



Distance Learning Plan for Students with Disabilities

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ATLANTA
PUBLIC
SCHOOLS



DEPARTMENT OF
SPECIAL EDUCATION

Distance Learning Plan for Students with Disabilities

APS will continue to implement services and make decisions based on the best interests of individual students and their unique needs. We will continue to adhere to principles set forth in the IDEA by meeting the individualized needs of students and providing meaningful participation for parents. The District will implement remote learning for our students with disabilities, just as we would during normal school operations.

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Nothing in these guidelines are intended to replace, supersede, or expand on the requirements contained in federal or state law. Nor should these guidelines be cited as having the force of law. Instead, these guidelines are intended to serve as a practical guide for implementing a remote learning plan in response to the COVID-19 crisis. In light of the fluid and developing nature of this crisis, as well as the ongoing adoption of new laws, regulations, guidance, and waivers at both the federal and state level, the District reserves the right to update, amend, and deviate from these guidelines as appropriate in the future.

INDIVIDUALIZATION, MEANINGFUL PARENT PARTICIPATION, DOCUMENTATION

Individualization

What are we doing to ensure that individual student needs and their IEPs are being considered during this time of remote learning?

Special Education Lead Teachers (SELTs)

- Provide oversight of special education instruction and compliance
- Review each student's Documentation for Provision of Services log weekly and provide feedback and support to case managers as needed
- Provide daily assistance to building level special education staff for provision of services to students
- Serves as a liaison to case managers and building leaders to address individual student needs.

Special Education Case Managers

- Contact students and parents on their caseloads twice weekly to inquire about barriers, academic progress, instructional support needed in specific courses, assistive technology, technology devices, internet access, academics, specials, connections, and/or electives, Direct and Related services (Speech, OT, PT, DHH, VI, OI, etc.), adaptive specials, behavioral supports, etc.
- Facilitate communication between parents and school-based or district office personnel to address needs.
- Contact Speech Language Pathologists, related services providers, and Assistive Technology Specialists to ensure that service is being provided
- Oversee or conduct progress monitoring to ensure that the data is collected and documented
- Email progress reports to parents at designated times.
- Submit behavior support requests on behalf of the parent.
- Schedule time to address specific goals and objectives if the direct instruction is not provided and progress monitored by the content teacher.

Special Education Teachers

- Collaborate and plan with co-teachers and/or content specialists
- Actively participate in the planning and delivery of all virtual/extended learning opportunities
- Implement modifications and accommodations virtually as appropriate.
- Provide direct instruction for IEP goals and objectives, if appropriate.

Paraprofessionals

- Interrelated paraprofessionals check in with their SELT and general education content teachers daily to determine support needed for students.
- Regional paraprofessionals collaborate and plan with the regional classroom teachers to determine support needed for students.
- Interrelated paraprofessionals collaborate and plan with the teachers (special ed. &/or general ed.) daily.
- Assist teachers (special ed. & general ed.) and SELT with projects and instructional supports.

Meaningful Parent Participation

What are we doing to engage, consider, and incorporate parental input and feedback regarding their child's education during this time?

- Case managers contact students and parents on their caseloads twice weekly to inquire about academic progress, instructional support needed in specific courses, provision of related services, assistive technology, technology devices, internet access, etc.
- Parents are invited to engage in virtual meetings with the superintendent where they may ask questions and provide suggestions.
- When parents receive meeting notifications they are invited to list any concerns on the meeting notice.
- Case managers and service providers provide deference to the parent in determining the most appropriate virtual platform for meetings and services. If the preferred option is not available, district personnel provides technical support.
- The District is proceeding with IEP team related meetings (Annual, Manifestation Determination, Initial and Reevaluation) virtually or by telephone. If parents indicate that they would like to postpone the meeting until it can be conducted face-to-face, the IEP team honors and documents the request.

Documentation

How do we ensure that all of our efforts, interactions, and results are documented for future reference?

- Provision of Services Document is completed by all content teachers and case managers when direct communication occurs with individual students and parents. Case managers and DSE content teachers submit the documents to SELTs weekly via an assigned Google Drive.
- Document (time, date, method, & outcome) all efforts to contact parents and students.
- DSE teachers maintain documentation of instructional content as well as the virtual delivery models used to provide instruction.
- Documentation for all IEP related meetings must be in IEPOnline.

THERAPISTS AND ITINERANT PERSONNEL

Expectations

What are the responsibilities of all therapists and itinerant personnel?

Speech-language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists and Physical Therapists)?

- Contact parents weekly for services
- Conduct services via virtual platform, emailed assignments, and phone sessions.
- Provide guidance to parents on assignments and functional activities related to students goals.
- Consult with parents regarding progress of students for assigned tasks and evaluate assignments that are returned.
- Log services and enter any data (anecdotal or quantitative) in TalkTrac.
- Submit logs weekly to google drive
- Email progress reports to case managers and/or to parents at designated times.
- Serve as liaison and communicate any parent concerns or questions to Dr. Chang Robbins (crobins@apsk12.org) for handling if outside area of practice.

Assistive Technology Specialists

- Participate in staff meeting for all special education personnel to provide support
- Contact teachers of students who are assigned AT devices
- Provide support to teachers and students for use of Unique Learning and Teach Town.
- Monitor log-in information for students who are assigned AT solutions
- Contact parents as requested by teachers to provide technology support
- Work on assigned projects-including cost analysis of future software, securing free resources, and inquiries for software requests.

Visually Impaired Teachers, Deaf Hard of Hearing Teacher, Orientation and Mobility Specialists

- Contact students and parents on their caseloads twice weekly to inquire about barriers, academic progress, instructional support needed in specific courses, assistive technology, technology devices, internet access, academics, specials, connections, and/or electives, Direct and Related services (Speech, OT, PT, DHH, VI, OI, etc.), adaptive specials, behavioral supports, etc.
- Provide support to academic assignments
- Provide activities that address Expanded Core Curriculum goals
- Oversee or conduct progress monitoring to ensure that the data is collected and documented
- Email progress reports to parents at designated times.
- Submit behavior support requests on behalf of the parent.

School Psychologists

- Complete and upload the reports for all students evaluated prior to the teleworking period
- Lead parent feedback sessions to review the results of assessments
- Meaningfully participate in: SST meetings (as appropriate), referral meetings, eligibility meetings, reevaluation meetings, staff meetings, and committee meetings
- Obtain and document at least 5 hours of CEUs per week
- Meaningfully participate in school and district crisis response teams
- After obtaining parental consent, provide “Check-Ins” with students
- Provide consultative services to parents and district personnel
- Begin evaluations by obtaining data from school teams in the form of: student, parent, and teacher interviews, rating scales, district forms designed to provide background information regarding a student’s social-emotional and academic skills and abilities
- All other duties assigned by their direct supervisor

Autism Specialists/Board Certified Behavior Analysts

- Complete Functional Behavior Assessments/Behavior Intervention Plans for all students evaluated prior to the teleworking period
- Meaningfully participate in: SST meetings (as appropriate), referral meetings, eligibility meetings, reevaluation meetings, staff meetings, and committee meetings
- Provide consultative services to parents and district personnel
- Support caseloads in which students have documented Behavior Services indicated in their IEP
- Obtain and document at least 2 hours of CEUs per week
- All other duties assigned by their direct supervisor

PROGRESS MONITORING

Procedures

What are the expectations for progress monitoring?

Requirements and Data Collection

- All Special Education Teachers, Special Education Itinerant Teachers, Speech Language Pathologists, and Related Services should continue to collect data weekly for all goals and objectives on a student's IEP.
- When appropriate students can access online probes through websites such as easyCBM, iReady, iXL, MobyMax, and/or AIMSWeb.
- Assignments that correlate to student goals/objectives can be used as data and submitted digitally
- Google Meet/Zoom 1:1 Session to complete progress monitoring probe with student. Parent may need to provide prompt support if available.

Goals to Progress Monitor

- All academic goals/objectives
- Goals that are environmentally based (e.g. Behavior, Executive Functioning, Daily Living Skills, Adaptive PE, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy etc.) will not have quantitative analysis but instead, the case manager should provide information within the Summary of Instructional Performance (see attached) how the goals were addressed in the home setting if at all possible.

Parent Notifications

- Please disseminate the following information every 4.5 weeks as it pertains to progress reports and progress monitoring:
 - IEP Progress Reports generated by IEP Online
 - Summary of Instructional Performance- see attached
 - For each instructional area this document will highlight:
 - How instruction was delivered via distance learning
 - Accommodations/Modifications used in this classroom
 - Student Participation
- Progress Reports can be distributed via email. Please confirm with parents their preferred email address. If a parent is unable to receive progress reports via email, when schools resume normal operation a parent can receive a printed copy at that time.

Summary of Instructional Performance Document

Student Name: [Click or tap here to enter text.](#) **Student ID#:** [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Grade: [Select Grade Level](#) **Case Manager:** [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

Directions:

1. For every instructional area in which the student was scheduled to receive instruction please complete the Summary of Instructional Performance document below. Academic Areas will have IEP Goal Progress and Summary of Instructional Performance
2. For instructional areas that are included in the student's IEP and you provided the parent consultation, please complete those areas as well (e.g. Behavior, Written Expression, Daily Living Skills, Occupational Therapy, Etc.)
3. This will be a final summary report for each instructional area and uploaded into IEP Online for the student's record.
4. Please complete and upload every 4.5 weeks

Instructional Area	Special Education Delivery Model	Teacher(s) and Paraprofessional(s)
How was Instruction delivered?	What accommodations and/or modifications were utilized?	What assignments did the student complete?
Describe the student's level of participation during instruction?	Additional Comments	

EVALUATIONS¹

What timelines apply to “Initial Evaluations” during the COVID-19 school closures?

The State has issued guidance that if students are not physically in school for five or more consecutive days due to the COVID-19 pandemic, those days, including contiguous weekend days, will not be counted toward the 60-calendar day initial evaluation timeline. While there is not a mandated timeline for how quickly the eligibility meeting should be held, the State has indicated that “as a matter of best practice,” it should be held within 10 calendar days of the completion of the evaluation report(s). In addition, the family and the District may mutually agree to extend any of these deadlines.

What timelines apply to “Reevaluations” during the COVID-19 school closures?

The State has not given any specific relief or waiver from the “three-year deadline” to reevaluate students already eligible for special education services. The State has reminded the District of the following principles that apply to re-evaluations and meetings:

- Parents and the District can **mutually agree** to extend the timeline to conduct the reevaluation.
- The parents and District can also **mutually agree** that the reevaluation can be conducted simply by reviewing existing data and determining that additional assessments are not needed.
- If the only “reevaluation” being conducted is a review of existing data, with no new assessments, then a PCE is not required.
- IEP meetings to make these decisions can be held virtually (by telephone or video conference).
- If the parents and District **mutually agree**, then the “review of existing data” can occur outside of an IEP meeting (e.g. by written exchange).
- The family and the District can also **mutually agree** to any documents of existing data, eligibility reports, or other amendments to IEPs outside of an IEP meeting.

APS Operational Requirements for Obtaining “mutual agreement” to proceed outside of the traditional timelines and traditional processes of the IDEA:

- (1) While the case manager may make the initial contact and communications with the family, the SELT is ultimately responsible for vetting and approving the sufficiency of

¹ These guidelines are intended to serve as a practical guide for implementing evaluations during the COVID-19 crisis. In light of the fluid and developing nature of this crisis, as well as the ongoing adoption of new laws, regulations, guidance, and waivers at both the federal and state level, the District reserves the right to update and change these guidelines as appropriate in the future. Additionally, if the needs of a particular student cannot be aligned with the guidance in this document, contact the Special Education Coordinator to address the specific situation. Nothing in these guidelines are intended to replace, supersede, or expand on the requirements contained in federal or state law.

documentation showing that a “mutual agreement” for one of the reasons described above was reached.

- (2) The SELT must also ensure that all documentation showing that a “mutual agreement” was reached is uploaded into IEP online. A specific form is not required, and this can be documented via an email from the parent. However, a “mutual agreement” must be reached in writing, and a verbal confirmation from the parent is not sufficient.
- (3) In overseeing this process, the SELT should ensure that the District—
 - Offers the parent an opportunity for “meaningful parental participation” and explains to the parent that they have a right to have the decisions made via a meeting if they prefer. The District should also send a copy of Parent Rights and Procedural Safeguards.
 - Never amends an IEP, completes a review of existing data report, etc. or otherwise adopts any document that should normally be completed by an IEP team without express written agreement by the parent. The parent must have received a copy of the proposed document and expressly agreed in writing to its adoption. If the parent disagrees with the document in any way, a meeting must be held.
 - Because of concerns regarding “Pre-determination,” the District should proceed with extreme caution in proposing an eligibility redetermination document outside of an IEP meeting, and should only suggest this approach if the District is sure that the family and the District are on the same page and do not expect any changes or conflicts.

Will the DOE allow a waiver of the Evaluation & Re-Evaluation Timelines for districts who, due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, report under 100% compliance?

At this time, we have not received any indication that the State will waive the evaluation and re-evaluation timelines, other than through the strategies and exceptions identified in this guidance document. Thus, the District should proceed in good faith with completing as much of the evaluations as appropriate and as if the timelines are required at this point. While the State has not agreed to waive timelines, the State has indicated that deadlines can be coded as “excused.”

What portions of the evaluations are appropriate to complete during the COVID-19 school closures?

The District should only proceed with completing those portions of the evaluation that are capable of being performed remotely, but not to force the completion of the evaluation or conduct direct 1-1 testing of the students because it could compromise the integrity of the results.

Examples of those items that can be performed remotely include:

- Reviewing student records, including prior evaluations, medical information, and educational records accessible remotely
- Issuing and analyzing rating scales

- Issuing and analyzing parent/teacher/student questionnaires
- Communicating with the parent/teacher/student to receive any other input

The District should not conduct any direct face-to-face testing of a student during the period of closure, nor should the District conduct these 1-1 assessments “virtually” due to concerns with testing integrity and the inability to obtain an accurate measure of the student.

Has there been an established safety protocol to protect students and teachers when testing in confined spaces closer than 6 feet?

In light of the current CDC recommendations, Atlanta Public Schools Special Education personnel should not conduct in-person evaluations while schools are closed for COVID-19.

Should the District request an “extension” to the Initial 60-day evaluation timeline?

As explained above, the 60-day window for initial evaluations does not include the time that the District was closed for 5 consecutive school days or more or the contiguous weekend days.

However, even with this relief, the IEP team may also wish to request that the family agree to waive the 60-day timeline in order to allow it to complete testing after students have had an appropriate “re-acclimation period” to school so that the COVID-19 disruption (and lack of school structure) does not artificially skew or impact testing results.

How should the District respond to parent requests for initial evaluations received while schools are closed for COVID-19?

Do not automatically postpone all referral meetings or tell parents “we are not accepting any new evaluation requests during the period of closure.” The team should proceed, if feasible, with holding a meeting to better understand the scope of the parents’ concerns, make a decision as to whether an evaluation is warranted, and review and adjust interventions and progress monitoring tools.

If the team (including parents) determine that an evaluation is unwarranted, and the parents indicated they are withdrawing their request for an evaluation, document the parents’ and the team’s consensus in the meeting minutes. Provide the parents with a copy of the meeting minutes and a copy of the Parent Rights and Procedural Safeguards.

Teams that agree that an evaluation is warranted should move forward with obtaining a Parental Consent to Evaluate (PCE). A copy of their Parent Rights and Procedural Safeguards must also be provided to parents.

If a referral meeting is held during COVID-19 closures, teams should attempt to obtain the parent’s waiver to the deadlines (see district template).

- SST Specialists must collect each document listed on the Atlanta Public Schools “Initial Referral Checklist”.

- SST Specialists must upload each document individually into IEP Online.
- All available progress monitoring and information regarding interventions must be uploaded into IEP Online at the time of the referral.
- Please see MTSS Guidance regarding intervention implementation during School Closure Document.
- While vision and hearing should have been screened and cleared during the SST process and there may be a screening available to the team that is current at this date, this screening could potentially expire during the testing window. Therefore it is MANDATORY that an ADDITIONAL signed consent for hearing and vision must be included in ALL referrals that are uploaded.

If a referral meeting is not held (*due to parent requesting a face to face meeting*), be sure to keep track of this request and schedule a referral meeting as soon as school resumes to normal operations.

- Please utilize the following link to track these cases-
<https://www.cognitofrms.com/APSDepartmentOfSpecialEducation/InitialReferralRequest>

If the District proposes to complete the evaluation virtually, but the parent does not agree, does that count as revocation of consent? How do we handle this?

A parent’s lack of responsiveness during the COVID-19 closures does not constitute a “revocation of consent” to evaluate.

Again—APS Special Education personnel will not conduct any 1-1 testing occur (either in person or virtually) during the COVID-19 closures. If the District has completed all 1-1 testing (prior to the COVID-19 closures) and is waiting on other information from the family (such as the completion of rating scales, etc.), the District should notate the delay. Once school resumes, the District should resume with completing the evaluation in the traditional format.

How should the District document a parent’s lack of response or willingness to complete information during COVID-19?

District staff should maintain a log of each of the efforts to obtain the parent/student’s participation in the various components of the evaluation as well as the outcome/response from the family. For example, a log could include:

Date	Name/Title of Individual	Action
March 15, 2020	Pete the Psychologist	Emailed Parent at (supermom@gmail.com) XYZ rating scales to Parent at home address
March 17, 2020	Izzy the SELT	Received email from Parent indicating she is not willing for Student to be interviewed on the phone by Pete the Psychologist.

How can an individual cognitive, academic, speech or OT/PT evaluations be conducted virtually and also remain in accordance with testing standardization as per how the assessment manuals indicate?

It is important to follow all testing protocols when administering assessments. The District should not sacrifice the integrity of the evaluation results in an effort to proceed remotely.

What if the parent requests that we conduct the 1-1 testing of the student “virtually” and not postpone that portion of the evaluation?

Teams should use the “COVID-19_Parent Request for Virtual Evaluation” template to respond to the parent’s request.

Should the district proceed with the parts of the evaluation that do not require face to face interaction with the student (questionnaires, rating scales, document review, parent interviews, student interviews)?

Yes. The District should proceed with conducting as much of the evaluation as possible (and appropriate) during the period of school closures so that when schools do return to normal operations, the evaluation can be completed as quickly as possible and not be further delayed.

Is there a certain time after which we should stop sending or accepting rating scales and parent/teacher/interviews due to concerns of skewed results from COVID-19?

In general, it is better to have the student’s current teachers complete rating scales/interviews rather than brand new teachers at the beginning of the year. Additionally, the closer in time that ratings are completed to the traditional environment, the better.

Raters should be advised that their responses should be based on how the student was performing in the traditional environment before schools closed. If raters have a noticeable concern regarding a COVID-19 impact on the student (e.g. they have seen escalated anxiety, behavioral outbursts, etc.), then that should be noted.

If the District believes that too much time has passed from the traditional school environment to obtain an accurate assessment, then (if possible) the District should postpone the rating scales until schools return to normal operations and the student is reacclimated. However, whether this is feasible will depend on the individual situation as well as the timelines involved for the specific student.

What statement needs to go into the evaluation and eligibility reports indicating that the evaluation was conducted during the COVID19 pandemic and the impact that may have had on the evaluation results?

As explained above, Atlanta Public Schools Special Education personnel should not conduct 1-1 testing during COVID-19 closures. If a team believes that other portions of the evaluation (e.g. rating scales/questionnaires/etc.) conducted during COVID-19 closures are skewed, or that

assessments completed immediately upon return to school are skewed, the District should proceed as follows:

1. Attempt to obtain an extension of time from the family to complete the evaluation (see template)
2. Ask the raters to complete updated rating scales to put context to the skewed results.
3. Postpone, if possible, the 1-1 testing of the student until the student is acclimated to a traditional school environment again.
4. Include a notation of concerns and the resulting action taken to attempt to address the concern.

Can we justify denying any IEE request for evaluations conducted if the assessments are conducted in a non-standardized administration?

The District must respond to IEE requests utilizing its normal processes and procedures. There is no “special rule” at this point for IEE requests involving evaluations conducted during COVID-19.

As explained above, the District should ensure that all assessments are conducted in accordance with their applicable testing protocols. Careful documentation by the evaluator regarding the reasoning, timing, format, and validity of the response will be critical in responding to any IEE requests.

SECTION 504

504 Contacts

- Provide oversight of 504 Protections and compliance
- Conduct 504 meetings as long as parents are afforded an opportunity for meaningful participation
- Monitor and review each student's Documentation for Provision of Services log weekly and provide feedback and support to content teachers as needed
- Provide daily assistance to building level staff for provision of services to students
- Serve as a liaison to content teachers and building leaders to address student needs.
- Provide consistent communication with school-based staff & families of students with 504 Plans
- Document communication with students and families in Infinite Campus
- Participate in weekly skype calls
- Monitor timelines
- Complete monthly logs and upload to Drop Box