

# Virtual and Cyber and Web, Oh My!

Understanding School Options

with Michelle Driscoll and Stephanie Nicholls



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Free parent training and information to improve educational services and outcomes for students with disabilities

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## Agenda

- Terms and Definitions: Schools
- Big Ideas in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- Terms and Definitions: Learning with Technology
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Considerations When Thinking of Changing Schools



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### Local School District / Neighborhood Schools

Public School District  
 Educating students who live in within resident district (K-12 +)  
 Can not charge tuition  
 Must not discriminate  
 Governed by an elected school board



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### Charter School / Public School Academy (PSA)

Can include any combination of K-12  
 No "resident students"  
 Public school district  
 Can not charge tuition  
 Must not discriminate  
 Governed by a board  
 Charter contract issued by authorizing body



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### Nonpublic and Home Schools

A nonpublic school is:

- not operated by a public school district
- a private school, could be religion-based
- home schools are treated like a nonpublic school in Michigan

Parentally placed eligible students in a registered nonpublic school are not entitled to a FAPE but may receive some special education services through a nonpublic service plan.



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### Resident District & Operating District

- **Resident District:** Public school district where the home address is located. District responsible for ensuring the eligible students receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).
- **Operating District:** District responsible for implementing the programs and services documented in the IEP. May or may not be the resident district.
- **School of Choice:** Provide students with additional enrollment options. School of choice could be within resident district or another district. Participation in school of choice programs is **optional** for districts.




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### Special Education Laws and Rules



Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE)




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### Big Ideas in IDEA



Child Find

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)




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## 🔍 Child Find

Child find activities are required to identify, locate, and evaluate all children and students with disabilities who need, or may be in need of, special education programs and services, including children and students who are:

- Suspected of having a disability even though they are advancing from grade to grade.
- Home schooled.
- Enrolled by their parents in a private, nonprofit elementary or secondary school, including a religious school, which is in the jurisdiction of the district.
- Attending an in-district virtual school or magnet school.
- A ward of the state.
- Highly mobile, such as a migrant and/or homeless student.
- Dropped out of school and have not reached the age of 26.
- Enrolled in another public educational program (i.e., Adult Education, Alternative Education).
- Held in county jail.
- In a low incidence placement, such as a residential facility, homebound, or hospitalized setting.




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## 🔍 Child Find Responsibility

Where student is enrolled	Who is responsible for Child Find
Local School District	District where child resides
School of Choice District	District student is enrolled
Homeschool	District where home is located
Private school	District where school is located
Public School Academy	District student is enrolled (which is the PSA)




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## FAPE


  
**Free**

  
**Appropriate**

  
**Public**

  
**Education**

The primary vehicle for providing FAPE is through an appropriately developed individualized education program (IEP) that is based on the individual needs of the child.




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### FAPE & IEP Implementation – Nonpublic

  
Free

  
Appropriate


  
Public

  
Education



All eligible children are entitled to a free appropriate public education.

- If the family decides the eligible student will attend a nonpublic school option, they are opting out of a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for their child.
- Nonpublic schools are not bound by IDEA.
- Services may be provided through a nonpublic service plan.



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### FAPE & IEP Implementation – Public School

  
Free

  
Appropriate


  
Public

  
Education




If the parent chooses to move the student from resident district to a different public school, who ensures FAPE?

- Operating District



If the IEP Team decides to move the student from resident district, who ensures FAPE?

- Resident district ensures, operating district implements
- When the operating district is different from the resident district, they must work together to ensure FAPE.



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### Least Restrictive Environment

**300.114 LRE Requirements**

(2) Each public agency must ensure that—

- (i) To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and
- (ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.



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## Accessibility

**Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** prohibits discrimination based on disability in any program or activity operated by recipients of federal funds.

**Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)** prohibits discrimination based on disability by public entities, regardless of whether they receive federal financial assistance.

Examples of the types of discrimination prohibited:

- inequitable access to educational programs and facilities
- denial of a free appropriate public education (FAPE)




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## Learning with Technology




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## Remote Learning

- **Remote Learning:** any student learning that takes place outside of a traditional classroom environment that also counts towards the minimum number of days and hours of instruction a school must provide.

**Distance Learning:** a method of receiving live (synchronous) academic instruction in courses where attendance is recorded. The teacher of record and a group of students meet at a designated class time to learn together. The course appears on the student's schedule.

**Virtual Course:** an online interactive learning environment (asynchronous) in which most of the curriculum is delivered using the internet and in which students are separated from their instructor or teacher of record by time or location, or both. Virtual courses offer a credit or a grade. (example: Michigan Virtual)




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## Virtual or Cyber School

**Virtual or Cyber School:**

- A public school that offers only virtual courses
- Operating district
- Instruction in which children and teachers are separated by time and/or location
- Interaction occurs via computers and/or other technologies, and the school generally does not have a physical facility that allows children to attend classes on-site




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## What may accommodations or modifications look like virtually?

Student Needs	Virtual Learning Alternatives
Written instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructions/ assignments shared ahead of time, bulleted list of instructions in chat for live session</li> </ul>
Instructions/ lesson read aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher records instructions / lesson</li> <li>• Text to speech tools</li> </ul>
Writing assignments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech to text tools</li> </ul>
Large font, highlighted sections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online tool, example: Read &amp; Write</li> </ul>
Sensory tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher drops off sensory toolbox to student at home</li> </ul>
Breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brain breaks during virtual sessions</li> </ul>
Modified assignment or test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepared ahead of time, shared with student directly</li> </ul>




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## What may services look like virtually?

Student Needs	Virtual Learning Alternatives
Speech and language therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teletherapy-students and providers use webcams, headsets, live video conference</li> </ul>
Occupational therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools can contract with teletherapy companies to provide services</li> </ul>
Physical therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools can contract with other districts to provide services (Example: resident district)</li> </ul>
Social work services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student and parent training to utilize assistive technology</li> </ul>
Counseling	
Assistive technology	
Etc.	




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**What may supports look like virtually?**

Student Needs	Virtual Learning Alternatives
Resource Program support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resource Program teacher meets virtually with student/ small group of students</li> </ul>
Paraprofessional support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remote desktop control</li> <li>Private virtual meetings with paraprofessional for 1:1 work with the student outside of class time</li> </ul>



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**What is the expectation for parent involvement in virtual schools?**

Great questions to ask the specific virtual or cyber program you are considering:

- What is my role as the parent?
- How much time is expected?
- How is it structured?
- How will staff communicate with me (phone, email, text) and how often regarding my child's progress or areas of concern?
- How will I be trained to support my child's accommodations?



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**If I am told they do not provide special education supports and services virtually what are my options?**

- Public (including charter and virtual) school may not be selective in its enrollment process.
- The school may not screen out students based on disability, race, religion, gender, test scores, etc.
- A random selection process must be used if the number of applicants exceeds the school's enrollment capacity.

A charter school must provide special education programs and services through a combination of:

- (a) operating a special education program or service
- (b) contracting with another provider

Remember: If the virtual school is a public school, they have an obligation to provide FAPE.



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**Can a student who is homeschooled receive special education and related services?**

**Yes!** A student who is home schooled may be eligible to receive special education and related services if the homeschool is registered with the state. Parent (or school) may refer the student who is suspected of having a disability for an evaluation through the child find process of the local public school district where the home is located. If determined eligible for special education and related services, the local public school district will develop a nonpublic service plan.

Please put your answer in the chat.



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**Can a student over 18 years old who has an IEP attend a virtual program offered by the school district and receive transition services?**

**Yes!** The virtual school has the responsibility to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) until the eligible student graduates, exits school, or through age 25. The school can provide the transition services directly or contract to provide the services.

Please put your answer in the chat.



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**Can a student automatically be placed in a virtual or online program due to challenging behaviors?**

**No!** Schools should be cautious about excluding a child with a disability from their regular educational program to provide virtual instruction for the sole purpose of responding to a child's behavior.

Removing a child from the regular education program without ensuring behavioral supports have been made available throughout a continuum of placements, including in a regular education setting, could result in an inappropriately restrictive placement and denial of FAPE.

Please put your answer in the chat.



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### If considering changing schools...

- Why am I leaving my current school?
- What am I looking for in a new school?
- What will be different at this new school? How will it benefit my child?
- What are the possible disadvantages of leaving my current school for a new one?
- How does my child feel about changing schools? How might this affect them emotionally or socially?




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### Questions to ask a potential school

- Who is going to implement my child's IEP?
- Does this school have a particular mission or philosophy?
- What is the teacher to student ratio and average class size?
- What is the turnover rate with staff?
- How diverse is the school and staff? Does the school provide training to staff on working with diverse populations?
- What are the discipline policies and how are such issues handled?
- How does the school support students with different learning styles and needs?
- How does staff communicate with and engage parents? Is there a family engagement policy or plan?
- What extracurricular or after-school activities does the school offer?
- Does the school have policies in place to address school climate issues like bullying or safety?
- How will my child's academic progress be measured?
- How is their developmental and social-emotional progress measured? How is this information communicated to families?
- Will the school provide transportation for my child?




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