



April 8, 2020

Dear FirstLine Families,

I hope that our fourth week of distance learning has been great! I wanted to share some exciting news with you regarding technology and special education in our distance learning landscape.

Distance Learning and Technology

Our distance learning plan has been grounded in paper-based instruction, while offering supplemental instruction via phone calls and online classes. We chose a paper-based plan because we knew this was the best way to ensure that all students had access to materials. We are very excited to announce that NOLA-PS has purchased technology for schools to use during this challenging time. This will help more students access our virtual offerings. On Monday we received 1,119 Chromebooks to loan to families while students are doing distance learning. We are working to distribute them to families without a device this week and early next week. Per the agreement with NOLA-PS, these devices will be returned to FirstLine at the end of our time in distance learning so that we will have them should we need to have another period of distance learning in the future.

As you may know, FirstLine serves approximately 3,600 students, which means there is not a device for everyone. At report card conferences during the week of March 9th and through phone calls with families, we conducted a needs assessment with families to determine who had a device and who needed a device. We have also updated these needs, as situations have changed. Our priority for distribution is for students who cannot access classes, based on the needs communicated by families. If we find that there are additional needs, we will see if there are ways to secure additional devices. We do expect, however, that in some families two children will need to share one device.

We are awaiting our delivery of hotspots to support families that do not have internet access. We hope to have those deployed to families with the greatest need the week of April 13th. We will continue to share information on programs available from [Cox](#) and [AT&T](#) for low-cost internet. We can't wait to see more students in classes next week as we deliver devices to you!

Special Education

We are also excited to tell you about the work we are doing in Special Education. We are working to ensure that students with disabilities have access to services during our time in distance learning. Our special educators are reaching out to families to discuss the best ways to support their students at this time, as indicated in their Individual Education Plans (IEPs). Related services, such as speech, gifted, counseling/social work services, and more are being offered via video, phone or text, depending on family preferences.

Have a great Spring Break! We look forward to getting back to class on April 14th.

Sincerely,

Sabrina Pence
FirstLine Schools CEO