What types of support are schools expected to provide parents and students?

In September 2020, Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro announced that the County has allocated $197,000 for a COVID-19 Childcare Relief Scholarship which would allow parents to work, look for work, or attend college. Scholarships will be awarded beginning October 1, 2020 through the end of the academic year by a random selection process to eligible families with school-aged children. The Childcare Relief Scholarship will cover 75% of tuition for each child, and families with children with disabilities will be prioritized. The Program Guidance and Application Instructions can be found here.

The Dutchess Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) provides a variety of both certified and support personnel to special education students enrolled in classes run by Dutchess BOCES as well as in participating district and private schools. They provide assistive technology evaluation, assistive technology support, Teachers of the Deaf (TOD), sign language interpreters, speech services, and Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI). One special education teacher at the Salt Point Center found a way to bring her class of in-person and remote students together through Jamboard, an interactive whiteboard system developed by Google. Jamboard allows for real-time collaboration as a whole class, which the students enjoy because they can work simultaneously and receive immediate feedback.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that was passed in March provides more than $16 billion dollars to K-12 education. Click here to read the article that offers tips to schools for allocating CARES Act money for equitable learning. School districts should direct CARES Act resources to students to improve their learning outcomes and minimize spending on compensatory education in the future, as the Department of Education suggests that districts must award compensatory education to make up for skills regression and lost services when schools resume. Schools should also fund distance learning arrangements that mimic in-person instruction, such as purchasing online learning supports and paying for virtual therapy providers or special education teachers. It is also recommended that students with moderate-to-severe disabilities should safely return to the classroom so that they can access necessary in-person support. Finally, schools should add a budget line item for compensatory education and expect to hire additional staff or fund additional hours of service to meet compensatory education mandates.