



DISTANCE LEARNING GUIDANCE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION

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► INTRODUCTION

Our era of technology has afforded us great flexibility in how we can effectively deliver instructional content. The Distance Learning Guidance for Special Education has been created for districts and their stakeholder engagement plans. Those plans must include the best approaches for the provision of free appropriate public education (FAPE) to meet the unique disability-related needs of students with disabilities.

Key Ideas

1) Keep Students at the Center

Intentional outreach should be used for building relationships and maintain connections. Help students feel safe and valued. At a minimum, plan to do the following:

- **Plan for Student Learning:** Build on each student's strengths, interests, and needs and use this knowledge to impact learning positively.
- **Develop a Weekly Plan and Schedule:** Offer routines and structures for consistency and to balance think time, work time, and playtime for health and well-being.
- **Contact Families:** Partner to support student learning through ongoing communication and collaboration. This partnership will not look the same for every student and family—safety remains the priority.

2) Design Learning for Equity and Access

Plan and deliver content in multiple ways so that all students can access learning.

- **Teach Content:** Set goals using knowledge of each student, their current educational needs, and use appropriate learning standards.
- **Deliver Flexible Instruction:** Consider how to deliver content depending on tools and resources accessible to each student. Delivery of instruction may include paper, pencil and phone contact, email, technology-based virtual instruction, or a combination to meet diverse student needs.
- **Engage Families:** Communicate with families about engagement strategies to support students as they access the learning. Families are critical partners.

3) Assess Student Learning

Manage and monitor student learning and plan what's next for learning.

- **Check Student Learning:** Use a variety of strategies to monitor, assess, and to provide feedback to students about their learning.
- **Make Instructional Adjustments:** Use formative assessment results to guide their reflection on the effectiveness of instruction and to determine the next steps for student learning.
- **Engage families:** Communicate with and seek input from families about assessment results to inform the next steps.

► FEDERAL GUIDANCE

The United States Department of Education released information clarifying that federal law should not be used to prevent schools from offering distance learning opportunities to all students, including students with disabilities. This resource from the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) explains that as a school district takes necessary steps to address the health, safety, and well-being of all its students and staff. Educators can use distance learning opportunities to serve all students. [Supplemental Fact Sheet](#)

Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must ensure IEP teams make individualized determinations regarding whether and the extent to which a student requires compensatory education. There may be “exceptional circumstances” that could affect how a particular service is provided, which may result in a later need to provide compensatory education. Schools should not create blanket rules offering a set amount of compensatory services to all or subsets of students with disabilities when they return to school.

► OKEDGE

In the spirit of distance learning, this document is available at [OKEdge](#), the Oklahoma State Department of Education online learning management system. OKEdge provides an interactive and individualized learning experience.

► COMMUNICATION

Communication between special education teachers and the parent will be made via telephone, email, Skype, etc. Confidential documents will be sent via certified mail. **To ensure ongoing communication, please let the teacher and school know if there is a change in a phone number, email, or mailing address.** Parent contact information should be kept updated in the district’s student information system (SIS).

► INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS DELIVERED ONLINE

Providing proper supports to students with disabilities in online and blended learning environments requires the attention of all involved in the planning and execution of the student’s educational program as well as a comprehensive approach. Attention to sound instructional strategies that differentiate learning opportunities, expected learning outcomes, student-specific supports, and student voice can help maximize success. Because IEP teams play such an integral role in the educational experience of students with disabilities, each individual role on the IEP team can play an essential part in shaping the best experience.

Distance learning services can occur through synchronous and/or asynchronous frameworks.

Synchronous frameworks will enable the exchange of information in real-time (i.e., live) between student and provider via audio and video. Advantages include service provision within the natural context (e.g., home, school, and community), minimal infrastructure requirements, and lower cost for equipment and connectivity. Disadvantages may include privacy, security, confidentiality risks, lack of infrastructure, recurring expense, diminished sound or image quality, and technology challenges.

Asynchronous frameworks also referred to as store-and-forward data transmission, may include video clips, digital images, virtual technologies, and other forms of electronic communications. With asynchronous, the provider and student are not connected at the same time. Potential applications might include recommendations for assistive technology, review of data/progress monitoring, and viewing/reviewing video and digital images for intervention or evaluation purposes.

Hybrid frameworks include a combination of synchronous, asynchronous, and/or in-person services.

When determining the instruction, LEAs should consider resources that offer consistency and structure.

- Examine each child's needs/abilities, give support at home.
- Provide specific materials for children as appropriate for making progress on the IEP goals, ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to the same opportunities as their peers.
- Collaborate between general and special education regarding lesson planning and lesson execution.
- Special education teachers and related service providers will continue to work on IEP and evaluation paperwork within the required timelines. Special education administrators will work with individual teams if IEP meetings are going to be held via phone or in another format, such as Zoom or Google Hangouts.
- Providers should collect progress data for IEP goals to inform parents and IEP teams and assist in compensatory service decisions later.
- Document communication with parent/student as attempts to make progress (notes section of your learning management or IEP system, communication log, etc.).
- Adjust students' plans to meet the needs of in-home learning environments.
- Investigate and determine whether newly introduced apps/platforms are accessible to a child based on the child's unique needs.
- Modify information for persons with disabilities (such as persons who are deaf, deaf-blind, or blind).
- Create highly motivating, interest-based activities.
- Work with parents to provide ideas to help with reinforcement of goals and benchmarks.
- Establish a routine for communication with families.

The information and materials must be provided, as appropriate, in alternate formats to facilitate effective communication for individuals with disabilities. Any decisions regarding special education and related services for an individual child should be made by the child's IEP team, and should not be based on diagnoses, eligibility categories, or blanket policies.

Supporting the transition to at-home learning for teachers, students, and families is essential. By providing information and resources within the [Online Learning Resources](#) guide, our hope is that you will find the right instructional tools for success during this time away from the traditional classroom. We encourage sharing this information and resources with whoever would benefit.

➤ ACCESSIBILITY

Students with special needs and IEPs should be allowed to continue with learning that is consistent for all students. This learning will be based on the individual IEP.

Instructional

- Identify realistic, individualized time frames for task completion. Be mindful of extended time accommodations outlined in IEPs.
- Provide specific instruction and mini-deadlines/benchmarks for assignments, especially those with multiple tasks.

- Create opportunities for students to demonstrate progress and receive feedback related to assignments and IEP goals.
- Use student interest profiles to inform lessons and activities.
- Provide alternative options for participating in virtual class discussions.
- Create video modeling of how you expect something to be done or what has been successful in the school setting, such as hand-over-hand assistance in the classroom.
- Use built-in accessibility features in learning management systems, albeit on an individualized basis according to student need, for example:
 - Use heading styles that allow screen reading software to navigate from section to section.
 - Use font, size, and text formatting to distinguish between items or to navigate. Ensure no information is conveyed solely by color or sound.
 - Use Alt-Text to allow users with screen readers or with a slow connection to identify your images, graphs, and charts.
 - Enable tooltips so that descriptions appear when users hover over images, graphs, and tables.
- Provide transcripts of any pre-recorded audio or video used with students. Use closed captioning on videos.
- Use descriptive titles, headers, and captions to provide additional context and information for students.
- Use descriptive text in hyperlinks, so students know where the link will take them.

[ABLE Tech](#) provides information and resources in the area of accessibility, helping to make learning possible for all students.

Additionally, the National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials shares videos guiding the process of creating accessible PowerPoints and Word documents.

► NON-TECHNOLOGICAL DISTANCE LEARNING

Some students and families may have limited or no access to technology when normal school operations are closed. In these cases, providing instruction and instructional materials may need to take place via alternatives, such as emails, phone calls, or teacher-developed packets.

Teacher developed packets can be distributed via email or through other district push-out initiatives. Packets may include items such as print materials, games, school supplies, books, and manipulatives.

Schools should consult with their local city or county health departments to implement policies and procedures, including practices for cleaning and sanitizing items prior to pick-up and health screening protocol for individuals entering a school building. This process may include designating times for students to pick up items while in cars or setting times for a handful of students at a time to come to the school to retrieve or return items.

It is imperative that kits be distributed and returned in keeping with CDC-approved guidelines for social distancing to contain the spread of COVID-19.

➤ **ONLINE LEARNING SYSTEMS**

To support learning from home during school closures, several vendors have made services available for schools at no cost. Provided for your review is a list of current offers. The offer from Teams is unrestricted; the free offers from WebEx and Zoom are temporary. The Oklahoma State Department of Education recommends that consumers review all terms of the agreement before signing up for services.

[Microsoft Teams](#) is a unified communication and collaboration platform that combines persistent workplace chat, video meetings, file storage, and application integration.

[Cisco WebEx](#) offers video conferencing, online meetings, screen share, and webinars.

[Zoom](#) provides remote conferencing services that combines video conferencing, online meetings, chat, and mobile collaboration.

[Edmodo](#) enables teachers to share content, distribute quizzes, assignments, and manage communication with students, colleagues, and parents.

[Loom](#) captures your screen, voice, and face and instantly share videos in less time than it would take to type an email.

➤ **ADDITIONAL VIRTUAL SERVICE CONSIDERATIONS**

Maintain a secure location for providing services that are not interrupted (e.g., having others walk into the room where you are providing service). Maintain confidentiality using secure remote access to electronic documentation. Verify that someone will be physically present with the student who can support session activities.

➤ **OKLAHOMA ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM (OAAP)**

[OAAP Distant Learning Resources](#) have been compiled to help teachers succeed in serving students who participate in the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP). Many of the resources provided, such as Dynamic Learning Maps' Familiar Texts, are designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities. The resources listed are not comprehensive, and more resources can be added.

➤ **UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING**

[Universal Design for Learning \(UDL\)](#) is a framework that guides the design of learning experiences to meet the needs of all learners proactively. When UDL is utilized, an assumption is made that barriers to learning are in the design of the environment, not in the student. UDL is based on brain science and evidence-based educational practices. It also leverages the power of digital technology.

Review these UDL tips for addressing specific aspects of UDL in the design of learning environments (learning goals, assessment, and more).

- UDL Exchange ([UDL Exchange](#)) allows educators to create, mix, and share instructional resources, including lesson plans, based on UDL and aligned to standards.
- UDL Studio ([UDL Studio](#)) allows educators to make universally designed educational materials with levels of learning support

- UDL Book Builder ([UDL Book Builder](#)) enables PreK-12 educators to develop their digital books to support reading instruction literacy learning.

➤ RELATED SERVICES CONSIDERATIONS

Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Counseling Services, Orientation and Mobility, Audiology, Parent Training, Psychological, Interpreting, Recreation, School Health/Nursing, Social Work, and Transportation are related services in which IEP teams should consider for students. While some associated services, for example, transportation, and school nursing services, may not be applicable for distance learning, there may be individual situations where these services are necessary for capacity building. Teams should detail how these services will be provided, frequency or dates of services, session lengths, providers, and method of service provision (online using what platform and which device).

Related service providers should refer to their appropriate certification or professional associations for any additional requirements and ethical considerations that may pertain to providing services online.

- The American Physical Therapy Association | [APTA](#)
- The American Speech-Language and Hearing Association (ASHA) | [ASHA Updates](#)
- The American Occupational Therapy Association | [OT and the Coronavirus](#)
- National Association of School Psychologists | [Health Crisis Resources](#)
- National Association of School Nurses | [COVID-19-Resources - Nurses](#)
- National Association of Interpreters in Education | [NAIEDU](#)
- National Association for Pupil Transportation | [Covid-19 - Transportation](#)
- School Social Work Association of America | [SSWAA](#)
- American School Counselor Association | [ASCA Update: COVID-19](#)
- American Therapeutic Recreation Association | [ATRA](#)

➤ EARLY CHILDHOOD

Our youngest learners require safe, healthy, and consistent learning environments during times of stress and uncertainty. For families with young children and for those responsible for providing distance learning services to them, coping with the unknown and navigating school closures, abrupt changes in routines, and loss of connections with teachers and friends are concerns for all. Early childhood programs and caregivers play an essential role in helping our youngest learners understand the changes and process their feelings while also receiving appropriate services via distance learning delivery.

Learning at Home during Trying Times

- [Stable Routines and Consistent Guidance, Developmentally Appropriate Explanations, and Developmentally Appropriate Activities](#)

Learn at Home: Early Childhood Instructional Resources

- [Early Childhood Instructional Resources- English](#)
- [Early Childhood Instructional Resources- Spanish](#)

Guidance for Families with Young Children

- [Guidance for Families with Young Children](#)

Supporting Individuals with Autism through Uncertain Times

- [7 Strategies to Support Individuals with ASD through Uncertain Times](#)

Use of Technology with Evidence-Based Early Intervention

- [8 Part Video Series](#)

Distance Learning Early Intervention Resources for Staff and Providers Examples

- [Virtual Early Intervention Talking Points for Staff and Contractors](#)
- [Virtual Early Intervention Provider and Service Coordinator Checklist](#)

Distance Learning Early Intervention Resources for Families Examples

- [Consent for the Use of Virtual Early Intervention](#)
- [Virtual Early Intervention Family Technology Questionnaire](#)
- [Virtual Early Intervention Home Preparation Checklist for Families](#)
- [Virtual Early Intervention Troubleshooting Guide for Families](#)
- [Virtual Early Intervention Family Feedback Questionnaire](#)
- [Virtual Early Intervention Family Flyer](#)

➤ SECONDARY TRANSITION

Secondary transition services are “**a coordinated set of activities** for a child with a disability that is designed within a **results-oriented process**, that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of the child with a disability **to facilitate the child’s movement from school to post-school activities**, including post-secondary education, vocational education, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation.” (IDEA 2004)

Secondary transition is a coordinated effort between students and families, schools, and agencies, and support services. These Secondary Transition resources are provided to support the continued learning and skill development of transition-age students.

Teaching Transition Skills

EnvisionIT (EIT) is a free, evidence-based, standards-aligned, college, and career readiness curriculum for 21st-century students in middle and high school. EIT is a teacher-guided, digital curriculum for students with and without disabilities focused on helping students develop fundamental literacy and career skills needed for the 21st Century workplace.

Lesson plan starters have been developed to teach **academic, employment, and independent living skills** from high-quality intervention studies reviewed by the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition (NTACT). [NTACT Research to Practice Lesson Plan Starter](#)

Self-Advocacy/Self-Determination

- [Eye to Eye](#) - Empower Different Learners is a free app designed to empower differently-abled learners with confidence and arm them with a personalized advocacy plan.
- Self-Determination “bell ringers,” associated with the Me! Lessons for teaching self-awareness and self-advocacy: [Bell Ringer PowerPoints](#).
- Links to the Me! Lesson resources, Choicemaker Self-Determination curriculum resources, Whose Future, Is It Anyway? IEP participation curriculum, and other self-determination resources for FREE at [Zarrow Center Transition Resources](#).
- Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction website: <http://www.selfdetermination.res.ku.edu/homepage/resources/>. Three phases of the SDLMI worksheet: [Accessible/ Printable Worksheet](#) and [Interactive Online Page](#).

Education

- YouTube on Disability Disclosure: [NCWD-Youth Disability Disclosure](#)
- [Get Ready for College](#) - virtual course developed for high school students in Virginia but is relevant for students with intellectual or developmental disabilities in any state.
- Research colleges and universities using [OK College Start](#), [OK Career Guide](#) or [College Score Card](#)
- Use these “tips,” while visiting colleges virtually: [Campus Visit Tips](#) - with online suggestions.
- The [College Application Process](#) webinar resource from ThinkCollege.
- Use this time to prepare for college by creating lessons and activities with the following resources (e.g., highlight differences, list four critical next steps, create a calendar, list three major ideas).
 - [High School vs. College](#)
 - [College Preparation and Admissions Test](#)
 - [Comparing College Programs](#)
 - [Terms to Know](#)

Employment

- Learn about work and why it is important: <http://www.youthhood.org/jobcenter/index.asp>
- Explore career opportunities through active participation information gathering: <http://www.onestopcoach.org/>; <https://www.onetonline.org/>
- [Play the Career Interests Game](#) – University of Missouri
- Complete the [Pocket Resume](#)
- Explore possible job accommodations: <https://askjan.org/soar.cfm>
- Set the expectation of work/assist youth in preparing for employment: <http://www.pacer.org/transition/learning-center/planning/preparing-employment.asp>
- Tip Sheets for students/ families to review to gather relevant information for employment preparation: [How to Keep a Job](#) and [Disability Disclosure \(from Transitions to Adulthood Center for Research\)](#).
- [Skills to Pay the Bills](#) is a curriculum to teach the skills that are needed to get and keep a job. The curriculum is downloadable and printable – from the Office of Disability Employment Policy.

Independent Living

- Assess your child's independent living skills for future planning/ instruction: [Independent Living Checklist](#) and [Spanish version](#).
- Healthy Lifestyles instructional ideas from Oregon Health Sciences University: [Summary of Lessons from Young Adult Curriculum](#) and [39 Pages of Handouts](#).
- Mental Health conversation starters and infographics/ tips through [NAMI](#) and [Pathways](#).
- [PowerPoint slides for lessons on travel training](#) from the Kennedy Center in Connecticut – extracted from [NTACT's Quick Guide on Transportation](#).

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Explore Work is a free training developed for teens. It is designed to help them explore their talents and create a plan for their future! Students will: Discover talents and jobs that may be a good fit for them, get experience and try out jobs, uncover education and training options to help meet their job goals, learn about self-advocacy or how to ask for and get help, and gain skills to succeed at work and school. <https://explore-work.com/>

► BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT IN DISTANCE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Coping with the unknown, abrupt changes in routine, the loss of connections with teachers and friends can be difficult, may disrupt learning, and could result in behavioral challenges. Students must continue to receive behavioral supports and social-emotional learning opportunities during this time. Establishing clear expectations, creating a structured distance learning environment, and utilizing positive behavior interventions and supports can help ensure students continue to experience success and make progress toward academic and adaptive behavior goals.

School Engagement and Work Completion

- Establish expectations: Determine how students are expected to participate in a virtual learning environment. Consider expectations for participation, time spent in course, use of technology, group discussion rules, online etiquette, and work completion.
- Token Economy
 - This behavioral intervention can be implemented by teachers or families to encourage and support work completion and/or online classroom participation. For reinforcement/reward, consider what can be offered in a distance learning environment (e.g., homework pass, extra credit, special note to the caregiver, video call with a friend, etc.).
 - [Intervention Guide: Token System](#)
 - <https://vkc.mc.vanderbilt.edu/assets/files/tipsheets/tokenconomytips.pdf>
- Class Dojo: Some computer and smartphone apps, like Class Dojo, provide technological and interactive methods for tracking student behaviors and assigning “tokens.” <https://www.classdojo.com/>
- Consistent scheduling: Although students in virtual environments may participate in instructional activities asynchronously or not at the same time as classmates and teachers, consistent schedules are still important to maintain, especially for students with disabilities. Maintaining a consistent schedule increases predictability, structure, and behavioral compliance.
 - Create free custom student schedules for students and families to use: <https://www.canva.com/create/class-schedules/>

- Create instructional routines: Consistent teacher behaviors and instructional routines are essential to maintain teacher-student relationships and student engagement in the virtual classroom.
- Frequent Feedback: Provide students with “success criteria” for assignments, and provide ongoing, frequent, timely, and specific feedback for student work. Feedback can be in the form of individual student conferencing, rubrics, checklists, and formative evaluation.
 - * [Providing Meaningful Feedback](#)
 - * [Empowering Students through Individual Conferencing](#)
 - * [Educational Leadership - Feedback](#)
- Academic instructional decision-making
 - * Appropriately challenging home assignments: Provide multiple modes of instruction and scaffold home assignments so students can experience success. If students are unable to complete assignments or access the necessary support independently, they are less likely to engage in work completion behaviors.
- Instructional choice
 - * [Instructional Choice](#)
 - * http://ci3t.org/tier_library/ic/00_Instructional_Choice_Introduction.pdf

Supporting Social-Emotional Needs during Change

- Support understanding
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/talking-with-children.html>
 - <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/support-understanding>
 - <https://childmind.org/article/talking-to-kids-about-the-coronavirus/>
- Offer opportunities for expression
 - <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/offer-opportunities-expression>
 - <https://www.mindchamps.org/blog/help-children-identify-express-emotions/>
 - http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/documents/teaching_emotions.pdf
- Prioritize coping and calming skills
 - <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/prioritize-coping-and-calming-skills>
 - <https://childmind.org/article/how-to-help-children-calm-down/>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>
- Maintain routines
 - <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/maintain-routines>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/structure/index.html>
- Build new routines
 - <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/build-new-routines>

- [School Closed? How to Make a New Home Routine](#)
- Foster connections at home and from a distance
 - <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/foster-connections-distance>
 - https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/simple_activities_for_children_and_adolescents_4.pdf
- Be aware of changing behaviors
 - <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/be-aware-changing-behaviors>

Additional Behavior and COVID-19 Resources

- [Parent/Caregiver Guide](#)
- [Manage Anxiety and Stress](#)
- [Teachers Interrupted - An article on social and emotional learning](#)

▶ STUDENT PRIVACY AND FERPA

The United States (U.S.) Department of Education (Department) is issuing these Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) regarding the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the coronavirus disease 2019, The Department's Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO) prepared this document to assist school officials working with public health officials in managing public health issues related to COVID-19, while protecting the privacy of students' education records.

Understanding FERPA helps enable school officials to act quickly and with certainty when confronting challenges that affect the health or safety of students or other individuals.

Refer to the document here: [FERPA & Coronavirus FAQ](#) (US Department of Education).

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