

Special Education and Distance Learning: What Parents Need to Know

Each district has developed a **continuity of learning plan**. This explains how the district will provide instruction for all students (including those with IEPs). This could be paper packet pickup, phone calls, online classes, or a combination of methods.

IEP teams can create a **contingency learning plan** that explains the special education and related services the district will provide during this time while school buildings are closed. This plan is individualized, based on the current IEP, and makes sure the student can access the education now being offered by their district.



You are a critically important member of your child's IEP team and should be included in discussions on what distance learning looks like for your student. Students with an IEP are still entitled to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).



Special education services your student receives will look different. Some services can be provided through technology. Others that require face to face delivery cannot happen at this time. The accommodations and modifications your child needs while learning at home might not be the same as what they needed in the classroom.



There may be additional assistive technology needs. Districts must consider the student's technology needs in order to provide access to regular and special education services. If additional technology or internet service is needed for a student to receive FAPE, it must be provided by the school, at no charge.



IEP teams will meet via phone or video conference at a mutually agreeable time. If parents are not able to meet during this time, the meeting can be delayed. The annual IEP will be written for the usual school setting. The IEP team can also write the contingency learning plan for times when the school building may be closed during the next school year.



Make a paper trail. Log events and conversations as they occur. Use a calendar, notebook, or even voice memos on your phone. See page two for suggestions.



Parents know their child best and have a lot to manage during this crisis. Michigan Alliance for Families staff are parents of children who receive special education services. We are available to help answer your questions, brainstorm solutions and navigate this unprecedented time together.

May 18, 2020

Suggestions of What to Log

Keep track of events and conversations at the time they occur. You will be better prepared for conversations about summer services, extended school year, and compensatory education. When school resumes, each IEP team will review the provision of FAPE during the period of distance learning, and determine whether compensatory services are needed, including instruction and individual therapies.

Contact with the school

- Who? (Teacher, Special Education Teacher, Therapist, Principal, Counselor)
- When and how often were you contacted? (Dates, times, frequency)
- Was the information timely? Useful? Overwhelming?
- How were your concerns addressed?
- What special education services were provided (how often and how much)?



What your child is working on

- Academic activities (math worksheets, online classes, paper packets)
- IEP goals
- Games or puzzles
- Cooking/baking, life skills
- Social skills, behavior, self-regulation
- Physical activity
- Reading
- Music, art



Possible obstacles or barriers

- Parent's work schedule
- Siblings, family obstacles
- Lack of internet access, technology issues
- Emotional well-being
- Behaviors that affect your child's ability to engage in learning
- English language learners - parents and/or students



What worked or didn't work with learning

- What helped your child to be engaged and able to focus?
- Does your child need pre-teaching or re-teaching separate from the online course?
- Were there issues that prevented your child from completing their work? If so, what were the issues?
- Are assignments/materials engaging?
- Is the class moving too fast or too slow? Is class too frequent or too long?
- What motivated your child while learning at home?



5/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>tried to work on this week's math- refused, "too many and too hard".</i> • <i>emailed Mr. K to find right math videos on Khan</i> • <i>read chapters 3 and 4 of Winn Dixie</i> • <i>15 min speech with Mrs L</i>
5/12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>paid attention to about the first ten minutes of the class Zoom</i> • <i>lots of anxiety, refused to go for our walk today</i> • <i>ch. 5 of Winn Dixie, 10/10 on vocab list</i>