Ensuring FAPE for Students with Disabilities During COVID-19

Adapting Individualized Education to the Virtual Context

WEBINAR: January 2021
Our Mission

To ensure that students with disabilities are able to fully access and thrive in charter schools.

Document and Communicate Facts
The Center is committed to proactively disseminating information about the status of students with disabilities in the charter sector.

Inform Policy
As a part of our efforts to engage in the national discussion, the Center works to track and inform federal, state, and local policy.

Develop Coalitions
The Center is committed to bringing together stakeholders to change the status quo for children with disabilities.

Build Capacity
The Center works to actively engage key stakeholders to fully leverage the innovative opportunities created by charter school laws.
The Diverse Learners Cooperative connects teachers and leaders with professional learning, resources, and networks to improve outcomes for diverse learners and increase teacher and leader retention.
Today’s Mission

- Review the mandate
- Identify key principles in “translating” in-person IEPs to remote settings
- Examine a tool to support your team in student-centered IEP decisions
- Walk away with a next step toward ensuring FAPE in the virtual setting

AGENDA:
1. FAPE within current guidance
2. Principles of decision making
3. Tool organization
4. Application ideas
What is FAPE?

- Provision of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) is required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the federal law that also gives children with disabilities the right to special education and related services.

- FAPE ensures that the education is “appropriate” and meets the individual needs of each child with a disability.

Despite the ongoing challenges related to COVID-19, the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities remains in place.
“However, school districts must remember that the provision of FAPE may include, as appropriate, special education and related services provided through distance instruction provided virtually, online, or telephonically.”

“Schools may not be able to provide all services in the same manner they are typically provided.”

“Educators may still meet their legal obligations by providing children with disabilities equally effective alternate access to the curriculum or services provided to other students.”

U.S. Department of Education

Schools are called on to balance flexibility with individualization, providing services that ensure each child is making progress toward appropriately ambitious goals.
Considerations for Translating Services to Remote Settings

- Connect with families now.
- Consider purpose.
- Think beyond an in-person schedule.
- Anticipate needs that may overflow the current IEP.
- Get creative within parameters.
- Document.
23 personas

Personas

Autism Spectrum Disorder
Ayotunde | Grade K-6
Marcus | Grade 7-12

Visual Impairment
Sage | Grade K-6
Suzanna | Grade 7-12

Each persona offers a unique student profile, including an illustrative (not exhaustive) description of a young learner with a particular disability.

Jonas

Jonas is an 11th grade student with moderate-to-severe hearing loss which affects his vocabulary and language skills. He is successful when provided a peer support model to participate in class and complete assigned academic tasks. He chooses not to utilize an FM system in any of his classes and instead relies on his hearing aids. He enjoys working with younger students, and has expressed interest in being a teacher.

IEP Goal Areas describe what each student’s services are meant to address. If you’re working on translating services for a student with a particular set of IEP goals, trying looking for students with similar goals to reference how their services have been updated.

IEP GOAL AREAS
Language Executive Functioning Vocational
How to Use This Document

**Key Questions** articulate high-level prompts to consider for students like those represented in each persona.

**Additional Supports** offer important reminders about aspects of services that might be overlooked, or might be especially important to keep in mind given new learning contexts.

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**Jonas**
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**Sample Schedule**:

**Before COVID-19 (In-Person)**
- **Paraprofessional Support**
  - 55 minutes
  - 14 per day
  - Synchronous
- **Language Therapy**
  - 40 minutes
  - 14 per week
  - Provided by speech language pathologist
  - 1:1 Check-In
  - 10 minutes
  - 1 per week
  - Provided by speech language pathologist

**During COVID-19 (Virtual)**
- **Paraprofessional Support**
  - 35 minutes
  - 14 per day
  - Synchronous
- **Language Therapy**
  - 45 minutes
  - 14 per week
  - Synchronous (videoconference with speech language pathologist)
  - 1:1 Check-In
  - 8 minutes
  - 2 per week
  - Provided by speech language pathologist

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**Hearing Consultation**
- 30 minutes
  - 1 per month
  - Synchronous (videoconference with general education teachers)
- **Hearing Technology Check**
  - 30 minutes
  - 1 per year
  - Provided by audiologist

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Services are color-coded according to their setting and category in both the in-person and virtual environments.

For each Sample Schedule, the activities and purposes are listed at the center, with the original in-person services shown at left. Services are translated for the virtual environment on the right—with a creative focus on the purpose of the activities, rather than a prescriptive adherence to the original service schedule or duration.
**Purpose:** To support an IEP team in developing an appropriately individualized virtual learning plan

- Access to core content
- Foundational skills
- Authentic practice & feedback
- Monitoring progress
- Learning environment
- Related service support
- Social-emotional needs
- Engagement and persistence
- Team planning and collaboration
- Access to peer interaction
- Family partnerships
- Transition to postsecondary

Each set of key questions is mapped by shared characteristics of disabilities and ages. Focus on the 3-4 listed by profile and move on to others as needed to create a high-quality plan. Provide to team ahead of time, including the family.
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<thead>
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Ensuring RPSP for Students with Disabilities During COVID-19
Ensuring FAPE for Students with Disabilities During COVID-19:
Adapting Individualized Education to the Virtual Context

Key Questions
These sample questions articulate high-level prompts to consider for students like those represented in each persona.

**SPECIFIC LEARNING DISABILITY**
For a high school student with a specific learning disability, consider:
- What foundational literacy and/or math skill gaps exist and will require explicit skill instruction? Can this instruction be provided synchronously in small groups or asynchronously utilizing a digital platform?
- In what ways will these gaps present as a barrier to core content access? What accommodations are appropriate to mitigate these barriers?
- Will disability-related needs (i.e., anxiety or executive functioning needs) present differently in the virtual setting than the typical in-person setting? What additional support will be needed as a result?

For an elementary school student with a specific learning disability, consider:
- What impact does the specific learning disability have on the student’s ability to access grade-level content in all subject areas?

Student Planning Template

**STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**
- NAME:
- GRADE:
- DISABILITY:

**PROFILE**
- STUDENT PROFILE:
- IEP GOAL AREAS:

**KEY QUESTIONS AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS**
- KEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES:
How you could use the tool

- Share with your teachers, specialists, school leaders, and families
- Use personas as a model for yourself or your team
- Use key questions to guide IEP team discussion
- Use the blank template as a starting brainstorm
- Advocate that ensuring FAPE is possible!
We’d also love to hear:

1. What do you find most helpful about the tool?
2. What about the tool challenges your current practices?
3. How will you use the tool in your setting?
Thank You.

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