

SPECIAL EDUCATION

SUMMER 2020 | BRIEF 4

WHO ARE OKLAHOMA LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES?

In Oklahoma, approximately 16% of all students in public schools are receiving special education services, and 72% of the students in special education spend more than 80% of their time in the general education classroom.

Important Considerations for FAPE during Distance Learning

All students in special education are entitled to a [free appropriate public education \(FAPE\)](#). This includes students who are eligible for special education from the ages of 3 through 21. FAPE is individually determined for each student with a disability. FAPE must include special education in the least restrictive environment (LRE) and may include related services, transition services, supplementary aids and services and/or assistive technology devices and services. A FAPE requires an individualized educational program (IEP) to be appropriately ambitious in light of the child's circumstances, and every child should have the chance to meet challenging objectives. It should not be based on diagnoses, eligibility categories or blanket policies. Districts must ensure FAPE during [distance learning](#).

WHY IT MATTERS

- **Specially Designed Instruction-** Students should continue to receive specially designed instruction as outlined in their IEP. This includes any accommodations and/or modifications needed to ensure they can access the curriculum in a meaningful way.
- **Accessibility-** Students with special needs and IEPs should be allowed to continue with learning that is consistent for all students.
- **Access to services-** Students with special needs and IEPs should continue to receive services as outlined in their IEPs to the greatest extent possible. This includes related services, such as speech, occupational therapy and physical therapy.
- **Progress Monitoring-** IEP teams should continue to monitor progress toward IEP goals during distance learning and be prepared to make plans to address future learning needs.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Build on each student's strengths, interests and needs and use this knowledge to positively impact learning.
- Offer routines for consistency and to balance think time, work time and playtime for health and well-being.
- Partner to support student learning through ongoing communication and collaboration. This partnership will not look the same for every student and family – safety should remain the priority.
- Deliver content 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.
- Communicate with families about engagement strategies to support students as they access learning.
- Use a variety of approaches to monitor, assess and provide feedback to students about their learning.
- Provide ESY services when the child's IEP team determines that the services are necessary for the provision of FAPE to the child. An extended closure of normal school operations may necessitate a reconsideration of ESY services.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

How can disability-related accommodations/modifications and services be effectively provided online?

How can low-tech strategies be provided for an exchange of curriculum-based resources, instructional packets, projects and written assignments?

ATTENDING TO EQUITY

- **Keep Students at the Center**
 - Help students feel safe and valued through intentional outreach, building relationships and maintaining connections via the preferred method of communication (phone call, text, emails, Remind, Facetime, Zoom, Google Hangouts, etc.)
- **Design Learning for Equity and Access**
 - Plan and deliver individualized, specially designed instruction according to the student's IEP.
- **Assess Student Learning**
 - Manage and monitor student learning according to IEP goals and monitor progress to plan what's next for learning.
- **Address barriers that impede student learning**
 - Provide alternate access to the curriculum or services that is equally effective as that provided to other students.
- **Support families and children**
 - This is a challenging time for families. Assistance with locating and accessing community resources to help mitigate risk factors will provide much-needed supports.

