

Department of Education Issues Guidance Allowing Parents to Choose All-Remote Learning for Their Children

The New Jersey Department of Education today issued clarifying guidance to allow parents to select fulltime remote learning for their children in the 2020-2021 school year.

Released last month, the Department's guidance document, "The Road Back: Restart and Recovery Plan for Education," emphasized that schools should prepared plans to open in some capacity for in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 school year. Since its release, the Department received feedback from many parents who wanted a greater voice in the decision-making process of whether their child should return to in-person learning. In addition, officials in some school districts called on the Department to release guidance to specifically allow for all-remote learning for those students.

The core elements of the guidance issued today include:

Universal eligibility: All students, including students who receive special education or related services, are eligible for fulltime remote learning if their parent or guardian chooses.

Policies and procedures: School districts must set clear policies and procedures for families who want fulltime remote learning for their children. School districts also need procedures for students in fulltime remote learning to transition back to in-person services. These procedures should be designed to ensure that families can make necessary arrangements to prepare for their child's transition, and to help schools maintain continuity of services.

Communications: School districts must communicate clearly and frequently with families, in their home language, about the availability of this offering and the related procedures.

Quality of programming: Students participating in all-remote instruction should receive the same quality of instruction that is provided to any other student. In addition, fulltime remote programs must adhere to the same policies and regulations that in-person and hybrid programs follow regarding student attendance and the length of the school day.

Data reporting: To help the Department evaluate fulltime remote learning, school districts will report data to the Department about student participation in these programs.

The full guidance is available on the Department of Education's "Restart and Recovery: The Road Back" at <https://www.nj.gov/education/reopening/>