

School Closures Affecting Students with Special Needs

March 21 2020 11:31 PM



Wood River - Public schools are not the only ones affected by the Coronavirus shutdown. Possibly even more adversely affected is a small school in Wood River, IL. Sitting back in what is commonly referred to as Little Italy is a small school that has just over seventy students. The newer one-story brick building is the home to William BeDell's Achievement Resource Center (ARC). Children from three years of age through twenty-two, from school districts as far away as Staunton, Highland, Collinsville and East St. Louis attend the school Monday - Friday from 830 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. ARC serves students with severe mental and/or physical disabilities. The school offers small class sizes, qualified staff and materials and equipment to meet the special needs of the students it serves, both academically and therapeutically. Many of the

students who attend ARC thrive in the year round program in comparison to the public school system where the long summer break makes it hard for these students to retain the skills they have gained throughout the school year.

Unfortunately, due to the school shutdown, students who attend William BeDell are not receiving the therapies that they so desperately need such as physical, occupational, and speech and language support.

A teacher at William BeDell feels the shutdown is both good and bad for her students. "Many of our students have compromised immune and respiratory systems which put them in the biggest risk category. Home is the safest environment," she said as she explains the benefit of the closure. "Unfortunately, though, the down side is that most students don't receive therapy services at home. For example, students who receive physical therapy begin to lose muscle tone and strength in just a week or two which requires lots of work ahead once classes resume."

Staff members say they are just hoping that all the students will return to school healthy and virus free. One teacher points out how crucial a consistent routine is for students with disabilities. By missing so many days of school, the routines are forgotten and when students then return, there is a long adjustment period before the students settle back in. Food and nutrition for these kids is also a concern as many of William BeDell's students require special diets. The government required school shutdown affects more than just a child's education; it affects the whole child.