STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

Considerations for Reopening of Schools for Students with Disabilities

South Carolina Department of Education, Office of Special Education Services

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I. Equity and Inclusion

As districts adapt to different instructional delivery models, continuous planning and collaboration are needed when using alternate means of service provision to ensure efforts are *reasonably calculated to enable a child to make appropriate progress in light of the child's unique circumstances* (Endrew, 2017). In addition, efforts are needed to maintain access to general education instruction and activities to the greatest extent possible, as described on the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and to include opportunities to participate in general education hybrid or virtual instruction with needed supplementary aids and services. In other words to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE).

In the context of change, students with disabilities are most successful when educators and families have high expectations for what they are capable of learning and accomplishing in school. Students learn best when they feel valued. When students cannot communicate effectively, or behavior impedes participation and learning, explore multiple pathways for understanding and assume students want to learn but may have difficulty expressing their needs.

Equitable, inclusionary practices ensure all students maintain access to general education curriculum and instruction, even as schools adapt to a variety of instructional delivery models. A basic educational right for all students is high quality core instruction in a welcoming environment.

Equitable, inclusionary learning should reflect the following beliefs:

- All students feel a sense of belonging and value, as full members of the school community.
- All students have access to equitable and high-quality, meaningful instruction.
- Instruction is culturally responsive, and student and family centered.

II. Academic Recovery Services

The COVID-related school closures in the spring disrupted learning and instruction for all students in our state. Districts have been providing opportunities to recover lost skills through summer Academic Recovery Camps (ARCs). The intent of the ARCs is to provide instructional opportunities in math and reading for at-risk students in grades kindergarten through third. The South Carolina General Assembly provided funding for five additional instructional days at the start of the school year for students in grades 4K through eighth. These five days have been identified as Learn, Evaluate, Analyze, and Prepare (LEAP) days and are mandatory for all districts. The LEAP days must be used for face-to-face assessment activities and/or instruction. Districts were encouraged to place the highest priority on engaging students that have demonstrated significant learning gaps or specialized needs, such as students that:

- Experienced low engagement during the emergency deployment of continued learning opportunities in the spring;
- Have demonstrated learning gaps on prior assessments and diagnostic tools;
- Are in process for evaluation related to special education or English learner status; and/or
- Are homeless or migrant.

The purpose of academic recovery is to provide an opportunity to address unfinished learning for all students from the spring. The focus should be on the recovery of priority standards to ensure all students will be able to continue in the learning progression at the next level. The process of academic recovery will be on-going after school reopens.

III. Supplemental School Closure Service Needs because of COVID-19 School Facility Closure

Use of the term "supplemental school closure services" in this document describes additional services needed by students with disabilities during the school day due to lack of expected progress during the closure. These will include special education and related services designed to ensure the student with a disability is able to continue to progress toward meeting the annual goals in the IEP.

The terms "supplemental school closure services" as used in this document, describe additional, supplemental services needed to address gaps in special education service delivery due to COVID-19 health and safety limitations, over which districts had no control. These are not intended to eliminate or reduce obligations to provide compensatory education for special education services that were denied or inaccessible during the school closure.

Students with disabilities are general education students first. As districts are considering the effects of school closure and the need for recovery services for all students, districts should consider the following when making decisions on supplemental school closure services for students with disabilities:

- Supplemental school closure services are intended to enable the student to continue to make progress on IEP goals and in the general education curriculum.
- IEP teams should examine the effects of school closure and the special education and related services, accommodations, and modifications the student received during the spring on the student's overall progress toward the IEP goals and in the general curriculum.
    - This should include documentation to the degree to which services were offered and accessed (level of student engagement) during the closure. The extent of supplemental school closure services, if any, must be an individualized determination considering the student's needs in the context of emergency deployment of learning opportunities provided to all students during the school closure.
    - IEP teams may need to consider additional sources of progress data during

this decision-making period. These sources may include, but are not limited to:

- Parent observation and input
- Teacher observation
- Type of and access to emergency deployment of learning opportunities
- Progress and trends of learning prior to school closure
- Professional judgement

- Supplemental school closure services should be provided during the school day, unlike compensatory services, that are provided outside of the school day.
  - Districts should be cautious when scheduling supplemental school closure services to ensure these do not lead to a more restrictive environment/placement for the student or contribute to additional general education instruction being missed.

IV. Compensatory Services

Compensatory services are educational services that are awarded or can be agreed upon to be provided to students with disabilities to address a district's failure to provide students a FAPE under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Compensatory services a student may receive are considered on a case-by-case basis and when a FAPE has been denied. Compensatory services should be addressed by a student's IEP team. The goal of compensatory services is to put the student back in the position the student would have been in had a FAPE been provided.

Use of the term "compensatory services" describes the need for special education services that were denied or inaccessible during the school closure despite all reasonable and practicable efforts. It is a term for services to be provided as the result of a denial of a FAPE and are intended to close the gap between where the student should have been if he/she had been provided the services and where he/she is currently functioning.

In the event a district was unable to provide special education and related services to enable a student with a disability to access the emergency deployment of learning opportunities provided during school closure, the IEP team will need to consider whether the student was denied a FAPE under those circumstances. If the team determines there was a denial of a FAPE, the team must determine what compensatory services are needed, in addition to services currently in the IEP, to put the student back in the position he/she would have been in had FAPE been provided.

V. Contingency Plan Services

In the event, of a school or district closure that would again require the emergency deployment of continued learning opportunities, districts will use a contingency plan to provide reasonable and practicable access to the continued learning opportunities. If, as a result of an emergency closure, a district is able to switch students from a face-to-face or hybrid model to a completely virtual model, a contingency plan will not be used.

For example, contingency services would be needed if a district is providing a traditional face-to-face instructional delivery model to elementary students and there is a need to quarantine a class, grade level, or the entire school. The district is unable to switch these students to a more virtual instructional delivery model (hybrid or virtual as described below) because the infrastructure is not yet in place (the district is still in the process of securing the necessary hotspots and devices). The school would need to again provide instructional opportunities similar to those provided in the spring. Because the district is not yet able to switch these students to another instructional delivery model that would provide standards-based, high quality instruction, the district would provide contingency services to allow access and progress in the learning opportunities during the short-term emergency quarantine period.

If however, the district is able to switch these students to another model of instruction and continue providing the same standards-based, high quality instruction, although in a different delivery model, there would be no need for contingency services. Any changes that might be needed in special education services in this new instructional model would be documented in the Documentation of Special Education Services based on Instructional Model form.

There will be a Contingency Plan embedded in the Enrich IEP that may be completed at the next annual review for the student. In the meantime, a district may choose to use the Documentation of Special Education Services based on Instructional Model form.

Use of the term "contingency plan services" in this document is intended to describe the reasonable and practicable services needed by a student with a disability during a school closure when the school/district is unable to provide a standards-based, high quality instructional program to all students due to the nature of the emergency closure. A contingency plan is designed to be used during this short-term, emergency closure to describe how the school/districts will make reasonable and practicable efforts to provide access to the emergency deployment of continued learning opportunities.

Recovery Services	Supplemental School Closure Services	Compensatory Services	Contingency Plan Services
● Offered to all students as a result of missed instruction due to COVID closures ● Address unfinished learning for all students ● Designed to recover priority standards to ensure all students will be able to continue in the learning progression at the next level	● Based on degree to which services during the emergency deployment of continued learning opportunities were accessed ● Will include special education and related services needed to ensure student with a disability can continue to make progress toward annual goals ● Will be part of the school day ● Should not change LRE	● Needed when there was a denial of a FAPE due to the school/district's failure or inability to provide services in the IEP ● Provided in addition to school day and services currently in the IEP ● Designed to close the gap between where the student would have been if services had been provided and where the student is now	● Provided during an emergency school closure when the school/district is unable to provide "typical" instruction and must deploy emergency continued learning opportunities ● Designed to provide reasonable and practicable access to the continued learning opportunities ● Designed for short-term, emergency closure when the school/district is unable to provide standards-based, high quality instruction through an alternative model

VI. Movement between Instructional Models

Instruction when school reopens will look very different from the emergency deployment of learning opportunities district offered in the spring as a response to COVID-19. The emergency deployment of learning opportunities was pulled together very quickly, in some cases overnight, and was designed to provide students with an opportunity to continue participating to the extent practicable and reasonable in learning activities. Some districts were able to make the transition to these opportunities more readily than others were.

As stated above, the quality and type of instruction to be provided when schools reopen will be vastly different from what staff, students, and parents experienced in the spring. Districts will be providing several different instruction models. All must include standards-based, high quality curriculum and instruction. The goal for all districts is to provide face-to-face, five-days-a-week, instruction as soon as it is safe to do so unless the student is participating in a virtual model.

INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY MODELS			
Face-to-Face	**Hybrid**	**Virtual-Synchronous**	**Virtual-Asynchronous**
Provides traditional, in-person learning	Combines face-to-face instruction several days a week and virtual learning the other days	Instruction is provided through a live virtual format using an on-line learning platform	Instruction is provided via pre-recorded lessons that can be accessed at any time

Districts are taking into consideration information including, current Center for Disease Control guidelines, community spread conditions, and parent choice as the instructional delivery models for students are rolled out. Some districts may be offering parents the option of switching instructional delivery models after school reopens. Regardless of the instructional delivery model, all students with disabilities will be provided a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment.

IEPS will be amended, as needed, to reflect the instructional delivery model chosen by the parent so that appropriate special education and related services, supports, accommodations, and modifications are designed to provide meaningful educational benefit (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment.

Upon reopening, districts will prioritize the re-implementation of pre-closure IEPs and the updating and amending of IEPs, as needed, to provide supplemental school closure services and any different services that might arise due to a new instructional delivery model.

Unless a student with a disability was previously enrolled in a virtual setting (on-line instruction or one of the virtual charter schools), the student's IEP was probably written for the face-to-face setting. If a different instructional delivery model will be used with the student, his/her IEP *may* need to be revised or amended to ensure a FAPE will be offered in the new instructional model. However, a change in instructional delivery model does not automatically necessitate a change in the student's special education and related services.

Specially designed instruction is the instructional strategies that support meeting IEP goals and objectives. These strategies include adapting as appropriate the content, methodology, or delivery of instruction to address the unique needs that result from the student's disability to facilitate progress toward outcomes and ensure access to the general education curriculum. Specially designed instruction is responsive, evidence-based instruction using High Leverage Practices. It can be provided to individual students one on one, in small groups directly or in classrooms where instruction is differentiated or developed using Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Specially designed instruction is informed by present levels of performance, IEP goals, student performance data, and evidence-based instruction and intervention known to be effective with students with disabilities.

The following information should help IEP teams ensure that the focus remains on student learning, providing meaningful educational benefit, and the offer of a FAPE. To facilitate this focus, districts may use the Documentation of Special Education Services based on Instructional Model form to capture changes necessary in an IEP across instructional delivery models. Not all instructional models will be offered by all districts. This form will help IEP teams document the consideration and determination of how services and supports will be provided across instructional models.

Districts should develop a process to communicate with parents regarding their child's services, including discussion of amending IEPs to best meet the student's needs in hybrid or virtual models, if applicable. Review the delivery of special education and related services, as well as general education curriculum to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to learning options, especially if virtual instruction is being provided, including in a hybrid model.

- Students retain their right to be educated in the least restrictive environment, including their neighborhood school. Districts should be cautious about grouping students with disabilities simply due to the lack of services provided/accessed during the school facility closure, or due to the convenience (or the lack of) and feasibility of online tools and platforms.
- IEP teams should be familiar with their district's fall 2020 instructional plan, including the instructional models and phases that will be in place when school reopens. This will help teams determine methods for providing specially designed instruction in the various models, and how to continue a focus on inclusionary practices.

- Districts should be cautious when grouping students to receive services in hybrid models to ensure that students with disabilities are not subject to further segregation from general education peers, contrary to their IEPs.
- Facilitate communication between IEP members to ensure students with disabilities can be appropriately involved and make progress toward the general education standards and IEP goals.
- Include strategies for identifying, documenting, and providing coaching/support needs for families who will be supporting virtual learning. Examples might include short how-to videos, infographic materials in multiple languages, and joint virtual sessions with staff and families to practice accessing learning management systems.
- Review IEP services to anticipate student needs and adjust related service provider caseloads.
- Support providers to provide related services to students across the continuum of instructional delivery models while adhering to the CDC safety guidelines.
- Consider assistive technology or adaptive equipment needed so that all students with disabilities have access to instruction and related services.
- Consider training needed to support virtual instructional delivery, collaboration and progress monitoring data collection.
- Develop policies and practices that support student progress in teleservices and ensure that teleservices are only used when benefits can be reasonably expected.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">IEP Development Resources</th></tr>
<tr><td>Virtual IEP Meeting Agenda</td><td>Virtual IEP Meeting Tip Sheets</td></tr>
<tr><td>Developing High Quality IEPs</td><td>NASDSE Least Restrictive Environment in the Wake of COVID-19 Brief</td></tr>
<tr><td>High Leverage Practices</td><td>Data-Based Individualization</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">TIES Center Distance Learning Resources for:
Effective SDI in Distance Learning Environment
Embedding Instruction at Home
Promoting Engagement for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities in Group Learning Settings
High Leverage Practices Crosswalk (Can be adapted for Distance Learning)
Practices and Resources to Support Teachers</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">CAST Lesson planning, video demonstrations, planning. Also see Cast’s Accessible Educational Materials site</td></tr>
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VII. Progress Monitoring

Documentation of progress monitoring data is necessary to evaluate student progress across the school reopening models. It will also be critical information for IEP teams to determine the need for any individual supplemental school closure services.

Consider the following for progress monitoring:

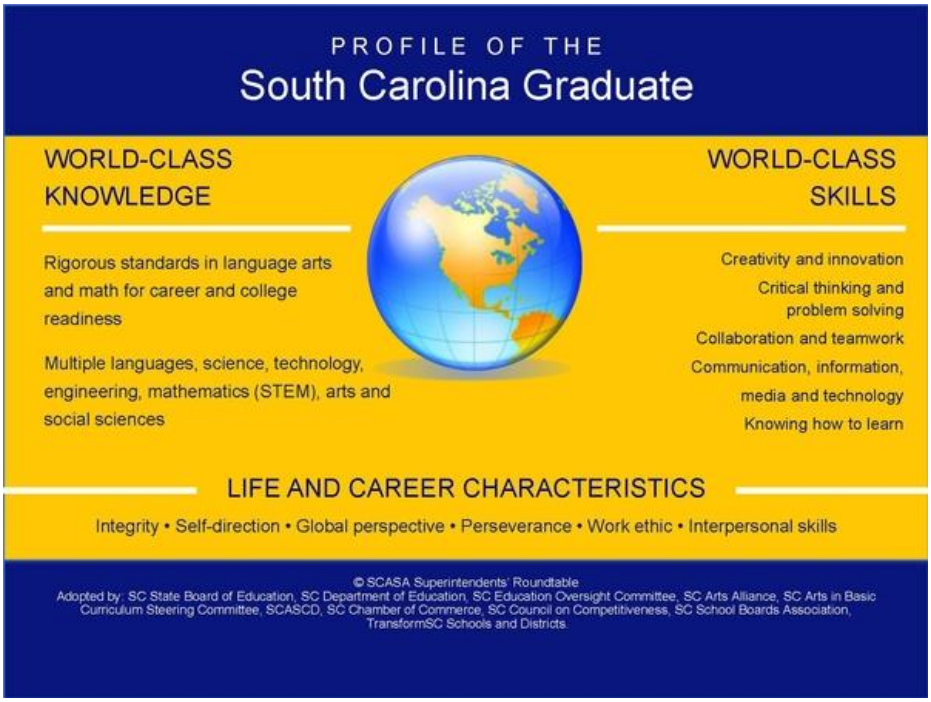
- Progress reports should be provided consistent with the way they are specified in the individual student's IEP and in the method the district normally provides progress reports to parents.
- Progress data should include the level of performance for each goal/objective, based on various forms of data collection.
    - Each report requires a summary of the progress towards the goal (or objective).
    - Reports may also note: goal met, minimal or limited progress, or unable to contact student or collect data.
    - It is recommended to also include comments in the progress report to note any changes in access to instructional delivery models.
- As part of progress monitoring and progress reporting under virtual learning frameworks, it is important to:
    - Explore all assessment possibilities recognizing that conducting in-person assessments may be limited or unavailable;
    - Maintain documentation of what services were offered;
    - Maintain documentation of what services were delivered;
    - Maintain documentation of student "attendance" to the extent possible (if virtual learning is being offered, how often did the student log in, what work was produced during that time, etc.);
    - Determine what aligns to IEP goals and how to gather solid data on IEP progress to support this determination in the best way possible; and
    - Analyze the data compared to the student's progress at the point school closures took place to ensure the COVID-19 impact is made clear.

Progress Monitoring Resources
TIES Center Distance Learning Resources for Effective SDI in Distance Learning Environments and Planning for Transitioning Students Back to School
Frequently Asked Questions on Collecting Progress Monitoring Data Virtually | National Center on Intensive Intervention https://intensiveintervention.org/resource/FAQ-collecting-progress-monitoring-data-virtually

VIII. Summary

Meeting the individual needs of students with disabilities across the continuum of school reopening models will require innovative approaches, flexibility, and ongoing communication between school and home, especially for our students with more complex individual needs. All students are general education students first. They need and are entitled to access and engagement in the general education curriculum, as well as the general education environment. The purpose of the IEP is to provide the instruction and support students with disabilities need to be able to access and progress in that general education curriculum.

Reopening of schools will require districts, schools, families, and communities working together to support positive learning experiences for all. Collaboration, on-going communication, and a renewed commitment will be needed to ensure all students with disabilities have equitable access to meet the profile of the South Carolina graduate.



Appendix A

Additional Resources

Highlighting Resources and Practices to Support Back to School and Continuity of Learning during COVID-19 for Children with Disabilities

This document provides links to the resources described in the third webinar in the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) series designed to feature ready-to-use resources, tools, and practices from OSEP partners to support the educational, developmental, behavioral, and social/emotional needs of infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities through remote and distance learning.

Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center

- Family Guide to At-Home Learning
- High-Leverage Practices in Special Education
- The High Leverage Practices
    - Video Exemplar: Online High School 1-1 Explicit Strategy Instruction Lesson
    - Video Exemplar: Explicit Instruction and Feedback through Online 4th Grade Science Vocabulary Lesson
    - Video Exemplar: Online 2nd Grade Reading

Strategy Lesson Contact the CEEDAR Center

National Center on Improving Literacy

- Implementation Toolkits
- Ask an Expert
- Improving Literacy Briefs
- Kid Zone!
- Resource Repository

Contact NCIL

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (Center on PBIS)

- A State Guide for Returning to School During and After Crisis: A Guide to Supporting States, Districts, Schools, Educators, and Students through a Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework during the 2020–2021 School Year
- New Jersey Positive Behavior Support in Schools

Contact the Center on PBIS

National Center on Intensive Interventions (NCII)

- Breaking Down the Data-Based Individualization Process: Questions and Considerations
- Academic Progress Monitoring Tools Charts
- Behavior Progress Monitoring Tools Charts
- Collaboration with Parents and Families
- Behavior Guide on Self-Management
- Using Sample Lessons to Support Continuity of Learning During COVID-19: Tips for Educators and Parents
- FAQ on Collecting Progress Monitoring Data Virtually
- Voices from the Field

Contact NCII

Michigan Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Technical Assistance Center (MiMTSS)

- MiMTSS COVID-19 Resources
- Considerations When Using Instructional Packets
- Considerations for Distance Learning
- Considerations for Online Instruction
- Classroom PBIS for Online Learning
- Supporting Educators in Preparation for the Fall Webinar Series [1]

Contact MiMTSS

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[1] This series is ongoing as of the webinar three event date of August 4, 2020. Please continue to check the MiMTSS website for updated materials from their webinar series events. The series will be revised and reshown in fall and winter of 2020.

National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI)

- Emergencies and National Disasters: Helping Children and Families Cope
- The Leadership Team's Guide for Re-Opening Programs
- Wearing Masks /Usando Mascaras
- I Can Be Safe and Healthy by Washing My Hands! /¡Puedo estar seguro y saludable lavándome las manos!
- Taking Care of Ourselves: Stress and Relaxation
- Transitioning Back to the Program: Connecting with Families
- Rebuilding the Pyramid: Reconnecting After a Break
- My Teachers Want to Know /Mis maestros quieren saber

- Tucker Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think at Home / La tortuga Tucker toma tiempo para detenerse y pensar en casa
- Solution Kit: Home Edition
- We Can Be Problem Solvers at Home! /¡Nosotros podemos resolver problemas! en casa
- Taking a Break: Using a Calm Down Area at Home
- Tips for Supporting Yourself During the Pandemic /Consejos para apoyarse a sí mismo durante la pandemia
- Connecting with Families

Contact NCPMI