



**Department of Teaching and Learning
Office of Special Education**

**Special Education Supports and Services for Students with IEPs
Fall 2020 Information for Families
August 25, 2020**

As Arlington Public Schools (APS) prepares to support all learners during the 2020-21 Academic Year, we recognize that students with disabilities have unique learning needs that require careful consideration and close collaboration between families and school staff.

Although instruction will be provided virtually during the beginning of the school year, APS has a legal responsibility to provide a **Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) to each student with a disability. Although schools will be providing remote instruction, FAPE has NOT been waived, and APS is preparing to implement students' Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) to the fullest extent possible.

Also, the APS Strategic Plan includes a goal that by 2024, 80% of students with disabilities (SWD) will spend 80% of their time in general education settings. As we build towards this percentage, APS will continue to increase our inclusive practices, even while we are virtual.

During the upcoming days and weeks, case carriers will thoughtfully review each student's IEP to consider any possible needs they may have accessing distance learning, and continue inclusive practices.

IEP meetings may be scheduled to align services and supports the student needs in the distance learning model as well as to make any needed adjustments to the current IEP. The goal of these meetings is not to simply reduce hours or make proportional adjustments to services, but rather to ensure that each student receives meaningful instruction and the services needed to continue to make progress.

Parents are encouraged to share their input, observations, ideas and questions with the IEP team. Should the IEP Team (which, as always, includes parents) determine to adjust any services, a **Prior Written Notice (PWN)** will indicate the services the student had been receiving prior to the COVID school closure to ensure IEP teams can resume previous services when APS re-opens to a full time, in-person instructional model.

As parents prepare to meet with other members of the IEP Team, based on the unique needs of students, some important considerations teams may wish to address include:

Social Interactions

- Supporting students' understanding of the nuances of social interactions in a distance environment. Provide explicit instruction on "hidden rules" and ground rules for

discourse related to online learning, including engaging appropriately with technology and with others. Ensure that there are written supports for the social interactions that occur within Canvas.

- Addressing how verbal social interactions might affect the student, especially during times of stress.
- When appropriate, encouraging academic collaboration with peers. Canvas provides options such as chats, discussion boards, and/or video conferencing features. Explore **Collaborations** and **Groups** features to support learning and social interactions.
- Providing clear examples of acceptable behavior is a good way to support expectations for social interactions. Digital citizenship and acceptable use policies provide support when dealing with expected student behaviors in distance and blended learning environments.
- Developing strategies to support active and equitable participation of students with disabilities in group activities, group discussions, and in direct social situations.

Executive Functioning (*Attentional, Organizational, Scheduling and Transition*) Supports

- Providing support to help direct/redirect students' attention to the most salient aspects of an instructional session
- Teaching and reminding students to check various Canvas calendars for due dates, test dates, and assignments, and to utilize various Canvas features such as the To-Do list and Coming Up features, as well as checking Grades regularly for overdue assignments. *(Staff are expected to consistently utilize these features to support learning and work habits).*
- Establishing systems that provide students with ample notice about changes in expectations or schedules. New or novel situations may cause confusion and have an impact on educational performance. Realize that students may have issues with adaptive behavior. Explain changes in instructional routines and use this as an opportunity to pre-teach content. Communicate changes to the mentor and parent so they can provide support and answer questions the student may have.

Behavioral Supports

- Scheduling and pacing content to ensure that unstructured time and activities have clear parameters and expectations for personal, as well as interpersonal behavior.
- Providing instructional videos or screen shots of the specific behaviors that are expected in the distance or blended learning environment will assist in the development of new skills.
- Making expectations clear and being very consistent in application of consequences in order to provide a structured environment. This can best be done by having rules, procedures, routines, policies, or expectations specifically addressed in educational and behavioral materials.
- Providing students with self-monitoring resources, such as checklists, rubrics, or planning guides. This helps them visually scaffold expectations and provides cognitive supports when affective challenges present themselves. Using multimedia examples that focus on the expected work and behaviors is a good way to assist students' understanding, and practice good distance and blended learning academic and social behaviors.
- Encouraging students to engage in the identification and labeling of their own internal emotional states, and to share those in an appropriate way with the instructional staff.

Supports for Presentation of Instruction

- Considering the issues students may have with sensory input. Ensure the multimedia used in distance learning instruction will not have a negative impact on the instruction due to sights or sounds that impede processing of content.
- Breaking down directions, and using simplified language and completing comprehension checks as needed.
- Planning for the needs of students who may be concrete and literal in their understanding of conversations, and things such as similes, metaphors, idioms, inflection, or intonation that might get lost or be misunderstood.
- Providing repetition of content using multiple modalities when providing instruction.
- Utilizing small group instruction within classes to reteach/review materials, checking for comprehension, and/or working on IEP goals.
- Augmenting instruction through written and visual materials and voice recordings. Use visuals as needed when presenting verbal directions or information.
- Understanding the impact distance learning may have on students' stamina, patience, and ability to interact with others in the environment. Students that are emotionally or physically stressed may not have the ability to process content at the moment, and the use of recorded content either for instruction or student assignments might allow them to participate more fully in the program.
- Breaking instructional content/activities into smaller segments.
- Providing brain breaks and movement opportunities
- Gradually introducing some instructional formats or delivery systems
- Ensuring that course design is consistent throughout the Canvas, visual clutter is reduced on the pages, contrast of texts and colors is maximized, the use of frames on the page is limited, and proper heading structures are used for content. Consult with content teachers and assistive technology specialists as needed.
- Assigning class note-takers (i.e. Consider assigning students to take notes for the class)
- Allowing for asynchronous learning.
 - Some students may not be able to watch a livestream, whether it's due to timing, internet access, social-emotional or behavioral needs or the ability to focus on a lesson via a videoconference. And some students have trouble processing information when it's presented only in auditory form.
 - Some students may need live instruction recorded to review or access later.

Supports for Student Responses to Instruction

- Assess student understanding of content in appropriate ways. *(For example, written reports may not allow students to provide the breadth or depth of their understanding in a way that a verbal presentation might.)* Online learning offers multiple ways for instructors to support differentiated student output, using software and apps, or use of an American Sign Language interpreter or Cued Language Transliterater for student work products, as well as assessments.
- Be explicit in letting the students know what is expected of them for educational performance. Provide examples from past student work projects so the students have a better understanding of the features they must attend to.
- Often, students with executive function needs are unable to meet deadlines for tests and assignments. When this happens, the use of the technological features of Canvas might assist with the need to extend time to complete assignments.
- Use the full range of features available in Canvas to differentiate or personalize student responses or assignments as needed

Technology and Accessibility

- Ensure that all systems/devices and software are compliant with the technical standards necessary to meet federal and state guidelines.
- Create short text descriptions of images and videos used during video and distance learning.
- Use Word, Google Docs, or other accessible formats with optical character recognition (OCR) for screen reader access rather than inaccessible formats such as PDFs.
- Explicitly and systematically teach how to use new instructional media. Co-create and share expectations for how to engage in this learning environment. Give opportunities for practice.
- Provide appropriate supports for students with vision loss. (Be mindful that some students might have difficulty seeing the entire screen or instructional content. Present content in a highly contrasted manner and read content aloud as needed. Summarize content presented in text form, highlighting the main features that students should focus on or that form the basis of the content.
- Provide the student screen readers and support when appropriate to meet their level of visual needs in distance and blended learning environments.
- Ensure that all participants in the distance learning environment face the video camera and speak in a way that supports the visual needs of DHH students. It is helpful to have the speaker indicate their name before speaking, to allow the student to adjust visual attention and/or allow the American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter/Cued Language Translator (CLT) to share speaker identification information with a DHH student.
- Plan for pauses to allow time for DHH students to pin the interpreter and also allow time when interpreters need to switch.
- Ensure audio/video materials are closed-caption enabled.
- Some students may need live captioning via Teams
- Provide copies of all notes, lectures, and handouts to assist with note taking in class, especially for DHH students using ASL interpreters/CLT
- Allow students to slow down the rate or pace of content provided in distance learning environments through the use of assistive technology. This provides students opportunities to review content they might have missed due to speed of presentation or the complexity of the content.

Delivery of Special Education and Related Services:

All special education and related services will be provided in a variety of means based on IEP Team decisions. This can include:

Consult:

- Collaborate with other teachers and related service providers using Microsoft Teams to develop, adapt, and modify materials and tools.
- Establish and share virtual office hours with parents and staff.
- Collaborate with teachers and related service providers, such as psychologists, to design and deliver instruction.
- Work with caregivers to set up daily schedules and routines.
- Recorded videos of student (or student and family members) shared with staff for communication and feedback
- Telephone with parents
- Email with parents

- Provide feedback via google docs on assignments to students

Direct:

- Co-teaching - providing virtual therapy/instruction, materials and tools development, video modeling, video chats and instruction in virtual general education setting
- Virtual direct therapy/instruction, with related service provider or special education staff member in virtual special education setting
- Provide coaching for parents to deliver home learning activities. This includes the use of emails, phone calls, or video sessions while the parent is working with the child. This can include providing guidance and feedback from parent-provided video or work samples. This can also include instruction for equipment use or use of assistive technology or other tools for learning.

Special Education Assistants:

All special education assistants will have devices with which to support students in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:

- Check-ins
- Support for work completion and executive functioning needs
- Social emotional support
- Accommodations
- Reinforcing/reviewing previously taught lessons/activities
- Leading small/individual groups under the consultation of the special education teacher

Progress Reporting:

The VDOE Regulations require IEP goal progress to be reported as often as parents are informed of progress of students without disabilities. APS reports progress for all students in grades 6-12 with quarterly and interim, mid quarter report card grades. In order to maintain compliance with VDOE regulations, case carriers and related service providers must complete **IEP Goal Progress consistent with each of the APS progress reporting cycles as follows:**

Kindergarten and PreK provide IEP progress updates each semester.

Regular progress reporting, **based on the revised 2020-2021 calendar,** are as follows:

- November 4, 2020
- January 2, 2021
- April 13, 2021
- June 16- 17, 2021

In addition, the required **interim progress reporting for grades 6-12** dates are:

- October 2, 2020
- December 11, 2020
- March 1, 2021
- May 14, 2021

ESY Services

- Case carriers will carefully review the IEPs/504s of **every one of their students that received ESY this summer** to ensure that a progress report was completed.
- Families of students who had been scheduled to receive in person ESY services between August and December, 2020 will have an opportunity to either have their student receive the ESY

services virtually during that time period, or work with their student's IEP Team to adjust the dates to later in the school year.

Recovery Services: VDOE has provided Guidance for Schools on Recovery Services:

Step 1:

- After 6-8 weeks of instruction (virtual or in person), IEP Teams should consider individual student data to document recoupment of skills or persisting skill deficits.
- The IEP team should consider the student's progress compared to the progress of all students during the extended school closure. Also remember that skill loss and recovery of skills may vary by grade and subject matter.
- The determination of COVID-19 recovery services is made by the IEP Team **after a careful review of student performance and data including pre-COVID-19 closures, student participation and performance during COVID-19 closures, and performance upon return to school.**
- This means that IEP Teams will need a period of time to gather data on the student's performance and assess their skills in relation to pre-COVID-19 closure and their learning rate compared to peers and with consideration of the educational experiences being offered by the LEA.

LEAs (Schools) are not required to automatically hold IEP meetings for every student with a disability upon return to school.

Step 2:

School members of the IEP Team should consider initiating an IEP Team meeting when either:

- there is a lack of expected progress toward the annual goals and in the general curriculum, if appropriate;
- the results of any reevaluation conducted, information about the child shared by the parent needs to be addressed;
- and/or if the LEA anticipates that the child may need COVID-19 recovery services.

Additionally, the LEA must remember that when a parent requests COVID-19 recovery services, this is a request for an IEP team meeting.

Thus, the parent should receive a response from the LEA within ten business days from the time the request was made.

A Prior Written Notice must be issued if the team declines such a request and could contain additional information justifying the refusal such as, the need for time to assess student progress. If a parent requests a meeting to discuss COVID-19 recovery services, the IEP should communicate clearly the amount and types of data required to address COVID-19 recovery services.

Step 3:

After communicating the data required to make the decision, the IEP Team may either:

- 1) Hold the meeting to hear the parent's request and make a plan for when they will reconvene to discuss the data and make a determination; or

- 2) Seek parental agreement to schedule the meeting for a date in the future when the required data for decision making will be available. If the parent agrees to schedule a meeting in the future when sufficient data is available, this should be clearly documented.

Document all recovery services, to the extent they will be provided, **in the appropriate sections of the Prior Written Notice (PWN).**

Q. What Questions Should the IEP Team Consider?

Each IEP Team should consider if COVID-19 recovery services are appropriate, the amount and type of recovery services required to address individual students' needs including:

- additional services to recoup previously learned skills; and
- new services and supports that were not previously provided to assist with successfully re-entering the school environment (e.g., mental health needs or services related to a student's disability to address significant disengagement resulting from the extended school closure).

Not all students with disabilities will require COVID-19 recovery services. Prior to determining the need for and amount of COVID-19 recovery services, each IEP Team should consider data from a variety of sources. This includes data spanning the continuum of pre-COVID-19 to the return to school with a focus on reducing the impact of the school closure and a return to student progress that is appropriate for the student.

IEP Teams should use individual student progress data and data about LEA offerings during COVID-19 closure and upon return to school when considering services. **The need for COVID-19 recovery services should be based on whether or not the student continued making progress in the general education curriculum, or alternative course of study specified in their IEP, or toward meeting their individualized IEP goals and/or if any significant regression occurred during the period of school closure.**

COVID-19 recovery services should be unique, individualized to the student, and determined by the IEP Team. Educators should carefully document the COVID-19 recovery services provided to students with disabilities and monitor and track individual student progress. **COVID-19 recovery services do not need to be a minute for minute replacement for services that were not provided during the building closures.**

Resources:

Understood.org
Inclusiveschools.org
Virginia Department of Education