



April 15, 2020

Ms. Teresa Larkin  
New Branches Charter Academy  
3662 Poinsettia Ave., SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49508

Re: Approval of Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan ("Plan")

Dear Ms. Larkin:

I am pleased to inform you that the Plan for New Branches Charter Academy ("Academy") has been approved by The Governor John Engler Center for Charter Schools at Central Michigan University and will be transmitted by our office to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Treasurer. The Plan is effective as of the date indicated in the Plan. You may proceed with Plan implementation for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year and, if applicable, other elements that affect the 2020-2021 school year.

Please also proceed with the following next steps:

- To fulfill one of the required assurances, immediately add a copy of the approved Plan, assurances document, and budget outline to the Academy's website. An approved copy of the Plan is attached and can be found in Epicenter.
- Present the Plan to the Academy's Board of Directors ("Academy Board") at its next scheduled meeting. At that meeting the Academy Board should approve any necessary amendments to the Academy's 2019-2020 budget or other relevant agreements needed to implement the Plan. In accordance with the Terms and Conditions of the Academy's charter contract ("Contract"), the approved Plan shall constitute Contract amendment number eight (8) to the Contract upon approval by the Academy Board. This Contract amendment will remain in effect as long as the Plan remains in effect. Attached please find a draft resolution for the Academy Board to use in approving the Plan and Contract amendment.

If the Academy requires an amendment to the Plan, please contact Amy Densmore, Director of Charter Accountability, at (989) 506-0355 or via email at [avanatten@thecenterforcharters.org](mailto:avanatten@thecenterforcharters.org) to initiate that process.

Thank you for all your efforts to keep student learning moving forward in these trying times. If you have any further questions or need additional support, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Corey Northrop". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "C" and "N".

Corey Northrop  
Executive Director

cc: Ryan Julian, Board President  
Candace Sorensen, Board Corresponding Agent

Attachments:

Approved Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan  
Academy Board Resolution



3662 Poinsettia Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508

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**Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan  
New Branches Charter Academy  
April 2020**

**Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan Assurances**

**Date Submitted:** April 14, 2020  
**Name of District:** New Branches Charter Academy  
**Address of District:** 3662 Poinsettia Ave SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508  
**District Code Number:** 41901, Building # 08019  
**Email Address of the District:** [teresalarkin@choiceschools.com](mailto:teresalarkin@choiceschools.com)  
**Name of Intermediate School District:** Kent ISD  
**Name of Authorizing Body (if applicable):** Central Michigan University

This Assurance document needs to be returned to your Intermediate School District or, for Public School Academies, your Authorizing Body with your Continuity of Learning Plan and Budget Outline beginning April 8, 2020 to indicate that the District will adopt a plan to ensure continuous learning for all students through the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year.

Districts should submit a single district plan that relates to all of their schools.

The applicant hereby provides assurance it will follow the requirements for a Plan for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year:

1. Applicant assures that all student learning will take place under the direction of a teacher of record for each student enrolled in the district.
2. Applicant assures that it will continue to pay school employees during the balance of the 2019-2020 school year under the same terms and conditions established prior to the school closure order period.
3. Applicant assures that the Plan was developed in collaboration with district administrators, school board members, teachers, and local bargaining units.
4. Applicant assures that food distribution has been arranged for or provided for eligible students.
5. Applicant assures coordination between applicant and Intermediate School District in which the District/PSA is located to mobilize disaster relief child care centers.
6. Applicant assures that to the extent practicable the District/PSA will in good faith provide students with IEPs/Section 504 Plans the opportunity to participate in learning consistent with existing plans.
7. Applicant assures that Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan, Assurance Document, and Budget Outline will be posted immediately following approval to the District's/PSA's website.

## Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan

*The goal of a Continuity of Learning Plan and COVID-19 Response Plan is to ensure that each District or Public School Academy is providing, to the best of its ability, each student with alternative modes of instruction to help them stay on pace in their learning. This application recognizes that there is no “one-size-fits-all” solution; multiple means of engaging students and supporting families may be necessary that may vary by grade level, school building, or student population served.*

For the purposes of the Plan, “district” refers to school districts and public school academies.

**Date Submitted:** April 14, 2020  
**Name of District:** New Branches Charter Academy  
**Address of District:** 3662 Poinsettia Avenue SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49508  
**District Code Number:** 41901, Building # 08019  
**Email Address of the District Superintendent:** [teresalarkin@choiceschools.com](mailto:teresalarkin@choiceschools.com)  
**Name of Intermediate School District:** Kent ISD  
**Name of Authorizing Body (if applicable):** Central Michigan University

In accordance with Executive Order 2020-35 a Plan must include all of the following parts:

Please describe the methods the district will use to provide alternative modes of instruction other than in-person instruction and a summary of materials each pupil and the pupil’s parents or guardians will need to access meaningfully the alternative modes of instruction included in the Plan. If the Plan relies on electronic instruction, the Plan must ensure to the extent feasible that pupils have access to a connected device capable of accessing the electronic instruction and must not penalize a pupil for the pupil’s inability to fully participate.

***“Alternative modes of instruction” means modes of pupil instruction, other than in-person instruction, that may include, without limitation, partnerships with other districts or intermediate districts or community colleges or institutions of higher education, use of vendors, use of online learning, telephone communications, email, virtual instruction, videos, slideshows, project-based learning, use of instructional packets, or a hybrid of multiple modes of learning that still promote recommended practices for social distancing to mitigate the spread of COVID- .***

### ***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

New Branches Charter Academy will use a blended approach for all learners including online and paper-pencil instruction to meet the needs of students with and without technology. All teachers will use Google Classroom as the online learning platform in grades Kindergarten through 8th grade. The school will also provide paper/pencil resources in the form of learning packets for families to pick up or receive by mail as needed. Students will not be exclusively online but may be exclusively paper/pencil if access to technology or internet is not possible.

The school has surveyed families to determine the technology needs of each student. The district will be providing Chromebooks for all students who do not currently have their own device, and will connect families with resources to remove barriers to internet use.

All students will need access to materials such as paper, pencils, and crayons, which will be made available to families that don't have them based on communication between teacher and students and parents. All students will have access to grade-level textbooks either online or by picking them up at the school to complete their work, if needed.

**Please describe the methods the district will use to keep pupils at the center of educational activities, including outreach to continue building relationships and maintain connections, and to help pupils feel safe and valued.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

New Branches Charter Academy uses multiple means of communication with students and parents to build, strengthen, and maintain relationships that include its website, Facebook page, Class Dojo, text messages, Google Classroom, Remind, phone calls, email, etc. Teachers will assess the ways that work best for each family. We will expect all teachers to communicate daily through Google Classroom with students to respond to learning questions, teach new topics, and check in on their well-being through Google Classroom, Zoom, email, etc. Teachers will hold at least one classroom Zoom meeting each week to maintain a sense of community, allow students to interact and socialize, and teach essential concepts.

For students that are not able to participate in the online Zoom meeting or Google Classroom, teachers will individually call to check in on their learning progress and well-being at least once per week. The daily and weekly communication of each teacher will be logged in a spreadsheet to track the progress for each individual student and document concerns that the teacher might have. The school leaders will check in with teachers each week on their students' needs through virtual staff meetings, grade level collaborative meetings, phone and email communication.

Teachers will hold weekly office hours a minimum of two days per week at varying times which will allow for students and parents to contact teachers with questions, concerns, and help needed. Office hours will be communicated to parents through Google Classroom, Facebook, letter, and email.

All support staff will be re-deployed and will take part in individual student well checks to maintain healthy learning relationships and help students that may be struggling academically or emotionally during the closure. Specials teachers will help support healthy habits, emotional well-being, and exploratory learning through Google Classroom. These activities will be paired with printed versions as needed to include in grade-level packets for those who cannot access via technology.

Students that usually receive behavioral, emotional, or social learning support will receive weekly individual check-ins from their service providers which will be logged. We have advised staff that our role as mandatory reporters has not changed and will report any instances where they feel a student's safety is compromised.

New Branches Charter Academy does not have any students that speak a primary language other than English. For parents who do speak another language, teachers will make a concerted effort to have communication translated into that language through Google Translate.

For students who have special education programs and services, we will be initiating a contingency plan, with parent input, to address the needs of each individual student. Students

with IEP's will be provided with learning opportunities in the same manner as general education students. These learning opportunities will include accessibility options as well as materials that have been accommodated and modified. Teachers will be supporting students through virtual or phone contact.

**Please describe the district's plans to deliver content in multiple ways so that all pupils can access learning.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

The district will use a blended format which includes online instruction and paper/pencil resources to deliver content to students with Google Classroom as the main online platform. Each grade level has developed a list of websites with content in each subject area for students to remotely learn (ex. IXL, RazKids, Reading AtoZ, Prodigy). Teachers are utilizing various other online resources to help students practice previously taught standards and learn new material per grade level.

The school has surveyed families to determine the technology needs of each student. The district will be providing Chromebooks for all students who do not currently have their own device, and will connect families with resources to remove barriers to internet use.

For students who have special education programs and services, we will be initiating a contingency plan, with parent input, to address the needs of each individual student. Students with IEP's will be provided with learning opportunities in the same manner as general education students. These learning opportunities will include accessibility options as well as materials that have been accommodated and modified. Teachers will be supporting students through virtual or phone contact.

**Please describe the district's plans to manage and monitor learning by pupils.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

Teachers will monitor student learning on all online resources on a daily basis and provide feedback through those online tools by responding to student work and encouraging student learning on a weekly basis. Those resources could include Google Classroom, IXL, RAZ Kids Reading AtoZ, MAP Skills, or other additional online programs that the teacher designates.

Students will also have the opportunity to receive instruction and feedback through their weekly Zoom class, individual calls and check-ins with teachers. Students who are learning through paper packets will turn their packets in bi-weekly and teachers will provide written feedback and/or feedback through a phone conversation about student progress. Teachers will document their weekly communication with students on their progress in the NBCA Distance Learning Communication Log. School administration will work with teachers based on this log to help support student learning and manage the progress of each class.

**Please attach a budget outline estimating additional expenditures associated with the Plan and sources of revenue to pay for those expenditures.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

The Academy Board will be provided any necessary budget amendments for review and approval. The Academy will remain in compliance with the Uniform Budgeting and Accounting Act.

<b>Budget Item</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>
Learning materials for students (paper, pencils, crayons, etc).	\$3,000	Title 1 or General Fund
Mailing/Postage	\$5,000	Title 1 or General Fund
Chromebooks for students 50 @ \$300 each (including license and set-up costs)	\$15,000	Title 1 or General Fund
Printing costs for student learning packets (copy paper and machine copy cost)	\$3,000	Title 1 or General Fund
Grade level books for students \$20 per student x 350 students	\$7,000	Title 1 or General Fund
Remote Phone Service	\$150	Title 1 or General Fund
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$33,150</b>	

**Please describe the manner in which district administrators, board members, teachers, and any representatives of teachers collaborated in development of the Plan.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

District administration gathered information from the leadership team of teachers through Google Docs regarding the guiding principles designated on the plan template. Administration met virtually to collaborate with other school leaders and MAPSA representatives to consider best practices and strategies to effectively meet the needs of students. The initial plan was shared with teachers, Board members and our Board Contact to review and offer additional ideas. The plan was reviewed with the Board on Monday, April 13, 2020.

**Please describe the methods the district will use to notify pupils and parents or guardians of the Plan.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

The plan will be communicated to parents in multiple ways prior to the start of distance learning:

- Letter sent to each family
- Dispersed through email to all families that have access (School Messenger)
- Communicated through teacher email
- Plan will be posted to the school website and other social media platforms

To ensure that all families are aware that the plan has been developed and disseminated, a phone call message will be sent to all parents.

**Please provide an estimate of the date on which the district will begin implementation of the Plan, which must be no later than April 28, 2020.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

The plan will be implemented beginning Monday, April 20, 2020.

We will be operating within the protocol given by MDE for days of instruction.

**Please describe the assistance, to the extent feasible, to pupils enrolled in any postsecondary dual enrollment courses under Public Act of , as amended, MCL and Career and Technical Preparation Act, PA , as amended, MCL . to in completing the courses during the - school year.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

The Academy provides instruction to kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade; therefore, dual enrollment is not applicable.

**Please describe how the district will continue to provide or arrange for continuation of food distribution to eligible pupils.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

Due to our inability to provide absolute protection from the spread of COVID-19 to families and staff, families were referred to use the School Closure Meal Program (Meet Up and Eat Up) interactive map, or text FOOD to 877-877, to find the closest location in their immediate area, and to local food pantries, via email, and through our school website's COVID-19 resource web page.

**Please confirm that the district will continue to pay school employees while redeploying staff to provide meaningful work in the context of the Plan, subject to any applicable requirements of a collective bargaining agreement.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

All employees are expected to participate in the approved Continuity of Learning Plan and may be asked by the school leader to work in a role different than what was in their original offer of at-will employment for the 2019-2020 school year. School leaders will take each employee's strengths and growth plans into consideration when making these assignments and will communicate them clearly in writing to each hourly employee assigned to a different role than what was stated in their offer of at-will employment.

Employees assigned to the Academy in the board-approved budget will be paid as outlined in their signed offer of at-will employment for the 2019-2020 school year. The offers of at-will employment for the 2019-2020 school year have not been amended due to circumstances surrounding COVID-19. If the school's spring break falls during the closure, hourly staff will be paid and will not have to use Paid Time Off (PTO). Teachers are required to provide their students with learning opportunities as outlined in the approved Continuity of Learning Plan and in accordance with the expectations of the school leader.

At a minimum, hourly staff will be paid based on the average number of hours worked during a normal week. The average hours of a normal week will not include overtime. If the school leader asks an hourly employee in writing and in advance to work beyond the average number of hours of a normal week, the hourly employee will be paid for those leader approved hours. Hourly employees will be asked by the school leader to help with tasks to assist with the continuity of learning plans.

**Provide describe how the district will evaluate the participation of pupils in the Plan.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

The district will evaluate the participation of pupils in our distance learning plan through the documentation by our teachers on the NBCA Distance Learning Communication Log. Teachers will be responsible for documenting their weekly communication results with each student in their classroom or on their caseload. Teachers will reach out daily using either Google Classroom (or other social media). The expectation is that they personally contact each student at least once per week to check-in on their well-being, offer encouragement, provide feedback and answer student and parent questions.

Other ways that teachers will evaluate the participation of pupils:

- Attendance on Google Classroom, Zoom, and logins on other online programs, ex. IXL, Prodigy, etc.
- Completion of weekly learning packets
- Phone calls, emails, texts

If a student does not have access to technology, teachers will keep track of which students are completing the weekly instructional packets. They will also need to keep a log of all communication with students and parents. Students and families will be expected to have two-way communication with their classroom teacher each week through phone calls.

Concerns with inconsistent completion, lack of communication with a parent or student will be raised to the administration level to help develop a plan to connect with the student and family in sensitive ways. Additional support agencies in the community may be sought to make these connections.

**Please describe how the district will provide mental health supports to pupils affected by a state of emergency or state of disaster prompted by COVID-19.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

As part of the communication with students, teachers will talk about questions, fears, concerns, and ideas that their students may have during this crisis. Below are resources to share with parents to help them talk with their student about the COVID-19 outbreak:

- [Talking to kids about the coronavirus – ChildMind](#)
- [Just for Kids: A comic exploring the new coronavirus – NPR](#)
- [Talking to teens and tweens about coronavirus – NYTimes](#)
- [PBS videos and resources](#)
- JED Foundation - JED exists to protect emotional health and prevent suicide for our nation's teens and young adults. Text "START" to 741-741 or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
  - <https://www.jedfoundation.org/covid-19-and-managing-mental-health/>
- [Coping & Dealing with COVID via CDC](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists](#)
- [Supporting students with Autism Spectrum Disorder and COVID-19](#)

Teachers will assess any needs for mental health supports during their weekly communication with students and parents. Based on any concerns, the teacher will elevate that need to the behavior specialists (Student Advocate, Social Worker, principal, Homeless Liaison, etc.) The specialists will reach out to individual students and families to determine what they may need. The specialist will help connect the family to outside agencies to help meet their needs.



Administration will hold weekly virtual staff meetings with teachers to identify any additional students or families in need.

**Mental Health Crisis contacts in Kent County:**

- Network 180 Crisis Line: (616) 336-3909
- Crisis text line: Text GO to 741741. [crisistextline.org](http://crisistextline.org)
- 2-1-1, <https://www.mi211.org/> for community support

**Please describe how the district will support the efforts of the intermediate district in which the district is located to mobilize disaster relief child care centers as described in Executive Order - or any executive order that follow it.**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

At this time, the logistical ability to allow for disaster relief child care was not an option for the team at New Branches Charter Academy. We will openly cooperate with KISD as necessary.

**Optional question:**

**Does the District to adopt a balanced calendar instructional program for the remainder of the school year? Does the District plan to adopt a balanced calendar instructional program for the - school year?**

***New Branches Charter Academy Response:***

We do not plan on adopting a balanced calendar instructional program for the remainder of the school year. We will be awaiting direction from Kent Intermediate School District for guidance on the calendar for next school year for the county.

***Name of District Leader Submitting Application:***

*Teresa Larkin*

***Date Approved:***

*04/15/2020*

***Name of Authorizer Designee:***

*Corey Northrop, Exec Director*

***Date Submitted to Superintendent and State Treasurer:***

*04/15/2020*

***Confirmation approved Plan is posted on District/PSA website:***



Amy Densmore &lt;amyvanatten@gmail.com&gt;

## Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan ("Plan")

1 message

Google Forms <forms-receipts-noreply@google.com>  
To: amyvanatten@gmail.com

Wed, Apr 15, 2020 at 10:18 AM

Thanks for filling out [Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan \("Plan"\)](#)

Here's what we got from you:

## Continuity of Learning, and COVID-19 Response Plan ("Plan")

In accordance with the Governors Executive Order No. 2020-35, there has been a suspension of in person K-12 instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. School districts are required to submit a "Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan" (Plan) to their Intermediate School District (ISD) or authorizing body (if applicable) for review and approval no later than April 28, 2020. Intermediate districts and authorizing bodies shall submit one copy of the approved Plan by District to the State Treasurer and State Superintendent by completion of the following form and uploading a complete copy of the approved Plan. All questions regarding submission can be directed to [OSRFA@michigan.gov](mailto:OSRFA@michigan.gov)

Email address \*

### Intermediate School District/ Authorizing Body Information

Name of Intermediate School District (If you are an Authorizing Body select "Other") \*

**Name of Authorizing Body (if an ISD please answer "NA") \***

Central Michigan University

**Name of ISD Superintendent/Authorizer Designee \***

Corey Northrop

## School District Information

**Name of School District \***

New Branches Charter Academy ▼

**School District Code Number \***

41901 ▼

**School District Contact Name \***

Teresa Larkin

**School District Contact Email Address \***

[teresalarkin@choiceschools.com](mailto:teresalarkin@choiceschools.com)

**School District Contact Phone Number \***

616-243-6221

## Plan Specifics

**Confirmation "Continuity of Learning and COVID-19 Response Plan" has been approved by your ISD/Authorizing Body? \***

- Yes  
 No

**Date of ISD/Authorizer Body Approval? \***

April ▼	15 ▼	2020 ▼
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**What is your best estimate of additional cost associated with Plan implementation? \***

\$33,500

**Attach a PDF file of the Approved Plan. \***

Files submitted:

41901 New Branches CLP Approved - Amy Densmore.pdf

**By clicking submit on this form, you are certifying that the District's Plan has been approved by the ISD/Authorizing Body, contains a PDF file of the approved Plan, and the information provided is true, accurate, and in accordance with Executive Order No. 2020-35. \***

- Yes  
 No

Create your own Google Form