progress made toward IEP goals and objectives.

English Language Supports

The BCIU will provide English Learners with access to materials in their most fluent language and language interpreting services for parent consultation, as appropriate. The BCIU employs multiple bilingual staff (Spanish-English) to assist in communication. The BCIU also has two Spanish Language Interpreters on staff to support translation of documents into Spanish. The BCIU has an established contract with TransPerfect to assist with interpreting / translation services for other languages.

Educational teams will also have access to certified English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers for consultation purposes if needs for additional supports arise. Individualized support will be provided as reasonable and appropriate.

Gifted Education

The BCIU does not currently serve students identified as Gifted under PA Chapter 16 regulations. This section is not applicable in the current context.

Building / Grade Level Contacts

Additional information regarding this plan and the educational services provided during the mandated closure can be obtained through the following contacts:

Office of Early Childhood and Student Services – Contact Number: 610-987-8511

- Michelle Reichard-Huff, Director
- Christi Weitzel, Assistant Director of Early Childhood Services
- Sara George, Assistant Director of K-12 Education and Student Services

Office of Professional Development and Curriculum – Contact Number: 610-987-8421

- Dan Richards, Director
- Dr. Christina Foehl, Assistant Director

Resource Links

[BCIU Home Page](#)

[Core Connections to Virtual Learning](#)

[Distance Learning Resources](#)

[Pennsylvania Department of Education - COVID 19 Updates](#)

[Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network \(PaTTAN\)](#)