



SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES (SES)

August 12, 2020

	Question	Response
1.	Will there be additional webinars to provide support for navigating special education during the COVID-19 Pandemic?	We will provide updates to Special Education Coordinators when we have updates to share. We will provide additional guidance from OSEP when it becomes available.
2.	For students who are choosing a remote/virtual learning path, what is the LRE for the IEP?	For the majority of our students with disabilities, 83.59% who receive instruction in the general education classroom for at least 80% of the school day, the LRE should not change. Meaning, if the LEA has chosen to do virtual only and the student is participating via the general education classroom virtually, the LRE would be 01. If the student is pulled out to a meeting room with just students with disabilities, the LRE would be based on the amount of time removed from the general education classroom and nondisabled peers.
3.	If an LEA is starting school after August 28, may we have an extension as long as we have our IEPs in place when school starts?	Yes. Regulations require IEPs to be in place at the beginning of a school year. As a reminder, any student included on the October 1 Child Count must have a current IEP in order to be counted.
4.	Our calendar has changed as of yesterday. Are amendments necessary to all IEPs already written to change the beginning date?	No. A notice to all students in the LEA should suffice as notice and therefore parents should understand the initiation dates on an IEP have changed. In 2012 the legislature required all LEAs to start school on the same date, SES did not require IEPs to be amended because the change was outside of the IEP process.
5.	Are we required to provide face-to-face instruction if all general education students are virtual for the first nine weeks?	This is an LEA decision. LEAs are delivering instruction through traditional, virtual, or blended approaches.

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6.	Will there be ongoing training throughout the school year for new directors/coordinators?	Yes, the ALSDE will provide ongoing support to new directors/coordinators. In addition, the Fall CASE conference is September 28-30, 2020.
7.	How should we provide homebound and related services to our more severe students?	<p>The IEP Team should consider the least restrictive environment placement for students who are medically fragile on an individual basis, but schools do have some flexibility if a student’s health and safety are threatened.</p> <p>If the parents exercise their choice for the child to receive services via a virtual/remote option based upon COVID-19 concerns, the IEP Team should consider whether it can safely and/or feasibly provide all of the services set forth in the proposed IEP in a virtual/remote setting.</p> <p>Also, the IEP Team is required to consider how each student will be able to access instruction and his/her services within the distance learning environment. If assistive technology will be required for a student to appropriately access information, the IEP Team is required to provide that technology. Partnering with parents/ caregivers is critical in determining the context in which students will be able to receive instruction, what modalities of instruction will be most effective, and which assistive technologies may prove beneficial for students with severe or profound disabilities given the change in environment.</p> <p>The Increasing (T)ime, (I)nstructional Effectiveness, (E)ngagement, and State (S)upport (TIES) Center for Inclusive Practices, regularly updates a distance learning series that offers the following recommendations to support the inclusion and engagement of students with significant cognitive disabilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a morning meeting. A short morning meeting held virtually each school day is a chance for teachers to greet students and for students to connect with their teachers and their peers with and without disabilities. This practice also helps establish a routine and an

	Question	Response
		<p>opportunity to review the day's learning and social goals. The morning meeting can be held through videoconferencing or even through an email or a phone call check-in.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make connections accessible. Remove barriers to accessibility to make it as easy as possible for students to participate. For online programs, for example, use closed captioning, universal design for learning elements, and keep text and graphics to a minimum. Teachers should also review with parents the tools their child may need to be prepared for online lessons, such as core boards or communication devices. • Share behavior techniques with parents. Teachers should share with each student's parents the individual positive behavior techniques successfully used in the classroom so that parents can continue using the same approaches at home. These "tricks of the trade" can help students stay on task and avoid triggers for unwelcome behaviors. Teachers should share the reactive and proactive behavior techniques they use, including gestures, warnings, and affirmations. Give parents an opportunity to give feedback about what techniques are working, what is not working, and suggestions for other approaches. • Utilize daily learning opportunities. Now that educational opportunities have truly extended beyond school hours and buildings, educators can look for big and small ways to build essential life skills and academic progress into a student's day. Some activities that touch on these skills include following a schedule with increased independence, sustaining independent work for longer periods of time, and interacting with peers. <p>See <i>Continuity of Learning During COVID-19/OSEP Ideas that Work</i>: https://osepideasthatwork.org/continuity-learning-during-covid-19</p>

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8.	<p>My system is offering virtual and traditional learning. For the students who have opted for virtual, do we need to amend the IEPs to reflect virtual learning services and will that change the LRE?</p>	<p>If the special education services and related services can be provided in the virtual learning environment using alternative instructional delivery models, the IEP does not need to be changed. It is always beneficial to document/annotate updates, i.e. whether services will be provided using distance/virtual instruction.</p> <p>If the IEP Team determines that amendments are necessary, then the IEP Team must document the changes through the IEP amendment process.</p> <p>The IEP document itself could either be amended or could be kept intact and include an “alternative learning plan” that should be uploaded into SETS, that sets forth what the school district will provide to the best of its ability and to the greatest extent possible in light of the circumstances and the parents’ choice of setting. Creating an “alternative learning plan” may be the preferred option, as it will allow the IEP Team to maintain documentation of the original proposal for FAPE and the IEP Team’s efforts to implement the IEP while the student is in the remote/virtual setting.</p> <p>While “alternative learning plans” may be similar to the spring’s “distance learning plans,” they may need to be more robust since circumstances have changed. Any “alternative learning plans” developed or IEP amendments made for the virtual/remote setting should reflect the special education and related services that will be provided in that setting that are designed to assist the student to make progress in the general curriculum and toward achieving the goals set out in the student’s IEP.</p> <p>For all IEP Team meetings, remind special education teachers, LEA Representatives, and other Team members that the procedural requirements for convening IEP meetings and reviewing and revising IEPs must be followed for all IEP meetings, including those held remotely or virtually (e.g., written <i>Notice and Invitation to a</i></p>

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		<p><i>Meeting/Consent for Agency Participation;</i> presence of required school team members, unless excusal process is followed; provision of copies of IEP documentation to parents; provision of prior written <i>Notice of Proposal or Refusal to Take Action</i> to parents; copy of Special Education Rights to parents; etc.).</p> <p>Physical location of special education services does not automatically change the LRE. Students with disabilities who receive the majority of their instruction with nondisabled peers can still receive the majority of the virtual instruction with nondisabled peers. Parent choice does not replace the role of the IEP Team to make appropriate placement decisions for students with disabilities. See <i>Least Restrictive Environment in the Wake of COVID-19: A Brief from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education</i>: https://www.nasdse.org/docs/NASDSE_LRE.pdf</p>
9.	<p>What guidance can you provide regarding the process for IEP amendments as we struggle through this unusual time? Do we leave them as they are and create a different temporary learning plan for each student?</p>	<p>In cases where an IEP is in place for the 2020-21 school year that contemplates a return to the traditional school setting and that is the parent’s chosen option, an IEP Team meeting may not be necessary, unless updated data suggest that adjustments/revisions to the IEP are needed before school resumes (e.g., updates to present levels of performance, goals, services, etc.). If adjustments are needed before the return to school, the IEP Team should meet and update the IEP to be implemented in the traditional school setting.</p> <p>“Alternative learning plans” are contingency plans used to document temporary provision of special education services provided during a time of selective or required school closures. The alternative learning plan may include special education services and related services using options such as online or virtual instruction, instructional telephone calls, and other curriculum-based instructional activities. Alternative learning plans are included with the IEP and used to describe any necessary changes or amendments to</p>

	Question	Response
		<p>the IEP based on the use of an alternative instructional delivery model.</p> <p>See United States Department of Education (USDOE) Memo: https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/ga-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf</p>
10.	<p>I know that hiring certified teachers who are not certified in Special Education would have us out of compliance, so how do we service students when no certified person applies for the position? We do not have enough certified staff to service students both at school and through distance learning.</p> <p>What are possible solutions for SPED teacher shortage?</p>	<p>You are correct. The IDEA regulations require:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i.) The teacher to have full state certification as a special education teacher, including an alternate route that leads to certification as a special educator. (ii.) Has not had special education certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary, or provisional basis. (iii.) Holds at least a bachelor’s degree. <p>Refer to Memo FY 17-2066, Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and Special Education for special education certification guidance. https://www.alsde.edu/sites/memos/Memoranda/FY17-2066.pdf#search=FY17%2D2066</p> <p>Additional Teaching Field (Certificate Based on Test)</p> <p>Certain individuals can add collaborative K-6 or 6-12 certification by passing the appropriate Praxis subject area test(s), verifying the required educational experience, and holding one of the following requisite certificates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood special education P-3, • Collaborative special education teacher K-6, • Collaborative special education teacher 6-12, • Elementary multiple abilities K-6, • Early childhood multiple abilities P-3, or • Any area of special education P-12 (excluding gifted). <p>The application can be found using the link below, look on page 2 of 5, letter e: https://www.alsde.edu/sec/ec/CBT/(A)%20Application%20Part%201%20of%202%20(Supplement%20TBC).pdf</p>

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		<p>Interim Employment Certificate (IEC) This approach is for individuals who have been admitted to a traditional or alternative master’s program at an Alabama institution. If enrolled in a special education program, an employing school system could hire the individual as a special education teacher while the individual is completing the requirements for full certification. The IEC facilitates employment during this process.</p> <p>The application can be found using the link below, look on page 4 of 7 for information regarding special education: https://www.alsde.edu/sec/ec/Special%20Alternative/(A)%20Application%20Part%201%20of%202%20(Supplement%201EI).pdf</p> <p>The SES Section and Teacher Certification Section will continue to look for other options to assist LEAs with teacher shortages.</p>
11.	How will COVID-19 impact State Reporting?	<p>There are no waivers for reporting data regarding children with disabilities (IDEA). Note: A waiver for assessments and accountability was granted by the USDOE for the 2019-2020 school year.</p>
12.	Can we have a one pager of all the upcoming deadlines rather than different emails or requests?	<p>Yes. A Calendar for Special Education Reports and Data is included in the monitoring manual, which will be posted later this month.</p>
13.	For August IEPs, do we have parents complete the parent survey?	<p>No. The 2020-2021 Alabama Parent Survey administration (SPP/APR Indicator 8) will begin in February 2021.</p>
14.	How are we to conduct intellectual and achievement assessments for virtual students, especially those that are a carry-over from last school year?	<p>The OSEP gave flexibility on face-to-face (initial or reevaluations) evaluations during school closures. Document reasons why an initial evaluation or reevaluation and transition from Part C to Part B did not meet the required timeline.</p> <p>Doing the best that can be done to timely/ expeditiously complete these processes is vital, especially for any student where the LEA received parental consent as that starts the 60-calendar day timeline. However, where evaluations require face-to-face, in-person assessment or other interaction and it is not possible in light of the</p>

	Question	Response
		<p>health/safety mandates currently in place, document efforts/results and resume when school reopens.</p> <p>Use the “EMERGENCY LEA/SCHOOL CLOSURE” form provided in the March 13, 2020 News You Can Use (NYCU) to document any impact of the school closure on initial evaluation due dates and transition from Early Intervention (EI) to Preschool IEP implementation by the child's 3rd birth date. A secure file upload link will be sent for these forms closer to the September reporting period.</p> <p>The LEAs are reminded that a reevaluation may be conducted through a review of existing data, and this review may occur without a meeting and without obtaining parental consent, unless it is determined additional assessments are needed. Reevaluations that require additional assessments but do not require face-to-face assessments or observations may take place during the suspension of in-person learning if the parent has given consent.</p>
15.	What kinds of documentation will we need for students who are virtual and need face-to-face testing for eligibility if the parents will not let the student participate in face-to-face?	All documentation should be maintained in SETS under the Annotate Process. For initial evaluations, use the Emergency LEA/School Closure form. An LEA may print out a report of all overdue initial evaluations for those whom the timeline had started.
16.	What options do we have relative to observations? Can they be done virtually or possibly through a questionnaire?	If a student is receiving services virtually, the SES would allow the observation to be conducted virtually as long as the AAC requirements are met.
17.	Can we get all handouts and presentations in one email?	The handouts for the Back-to-School Virtual Conference were sent out to coordinators in an email as well as the recordings from the sessions on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday.
18.	Is there any guidance on HOW to adequately provide special education services including accommodations and supports virtually?	Remote learning for students with disabilities can include options such as self-directed learning packets and interactive computerized electronic learning in various learning management systems that is synchronous (students learn online together at the same time, on a schedule) and/or

	Question	Response
		<p>asynchronous (students learn on their own timeframe with provided lessons).</p> <p>As with traditional learning, remote learning for students with disabilities must be individualized. Goals and special education and related services for a student with a disability should be identified based on the student’s needs and current, unique situation. Appropriate remote learning for one student may not be appropriate remote learning for another student even though the two students may have been participating in a similar program prior to the pandemic. Many dynamics have changed and there are new considerations for students with disabilities, including the infrastructure available in the current setting. For instance, some students who are learning virtually may have adult support and technology/internet, and some may not.</p> <p>Teletherapy is the online delivery of services (e.g., speech, occupational, and mental health therapy) via high-resolution, live video conferencing. Live online therapy can be completed with students, individually and/or in small group, using established best practices to provide consistent, high quality services.</p> <p>Student needs have not gone away during the pandemic. In fact, the needs of some students have increased during the pandemic. Certain situations may require the consideration of in-home, in-clinic, and/or residential services. “Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategies for Applied Behavior Analysis: Treatment of Children with Autism During a Pandemic” was created for practitioners in Michigan but could be helpful for making decisions in other states also. Download the document: https://ddi.wayne.edu/covid19/abariskmanagementjuly20.pdf</p> <p>Below is a link to resources for a student with the most significant cognitive disability:</p>

	Question	Response
		<p>https://www.alsde.edu/sec/ses/Policy/Resources%20for%20Teachers%20of%20Alternate%20Achievement%20Standards.pdf</p> <p>Additional recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear communication on scheduling. • Set routines that work for parents as well as teachers. • Be flexible with due dates (remember the parents that may need the weekend). • Be sure that the students have all the logins and technology needed to access the lessons. • If you use Google or any shared document source, BE SURE you set the permissions to be accessible for anybody with the link. This will ease frustration for parents and students. • Include socialization and fun activities if possible. The students need that face-to-face connection with teachers, paraprofessionals, etc. If parents chose virtual but in class is also being offered, be willing to have the students watch you teach from a video source! <p>The Schoology Learning Management System has been offered and is a great tool for centralizing all tasks the special education teachers would like students to access. Think of Schoology as a student's "desk." If teachers need guidance on what Schoology can look like from their perspective, we do have a course with examples on Schoology that can be accessed by joining the course.</p> <p>**Courses→ My Courses→ Join a Course→ SNBD-VVM6-DSNBT</p> <p>We also have a group on Schoology that can be joined for updates and information on virtual learning in the special education world.</p> <p>Groups→ My Groups→ Join a Group→ CC7D-MKVT-SXKXF</p>

	Question	Response
		<p>For questions in regards to using Schoology as a special education teacher, you may contact Ms. Elisabeth Newell at elisabeth.newell@alsde.edu or Ms. Kimberly Baker at kimberly.baker@alsde.edu.</p> <p>The ALSDE also has added a LiveBinder of resources for virtual instruction: https://www.livebinders.com/b/2684268</p>
19.	How can I obtain the subscription to Education.com offered by the State?	<p>A subscription to Education.com has been purchased for every teacher who delivers instruction (core subjects) using the Alternate Achievement Standards (AAS). Please send an email to Mrs. Susan Goldthwaite at sgoldthwaite@alsde.edu if you have not received your subscription. You must indicate how many teachers of AAS will need a subscription. Also, email Mrs. Goldthwaite if you need to change a current license to a new teacher.</p>
20.	We need more direction with virtual instruction; how to provide a FAPE to students with significant disabilities if our district goes total virtual?	<p>Education programs for all students with disabilities must be designed to meet their individual needs to the same extent that the needs of nondisabled students are met. Resources can be found at the link below from the TIES Center - a national technical assistance center on inclusive practices and policies regarding students with significant cognitive disabilities https://publications.ici.umn.edu/ties/building-engagement-with-distance-learning/an-overview-framework</p>
21.	Could the Alternate Achievement Standards be loaded in Schools PLP/Schoology?	<p>Yes, the Alternate Achievement Standards will be available in SchoolsPLP.</p> <p>The SchoolsPLP content can be found within each of the grade-specific folders. Teachers can explore previous grade level folders to locate instructional material to help close a student's learning gaps. If special education teachers need assistance accessing the lower grades/skills, they can refer to the Special Education Group Schoology information as outlined in question 18.</p>