School Closure Toolkit for Districts: Special Populations

Updated 5/8/20

Summary

School closures and the implementation of educational opportunities due to the COVID-19 pandemic have raised questions regarding the provision of services to special populations. The focus of local education agencies (LEAs) should be on providing instructional continuity for all students while prioritizing their health and well-being. While it will be necessary to consider the need for compensatory education **on an individual basis once school resumes,** LEAs should not opt to close or decline to provide distance instruction, at the expense of students, to address matters pertaining to services for students with disabilities or limited English proficiency.

The United States Department of Education's Supplemental Fact Sheet released on March 21 states:

> **To be clear: ensuring compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act should not prevent any school from offering educational programs through distance instruction.**

For students with individualized education programs (IEPs), LEAs must ensure that students have access to the educational opportunities provided by the LEA. LEAs should provide the special education and related services identified in the IEP, **to the greatest extent possible.** Present exceptional circumstances may affect how special education and related services are provided, and school districts may not be able to provide all services in the same manner that they are typically provided. However, federal disability law allows for flexibility in determining how to meet the individualized needs of students receiving special education services.

This toolkit will focus on implementation strategies for continuing educational opportunities and services in regard to our special populations, including special education. The document includes the following:

- Checklists for supporting special populations of students
- Best practices for supporting students with disabilities or additional service needs
- Guidelines and sample procedures
- Resource list for school and district leaders

For questions related to serving special populations, please contact Theresa.Nicholls@tn.gov.

Table of Contents

Checklists

Below are brief checklists that districts and schools should consider when establishing learning opportunities during periods of closure.

District

☐ Designate a point of contact (POC) at the district level for each population (students with disabilities, English learners, at-risk, highly mobile, etc.) to ensure district policies are created, shared, followed, and documented.

☐ Review guidance provided by the US Department of Education regularly for updates or changes to policy.

☐ Establish the distance learning expectations between general education teachers and teachers of special populations (e.g., EL teachers, special education teachers, etc.) for student lesson support, accommodations, and other needed support for each school.

☐ Establish the method for providing educational opportunities for students (e.g., learning packets, online programs, distance learning lessons, etc.).

☐ Establish a platform or use of technology for students and teachers that is accessible for everyone. Consult your local board attorney to ensure the platform is compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

☐ Ensure district messages are accessible to all parents (i.e., household language, parent literacy skills, etc.).

☐ Compile and disseminate a list of resources that are available in the community to help families with daily living (i.e., meals for students, access to food banks, support for utilities, child care, etc.).

☐ Review emergency rule changes related to graduation credits for seniors, grading for high school courses, and licensure extensions.

School

☐ Designate a POC for each school site who can ensure proper documentation and implementation of various student support plans.

☐ Announce allowable building activity to teachers for the preparation of student work that will be sent home (i.e., device check out, assigning of books, packaging school materials, etc.) Any gatherings within school facilities should comply with applicable social distancing guidance as well as health safety recommendations.

☐ Establish the method for providing educational opportunities for students (e.g., learning packets,

online programs, distance learning lessons, etc.).

☐ Establish a platform or use of technology for students and teachers that is accessible for everyone. Consult your local board attorney to ensure the platform is compliant with HIPAA and FERPA.

☐ Virtually convene general education teachers and teachers of special populations (e.g., EL teachers, special education teachers, related service providers, etc.) for lesson support, accommodations, and other needed support for each school.

☐ Determine student support service plans for each population (see templates provided) including the method of providing services (telehealth, phone calls, virtual conferencing, etc.) as well as coordinating service opportunities with community-based service providers.

☐ Ensure school messages are accessible to all parents (i.e., language of households, parent literacy skills, etc.).

☐ Designate a main hub for parents to get important information related to school updates, but also use local communication such as various radio stations for parent and community outreach.

District Special Education Supervisor

☐ Determine the evaluations, reevaluations, and annual IEP team meetings that are due during the closure. You may want to use reports available in EasyIEP for determining evaluations and meetings needed as well as services indicated on IEPs.

☐ Create a method for tracking timelines, incorporating current extension of deadlines due to the COVID-19 closure.

☐ Decide communication expectations for teachers and parents in regards to IEPs and evaluations. Determine the frequency of contact and how those contacts will be documented.

☐ Assign tasks by case manager (i.e., special education teacher, consulting teacher, specialist, etc.). For example: Provision of learning opportunities, maintenance of contacting students/families, record keeping/documentation etc.

☐ Establish protocol to track tasks completed. Determine recording method (Excel spreadsheet, Google docs, etc.) which includes due dates and dates completed.

☐ Create a feedback loop between general and special education in regards to instruction. Include ESL support for students dually identified. Schedule regular times for collaboration and document occurrence and content.

☐ Develop a process for providing needed resources/materials to students and tracking the return.

Case Manager

☐ Review current IEPs for all students, including timelines and services.

☐ Complete the Student with Disabilities Protocol for School Closure (included in Guidelines and Sample Procedures section) for each student on case load to track evaluations, meetings, and service provision.

☐ Determine how IEP services may be provided within the established method for instructional continuity such as virtually, online, or telephonically.

☐ Determine how IEP meetings can be held in regards to access to technology. Consider parents' access to telephones, video chat, or US mail.

☐ Contact parents to explain the reason that a meeting is required during this time. Discuss the various ways that the meeting can occur in a manner that protects the health and safety of the team members. Explain to parents the guidelines for excusing an IEP team member and/or the ability to make changes to the IEP without convening a meeting.

☐ Schedule and hold the needed IEP meetings, including those needed if services cannot be delivered via the established method. See IEP Checklists for further direction.

☐ Develop a system to track provision of services (see template for tracking service provision in the Guidelines and Sample Procedures section) and reporting of progress to parents.

☐ Communicate progress on tasks with principal and/or supervisor. Prepare documentation on tasks completed and progress on timelines.

Best Practices

The following are some best practices for providing support to parents and students of special populations, no matter which method of instructional continuity is chosen.

General Strategies for Learning Activities and Supports at Home

- **Set Routines:** Encourage parents and/or caregivers to set routines at home to help maintain a mindset of learning. Teachers can help develop example schedules for grade bands and distribute them online, school websites, or places where parents will gather, such as meal support locations. Provide parents with resources to establish routines using visual schedules to reduce anxiety and establish expectations.

- **Create a Positive Behavior Program:** Provide parents with information on setting up a positive behavior program at home using tickets or a similar acknowledgement system like the one used in school. The Tennessee Behavior Supports (TBSP) project has created a family friendly video to explain the process located on YouTube here. Here is an example ticket:

- **Provide Reading Materials:** Provide families with lists of online libraries or audio book sites that parents can easily access at no cost.

- **Foster Communication:** Recommend structured activities that promote communication and interaction but do not require online access, such as games; shared or independent reading; daily living routines, such as cooking, pet care, and other home responsibilities; outside activities to explore nature, etc.

- **Provide Sensory Supports:** Provide resources to support sensory needs of children and how parents can support a child's dysregulation at home during the closure (e.g., sensory activities, calming spaces, visual supports, etc.).

- **Relax, We Don't Want You to Replicate School:** Remind parents that while children are not able to attend school, they are not expected to replace school; reassure parents that any structured learning is beneficial but not to set expectations so high that children and families experience additional undue stress.

- **Provide Easy At-Home Skills Practice:** Provide skills practice ideas that can be embedded within everyday routines; parents may not be trained special education providers, but they can support communication, motor, literacy skills with some encouragement and resources to practice at home.

- **Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Supports:** Prepare families to support communication for children who rely on alternative and augmentative communication (AAC); identify websites or send home picture symbols, Core Vocabulary boards, etc.

Handling Bullying and Discrimination Associated with COVID-19

The Coronavirus is not tied to any race, ethnicity, or nationality. Misinformation about coronavirus can create bias information, develop fear, and create hostility that harms the community and makes it challenging to help in time of necessity as well as keep everyone healthy. If schools are using online student collaboration features or chat options, it may be a good reminder to have a/an educator(s) monitor student activity for online safety. Encourage parents to talk to their students about questions or feelings they may have related to COVID-19.

For more information on helping prevent and addressing potential discrimination associated with COVID-19 please see: Letter to Leaders Preventing and Addressing Potential Discrimination Associated with COVID-19.

For more information on multi-language resources to better inform about COVID-19, please see: A Round-Up of Multilingual Resources on COVID-19.

Distance Learning Model

When choosing to utilize a distance learning model, the LEA will need to ensure access and participation of the students in a manner that is equitable as well as meaningful. While the department recognizes that the richness of direct interaction between the teacher and the students cannot be fully replicated in a virtual space, every effort should be made to ensure the lessons are high quality and provide the students with opportunities for engagement, discovery, learning, and application of skills. Additionally, many students will be home during the day while their parents are working outside the home. They may have siblings at home, but they will also have school requirements. This must be considered in the design and delivery of the instruction. Schools that have one-to-one technology will be assured the student has a working electronic device, however, this alone **does not mean the student has equitable access to the instruction**.

Please review Office of Civil Rights Webinar on Online Education and Website Accessibility.

Distance Learning Instructional Planning

The delivery method and relevance of a service or intervention must be considered for each student based on his/her/their needs. The services may include online, paper-based, or consultative support to families. A separate toolkit will be available to address specific teletherapy services.

The following are some factors to consider when planning distance learning educational experiences and the necessary accommodations:

- The student's physical and sensory characteristics

    - hearing ability

    - visual ability (e.g., ability to see material on a computer monitor)

    - manual dexterity (e.g., ability to operate a keyboard if needed)

    - physical endurance (e.g., sitting tolerance)

- The student's cognitive, behavioral, and/or motivational characteristics

    - level of cognitive functioning

    - ability to maintain attention (e.g., to a video monitor)

- willingness and appropriateness of the student and family/caregiver to receive services via distance learning
- The student's communication characteristics
  - auditory comprehension
  - literacy
  - speech intelligibility
  - cultural/linguistic variables
  - availability of an interpreter
- How will students **access** the online delivery of instruction? See the <u>Accessibility of Instruction</u> section for more information.
- How will students **interact** with the teacher?

  - Can they contact them by phone, chat, or video chat software?
  - How will students with limited communication, or who use an assistive augmentative communication system participate?
- Can a **daily schedule** be created for small groups of students and the teacher to work together online or through a video chat system?
  - Will the special education schedule or ESL schedule be created first and provided to general education teachers to build their schedule around?
  - Are there supports or accommodations currently in the student's ILP, IEP, or 504 plan that will not be deliverable during distance learning? How will this be updated or addressed in the student ILP?
    - Will the special education and/or ESL teacher have the opportunity to preview the online lessons provided by a general education teacher to ensure the students have access, or if needed, to provide students with specific accommodation(s) or modification(s) on the assignment/activity?
- Will the special education teacher have the opportunity to preview the online lessons provided by a general education teacher to ensure the students have **access**, or if needed, to provide students with specific **accommodation(s)** or **modification(s)** on the assignment/activity?
- Are there supports or services currently in the student's IEP that will not be deliverable during distance learning?
- Are there opportunities to engage students in "**life skills**" or "**transition**" goals the student could practice within the home setting (i.e., laundry, cooking, etc.).

- How will students' **non-academic needs** be supported? (i.e., emotional, life skills, transition, prevocational, etc.)

Distance Learning Suggestions and Resources

Instruction that can be provided in an interactive real-time format through free resources be one method for bridging the instruction from the school setting to the new distance learning format. Teachers may want to implement some of the following suggestions to support the students during the transition:

- Set new classroom/group norms including:
    - when to be present online and what "present" means,
    - how to comment or ask questions,
    - how to seek individual teacher help (or special education support) or a private conversation,
    - how to access and turn in work, and
    - deadlines and procedures
- Clearly outline the directions and timeline for all assignments sent electronically. For students who require accommodation(s) and/or modification(s) to complete the assignment, the students should be contacted individually and provided the support, information, or tools that are needed in accordance with their IEP. This should be as confidentially and respectfully addressed as it would be within the typical school day.
- Ensure accessibility of learning when creating lessons including the provision of alternate text for graphics, closed captioning and screen readers. For more information on accessibility and access refer to the National Deaf Center.
- Utilizing electronic features such as screen readers or speech-to-text may need to be specifically taught to students if they have not used these features independently. Consider developing a video tutorial that students can watch while mirroring the video online in real-time. These tutorials should be kept in location easily accessed and located by students.
- Deliver the instruction utilizing engaging graphics, videos, or visuals. Long pages of text can be overwhelming and finding the needed information within a large document can be overly difficult, minimizing access.

Providing predictable structure and consistent schedule supports all students but may be especially beneficial for some students with disabilities for whom this has been a critical strategy within the school setting, including some students with autism, emotional disturbance, or intellectual disabilities. Providing a visual schedule that the student can refer to at home can support the student's engagement with the distance learning. Teachers may want to create a schedule that can be printed out at home or will be delivered to the student's home. Some possible resources include:

- [Do2Learn](#)
- [Earlywood Educational Services](#)
- [Boardmaker](#)

Students with limited communication or who use assistive technology and/or augmentative assistive communication systems will need extra supports provided in order for them to communicate with the teacher. The teacher may need to create communication systems for use at home, or deliver the student's communication system used at school to the student's home for use. Potential resources include:

- [Boardmaker](#)
- [Storm Speech Therapy](#)
- [AAC Language Lab](#)
- [Tobii Dynavox Coronavirus Resources](#)
- [Project Core](#)

Accessibility of Instruction

Educational opportunities can be provided in a variety of ways during the period of school closure, and LEAs should ensure that students in special populations are being supported during this time.
Ensuring accessibility for all students is critical no matter which educational opportunities LEAs choose to provide. Below are some general strategies for ensuring accessibility during distance learning.

Universal Design for Learning

While teachers are planning distance learning, they should be planning to make it accessible to all students, including those with learning disabilities. Proactively considering these strategies for your students is part of a process called universal design for learning (UDL).

High-Tech Accessibility Options

High-Tech Options	Accessibility Considerations	Resources
Operating System	- Color filters - Color contrast - Screen readers - Resize icons, text, mouse and more - Magnify - Voice control - Text-to-speech and speech-to-text	[Chromebook accessibility features](#) [Microsoft accessibility features](#) [Mac accessibility features](#)

Web Browser	• Zoom or magnify • Make text larger or smaller • Text-to-speech • Change font, size, and colors • Caret browsing	• Chrome accessibility features • Internet Explorer accessibility features • Firefox accessibility features
Delivery Platform	• Closed captioning • Automatic transcripts • Screen reader • Text-to-speech and speech-to-text • Braille display	• G-Suite Platform accessibility features • Zoom accessibility features • Skype accessibility features

Accommodations

Accommodations change <u>how</u> the student is taught or expected to learn. They provide necessary access during instruction and assessments and neither change the construct being assessed, nor compromise the integrity or validity of the assessment or content. They are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability. They do not reduce learning expectations, if based on need.

Accommodation	Distance Learning Options
Presentation	
Large print	• Change your computer settings (Settings-->Ease of Access-->Make text bigger)
Text read aloud or on audio tape Provide a designated reader Present instructions orally	• Assign audio books (e.g., Epic!, Storyline Online, Newsela) • Enable your computer/device to read text (e.g., Read Aloud Google Chrome Extension) • Enable your computer/device to scan paper assignments and read aloud (e.g., Reader+, Read Text of Scanned Documents, and KNFB Reader).
Reduce number of items per page	• Preview the assignment. Reduce repetitive questions (e.g., odds, evens, 1-5). This should

	not change the complexity of the task just the number of items completed.
Provide a copy of the notes/outline	• Many video chat platforms allow you to add automatic transcription. • Take a picture of your notes and send it to the student. • Have another student take a picture of their notes and share it. • Share your digital notes.
Get a written list of instructions	• Type up a clear, concise list of step-by-step instructions and share it with the student.
Provide graphs and visual aids such as graphic organizers and webs	• Incorporate visual aids during lessons. • Record yourself creating a graphic organizer or web using whiteboard apps (e.g., ShowMe, Educreations) and share with the student. • Take pictures of visual aids used and send it to the student.
Response	
Allow verbal responses as needed	• Enable 'Voice Recorder' on your computer to allow the student to record their verbal response. The student can send their voice recording to the teacher via Google Classroom, Edmodo, or email.
Answers to be dictated to a scribe	• Enable your computer to perform voice to text (e.g., Voice to Text a Google Chrome Extension).
Permit responses to be given via computer	• For paper and pencil assignments allow the student to complete their response on a computer.
Permit spelling and grammar assistive device for writing assignments	• Enable spell and grammar checker on Microsoft platforms, Google platforms, etc.

Use a calculator or table of "math facts"	• Supply a calculator from the school or teach the student how to use the calculator app on their device.
Timing	
Provide a daily schedule	• Since distance learning allows for more flexibility with time, create a daily schedule with required times for online learning (e.g., video lesson, chat discussion). Reach out to parents and work collaboratively to create a daily schedule that meets the needs of the student.
Allow extra time to respond to questions in class	• Provide think time during distance learning before requiring a response. Have a student type/submit their answer once they have it instead of giving a time restriction for their response.
Allow frequent breaks	• Create a document outlining suggestions for when to take breaks and generate ideas with the student about what they can do during their breaks. Share student breaks document with the parents/care giver. • Utilize first/then statements (e.g., first complete _____, then you may _____).
Extend allotted time for a test Allow additional time to complete an assignment	• Inform the student that they have additional time to complete an assignment/test. • Encourage the student to approximate the amount of time they may need for an assignment/test.
Setting	

Provide preferential seating Provide a space with minimal distractions Provide special lighting or acoustics	• Preferential seating means that a student's seat is placed in a location that is most beneficial for his/her learning. Talk with the student and/or parents about where in their home may be the best place for the student to work.
Administer a test in small group setting	• At home learning is already a small group setting.
Use sensory tools such as an exercise band that can be looped around a chair's legs	• Allow the parents/care giver to pick up sensory tools the student used at school to use at home. • Create a list of sensory tools that are commonly found at home (e.g., sand, beads, Velcro, weighted blanket).
Organization	
Use a timer to complete a task	• Provide options for timers at home (e.g., kitchen timer, phone timer, <u>Visual Countdown Timer</u> app, <u>Visual Timer</u> app).
Mark texts with a highlighter	• Create a task in Microsoft Word or Google Docs and highlight areas to assist with organization (i.e., math key words, reading clue words, the question being asked).
Other	
Provide redirection	• <u>Use precise language to reinforce, remind, and redirect.</u>
Use nonverbal signals to re-engage a student	• You can use eye contact, a facial expression, proximity (move closer), tap on desk, gesture.

Modifications

Accommodations change ***how*** the student is taught or expected to learn, modifications change **what** the student is taught or expected to learn. Modifications change the content of the standard, which will mean identifying standards that are fundamentally related but also developmentally appropriate. Many modifications sound or look similar to an accommodation, therefore it is critical that the teacher(s) ensure the modification implemented changed **what** the student was taught or expected to learn.

For example, providing a scribe during instruction can be either an accommodation or a modification depending on the goal of the lesson. A scribe would be an accommodation if the intent of the writing is to assess the student's understanding of a book or topic. However, it is a modification if the intent of the writing is to measure the student's ability to write the letters, use appropriate punctuation, and correctly format the paragraph or story. The scribe has changed the expectation of the student forming the letters correctly by eliminating this requirement in this activity.

The table below is intended to support implementation of modifications needed as indicated within the student's IEP or ILP. Understanding the difference between modifications and accommodations will help the team determine if the strategy is appropriate.

Modification	Distance Learning Options
REMINDER: modifications change <u>what</u> the student is taught or expected to learn. Depending on the task, the following could be an accommodation rather than a modification.	
Presentation	
Modified content general strategies *Reminder: Modified content is age appropriate and aligned to the student's grade level.*	• Utilize the <u>course requirements for grades 5-12</u>. The course requirements will help you in identifying the essential, core concepts to help guide the modifications. • Leverage high quality instructional materials, if available, that are designed to provide modified instruction aligned to the standards • Provide a similar assignment. For example, in math, students are multiplying polynomials. A modification could be to multiply single-digit numbers. In ELA, students are asked to compare two different novels. A modification could be identifying the story elements from one of the novels including characters, setting, plot, climax/problem, and conclusion. • Provide time with the teacher or paraprofessional to guide the student, provide targeted feedback, and ensure the modifications are

	appropriate.
• Consider providing students the opportunity to opt-out of an assignment, lesson, or learning activity. Many students who need modifications will have deficits in the skills needed to access and participate meaningfully in distance learning (e.g., communication, fine motor skills, self-advocacy, sensory needs, pragmatic language, organization and planning, writing/typing). The online learning will therefore require the students to work on both content and non-content skills at the same time. This can cause escalated levels of stress and frustration.
Modified content: ELA
*Reminder: Modified content is age appropriate and aligned to the student's grade leve*l. | Reading suggestions:
• Modify the reading material complexity, length, and/or vocabulary. (e.g., reduce the vocabulary, minimize sentence length, reduce sentence complexity, shorten the passage, reduce the number of pronouns/characters, reduce the dialogue, add visual cues, etc.)
• Provide the text in a different format, (e.g., comic strip, summary, with picture cues, auditory and visuals). Utilize videos or movies that add context and visuals to the text.
• Modify the vocabulary or simplify language by reducing pronouns.
• Modify the comprehension expectations focusing on explicit questions, reflections, connections to self or within text, big ideas, and/or main characters.

Writing suggestions:
• Create a sentence or partial sentence for students to complete or extend.
• Provide an outline, web, or graphic organizer for the student.
• Focus on developing ideas verbally and allow a scribe to write or type.
• Empower students to "write" a story they read to you on a video or call to develop sequencing, language, variety of sentence structures, character development, etc.

Language suggestions:
• Focus on a part of speech (ex: adjectives) within simple sentences.
• Focus on a syntactic category or language pattern (e.g., asking a question, making requests, answering requests, idioms). |
| Modified content: math | • Use real numbers, whole numbers, or reduce the number complexity |

Reminder: Modified content is age appropriate and aligned to the student's grade level.	(e.g., 2-digit numbers instead of multi-digit, whole numbers instead of decimals). • Reduce the steps in solving the math problem (e.g., single operations rather than 3, 1 variable instead of 2). • Reduce large measurements to ones that the student can physically manipulate (e.g., change meters to centimeters to build models of the problem to aid in solving). • Provide formulas and calculators or online formula calculators.
Provide alternate aligned materials	• Select a novel of the same theme written in a way that provides the needed modifications to vocabulary, text complexity, text length, etc. but is also age/grade appropriate. • Use model(s) to demonstrate a concept rather that write about it or a complete traditional assessment. • Provide the data in a simple chart or graph. • Provide 2-4 answer choices when asking a question.

Give directions in alternative format	• Provide directions in different/multiple formats:
	   o Visual step-by-step
	   o Video directions
	   o Single step at a time
	   o Prompt (verbal or visual).

Communication	• Utilize online images or resources for communication symbols, core communication boards, or communication apps (fees may be charged).
	   o Boardmaker
	   o Tap-to-Talk
	   o LAMP Words for Life
	   o Proloquo2Go
	   o Snap Core First

Response	
Modified product	• Focus on one element of a larger product. • Change the product expected to align to the course requirement or lesson expectation(s). • Provide the pieces for a project for the student to compose (e.g., quotes or types facts they choose from to create a presentation

	board, models of the human body the student explains or puts in order).
Timing	
Modified Timing	• Break the project into single steps to complete. • Provide the project directions at the start of the unit to provide the student more time to divide up the work. • Provide extra think time. Use a timer, a minute of thinking is a lot more of a pause than we traditionally provide in school. • Provide fewer units of study, projects, books, writing assignments, etc. to provide additional time for processing and learning.
Setting	
Modified Setting	• Reduce expectations for online engagement. • Allow for alternate time of day and student choice of work order. • Schedule private work session time with the general education teacher, special education teacher, paraprofessional, etc. • Encourage a flexible environment (e.g., sitting, lying down, standing, or other sensory strategy) to maintain engagement.
Organization	
Modified organization	• Provide the daily work expectations in a checklist or task chart. • Provide the notes or outline for the student. • Utilize graphic organizers. • Collaborate with the parent to ensure the student has the materials needed for each lesson prior to the lesson start.
Other	
Modified rubric/scoring/grading	• Modify the assessment scale to ensure the grade aligns to the expectations communicated to the student. • Modify the rubric to focus on one or two areas. • Modify the rubric expectations within each area. • Modify grading to pass/fail or participated/did not participate.

Communication

Communication, the foundation for all learning, is delivered and received in multiple ways and often simultaneously. For individuals *without* communication challenges, the act of exchanging ideas, information, or feelings with another person can appear effortless; however, for some students, this essential skill requires significant support. Communication is dependent upon a person's (1) access to the message (hearing, reading, watching, touching); (2) their ability to understand the structure and meaning of the shared language, whether it be spoken or written words, sign language, or other symbolic representations; and finally, (3) the ability to generate some type of response to the message that will be understood by another person. For students with complex needs, their mode(s) of communication and access to necessary communicative supports must be considered in the lesson design, delivery, and assessment of student understanding. Additionally, lessons should always focus on improving the student's acquisition and development of language with a shared goal toward communicative independence across settings and partners.

Accessible Technology

When employing e-Learning or Distance Learning, access to the chosen platform is necessary. Not all students may have access to the internet, phone lines, television or radio during an extended school closure. In these cases, the district will need to ensure access. Many internet providers are offering free connection and service during this national emergency. Schools can support by ensuring families have access to tablets or other forms of digital literacy for student learning.

Main Internet Providers in Tennessee (most have accessibility to various spoken languages)
- Spectrum 1-833-780-1880
- Comcast 1-800-934-6489
- AT&T 1-800-331-0500
- Google Fiber 1-866-777-7550
- Sprint 1-889-211-4727

Software and hardware also offer online accessibility features.

- [Microsoft Suite Products](#) accessibility features
- [Apple Products](#) accessibility features
- [iPad](#) accessibility features
- [GSuite](#) accessibility features

Practices and Strategies for Disability Types

When setting up educational opportunities for students with disabilities, the following are some practices and strategies that may be helpful for specific disabilities.

Disability	Practices and Strategies
Autism	• Set up a daily schedule—visual schedules that are interactives indicating what is next, and what is complete are a strong strategy. • Include sensory input and sensory removal breaks. • Vary the location of the instruction and the student's positioning (in a chair with a hard back, sitting on the floor, on their belly, in a soft chair, in a brightly lit room, in a dimly lit room, etc. • Set-up multiple work bins, boxes, or choices for the student to have choice in the day. • For longer assignments or independent work assigned by the teacher, create a task-by-task to do list with clear deadlines or time frames. • Reading materials offered in both print, audio, and when possible visual to offer comprehension support. • Check in often on reading or writing tasks, even if through a text or chat, to maintain focus and ensure understanding. Example questions: What did you just read in the story? What do you think is next? What is your topic sentence? • Provide additional time for work completion with clear guidelines as to what the extended time is and what that looks like on the student's calendar. • Provide a daily/weekly calendar for the student of tasks. • Develop a positive behavior/work incentive program. Perhaps providing access to the teacher, or another reinforcer as approved by the teacher and the family. The TBSPs created a YouTube video about this. • Pragmatic language opportunities are key. Set up virtual calls or phone calls if needed to practice conversational and social language skills. • Play a game together. If the student needs to learn to stay on task, then pick a longer game to work on stamina, if the student needs to learn to negotiate when things are not as they choose, play a game that will create opportunities (e.g., Sorry, Uno, etc.).
Deaf-Blindness	• Create a small setting as the "classroom" or "little room" to help the student establish proprioceptive input. • Deliver the instruction in the student's preferred language. • Reading should be provided in the student's preferred format (i.e., braille, large print, audio). Coordinate materials with the TN Library for Accessible Materials and the American Printing house for the Blind. These are free

	resources and the student should already be registered, but if not, it should be a quick process. • Provide guidance on the use of manipulatives for math activities. Example: Does the student need all items the same (counting, simple calculations) or do they need items that are proportionally different (place value, decimals, fractions)? • Develop a hands-on, kinesthetic learning experience for the content if it is not already a part of the lesson. Example: the life cycle of a plant using a popcorn kernel, other seed in the house, bean sprout or other small sprout, plant, fruit or flower. • Provide manipulatives to signify key characters, historical figures or events, or other key content to enable the student to have a point of reference in the discussions. • Guide parents in the use of hand-under-hand strategies. Access the regional center for the deaf or the Tennessee Deaf Blind Project for supports.
Emotional Disturbance	• Set up a daily schedule. Visual schedules that are interactives indicating what is next, and what is complete are a strong strategy. • Develop a positive behavior/work incentive program. Perhaps providing access to the teacher, or another reinforcer as approved by the teacher and the family. The TBSPs created a YouTube video about this. • Include sensory input and sensory removal breaks. • Provide the student with a space that is for focused work and a place for emotional regulation (these need to be two separate spaces). • Provide the student a list of the work expectations for the day/week and the student chooses how and when to complete them. A strong incentive for finishing on time will support the student's engagement even through tough tasks. • Set up a "thermometer" or other visual indicator for the student to wordlessly indicate their current emotional state (red=highly anxious/can't engage safely; blue=feeling safe and in control; etc.). • For longer assignments or independent work assigned by the teacher, create a task-by-task to do list with clear deadlines or time frames. • Provide choice within the assignment completion. Examples: read text or listen to an audio story; write or dictate using speech-to-text software; read the first page and the teacher/parent reads the next and so on. • Reduce assignment length or repetition. • Provide a daily/bi-weekly check-in with a counselor, teacher, or other school

	staff member that the student has strong rapport • Allow the student to log-off or take a break during teacher-led distance instruction. • Create a daily check-in/check-out chart.
Intellectual Disability	• Set up a daily schedule. Visual schedules that are interactives indicating what is next, and what is complete are a strong strategy. • Include sensory input and sensory removal breaks. • Vary the location of the instruction and the student's positioning (e.g., in a chair with a hard back, on the floor, on their belly, in a soft chair, in a brightly lit room, in a dimly lit room, etc.). • Set-up multiple work bins, boxes, or choices for the student to have choice in the day. • For longer assignments or independent work assigned by the teacher, create a task-by-task to do list with clear deadlines or time frames. • Offer reading materials in both print and audio, and when possible, visual to offer comprehension support. Check in often on reading or writing tasks, even if through text or chat, to maintain focus and ensure understanding. Example questions: What did you just read in the story? What do you think is next? What is your topic sentence? • Provide additional time for work completion with clear guidelines as to what the extended time is and what that looks like on the student's calendar. • Provide a daily/weekly calendar for the student of tasks. • Develop a positive behavior/work incentive program. Perhaps providing access to the teacher, or another reinforcer as approved by the teacher and the family. The TBSPs created a [YouTube video](#) about this. • Pragmatic language opportunities are key. Set up virtual calls or phone calls if needed to practice conversational and social language skills. • Play a game together. If the student needs to learn to stay on task, then pick a longer game to work on stamina, if the student needs to learn to negotiate when things are not as they choose, play a game that will create opportunities (e.g., Sorry, Uno, etc.).

Multiple Disabilities	- Set up a daily schedule. Visual schedules that are interactives indicating what is next, and what is complete are a strong strategy. - Include sensory input and sensory removal breaks. - Vary the location of the instruction and the student's positioning (e.g., in a chair with a hard back, on the floor, on their belly, in a soft chair, in a brightly lit room, in a dimly lit room, etc.). - Set-up multiple work bins, boxes, or choices for the student to have choice in the day. - For longer assignments or independent work assigned by the teacher, create a task-by-task to do list with clear deadlines or time frames. - Offer reading materials in both print and audio, and when possible, visual to offer comprehension support. - Check in often on reading or writing tasks, even if through a text or chat, to maintain focus and ensure understanding. Example questions: What did you just read in the story? What do you think is next? What is your topic sentence? - Provide additional time for work completion with clear guidelines as to what the extended time is and what that looks like on the student's calendar. - Provide a daily/weekly calendar for the student of tasks. - Develop a positive behavior/work incentive program. Perhaps providing access to the teacher, or another reinforcer as approved by the teacher and the family. The TBSPs created a YouTube video about this. - Pragmatic language opportunities are key. Set up virtual calls or phone calls if needed to practice conversational and social language skills. - Play a game together. If the student needs to learn to stay on task, then pick a longer game to work on stamina, if the student needs to learn to negotiate when things are not as they choose, play a game that will create opportunities (e.g., Sorry, Uno, etc.). - Provide reading in an accessible form, with lower Lexile (NewsELA). Register the student with the TN Library for Accessible Materials or BookShare. - Provide guidance on the use of manipulatives for math activities. Example: Does the student need all items the same (counting, simple calculations) or do they need items that are proportionally different (place value, decimals, fractions)? - Develop a hands-on, kinesthetic learning experience for the content if it is not already a part of the lesson. Example: the life cycle of a plant using a popcorn kernel, other seed in the house, bean sprout or other small sprout, plant, fruit or flower.

	• Provide manipulatives or visual symbols to signify key characters, historical figures or events, or other key content to enable the student to have a point of reference in the discussions. • Guide parents in the use of hand-under-hand strategies. • Provide opportunities to access and utilize the student's communication system, new vocabulary, and meaningful conversations. • Pre-teach content and conversation vocabulary. For student using an AAC, symbols for new vocabulary will taught prior to expecting the student to use the word in a meaningful way.
Orthopedic Impairment	• Schedule daily opportunities to practice skills identified within the student's goals. • Teach the student the use of speech-to-text software. • Identify what activities the student will complete with the use of accessibility technology or software and what activities the student will complete in the same manner as their peers. • Ask the student to write (pen and paper writing) while laying on their belly to isolate the smaller muscles.
Traumatic Brain Injury	• Minimize computer/screen time and engagement to only necessary and minimal interactions. • Provide a meaningful goal/skill the student will work towards. • Provide a daily/weekly calendar for the student of tasks. • Clearly communicate task directions with limited number of steps. • Break tasks into small steps and demonstrate each step. • Provide necessary assistive technology on their home device (large text, speech to text, spelling and grammar checker, calculator, blue light filter, read text, etc.). • Focus on a multisensory approach to instruction by focusing instructional materials in the student's least affected modality, while still providing instruction in the modalities affected by the injury. • Provide opportunities for the student to restate back to you what is covered in class and the steps of activities. • Offer 1:1 "office hours" or tutorials.
Vision Impairment	• Guide parents in the use of hand-under-hand strategies.

	• Provide the materials in the student's preferred mode (i.e., braille, large print, audio). Coordinate materials with the TN Library for Accessible Materials and the American Printing house for the Blind. These are free resources and the student should already be registered, but if not, it should be a quick process.
Functional Delay	• Set-up multiple work bins, boxes, or choices for the student to have choice in the day. • For longer assignments or independent work assigned by the teacher, create a task-by-task to do list with clear deadlines or time frames. • Offer reading materials in both print and audio, and when possible, visual to offer comprehension support. • Check in often on reading or writing tasks, even if through text or chat, to maintain focus and ensure understanding. Example questions: What did you just read in the story? What do you think is next? What is your topic sentence? • Provide additional time for work completion with clear guidelines as to what the extended time is and what that looks like on the student's calendar. • Provide a daily/weekly calendar for the student of tasks. • Develop a positive behavior/work incentive program. Perhaps providing access to the teacher or another reinforcer as approved by the teacher and the family. The TBSPs created a [YouTube video](#) about this. • Play a game together. If the student needs to learn to stay on task, then pick a longer game to work on stamina, if the student needs to learn to negotiate when things are not as they choose, play a game that will create opportunities (e.g., Sorry, Uno, etc.).
Developmental Delay	• Read books and talk about the stories and pictures. • Provide parents with suggestions for targeting concepts and basic skills (e.g., sorting objects, categorizing, scavenger hunt for objects by colors, etc.). • Share a screen on videoconferencing and have the child identify letters, rhyming pairs, pictures, etc., that are displayed. • Display on screen or send visual supports to the families to support communication, behavior, schedules, etc. • Have child share a favorite toy, game, etc., and use language to describe it.
Speech/Language	• Engage in live conferencing to practice speech sounds providing immediate

Impairment	feedback. • Read social stories online. • Use the whiteboard feature to create a KWL (What I Know, Want to Know, Learned) chart together paired with a reading a passage. • Use clapping or ask the student to tap blocks/Legos to represent the number of syllables in a word for phonological awareness skills. • Practice vocabulary using concepts maps, Venn diagrams, etc. • Role play conversations for social skill practice. • Read a book aloud and ask comprehension questions. • Use screen casting from a tablet to share learning videos. • Ask the child to verbally explain how to play a common game or complete a task targeting sequencing and language. • Ask the child to hide an object, use language to describe it and see if others can guess it, the child can then reveal object on video
Deafness	• Utilize ASL Learning videos on YouTube. • Use math tutorials in ASL. • Access the regional center for the deaf. • Engage families in videoconferencing to offer support for the child's needs at home.
Hearing impairment	• Access the regional center for the deaf. • Use text chat features during a lesson. • Use screen casting with a student or share with parents a list of virtual museums, field trips, etc. to share virtual experiences.
Intellectually Gifted	• Design lessons with higher order thinking in mind (evaluating, creating, designing, experimenting, and composing). • Ask open-ended questions that allow for flexibility in thinking and more thoughtful responses. • Assign an independent/collaborative project around the student's special interest. • Find a mentor to help student explore a subject of interest more deeply. • Organize a check-in with the gifted cluster to discuss long-term projects and for relationship builders while away from school. • Provide enrichment options. • Have students set individual goals while learning from home. • Provide opportunities for students to identify how they are feeling and discuss strategies for dealing with stress, anxiety, worry, fear, etc.

Other Health Impairment	• Teach student to use necessary assistive technology on their home device (speech to text, spelling and grammar checker, calculator, blue light filter, read text, etc.) • Check knowledge through verbal responses as needed. • Provide additional time for work completion with clear guidelines as to what the extended time is and what that looks like on the student's calendar. • Provide a daily/weekly calendar for the student of tasks. • Modify assignments only as needed. • Look at alternatives for excessive writing. • Break tasks into small parts. • Reduce homework amount, taking into consideration students' physical ability to complete it in a timely fashion. • Maintain a communication link with all individuals involved with the student (e.g., parent(s), doctors, instructional assistant, therapists, special and general education teachers) to assure appropriate and coordinated instruction. • Make appropriate arrangements to accommodate the student's schedule with regards to personal needs (e.g., catheterization, availability of instructional assistant or nurse, toileting, etc.). • Talk with the student and/or parents about where in their home may be the best place for the student to work at home. • Create a document outlining suggestions for when to take breaks and generate ideas with the student about what they can do during their breaks. Be sure to share this document with the parents/caregiver. • Create a list of sensory tools that are commonly found at home (e.g., sand, beads, Velcro, weighted blanket). • Develop a positive behavior/work incentive program. Perhaps providing access to the teacher or another reinforcer as approved by the teacher and the family. The TBSPs created a YouTube video about this. • Provide opportunities for students to identify how they are feeling and discuss strategies for dealing with stress, anxiety, worry, fear, etc.
Specific Learning Disability	• Schedule small group or 1:1 instruction around individual needs. • Teach how to use necessary assistive technology on their home device (e.g., speech to text, spelling and grammar checker, calculator, blue light filter, read text, etc.). • Provide additional time for work completion with clear guidelines as to what the extended time is and what that looks like on the student's

	calendar.
	• Since distance learning allows for more flexibility with time, create a daily schedule with required times for online learning (e.g., video lesson, chat discussion) or a schedule of required tasks.
	• Type up a clear, concise list of step-by-step instructions and share it with the student.
	• Incorporate visual aids during lessons (e.g., webs, graphic organizers, flow charts).
	• Create a document outlining suggestions for when to take breaks and generate ideas with the student about what they can do during their breaks. Be sure to share this document with the parents/care giver.
	• Talk with the student and/or parents about where in their home may be the best place for the student to work at home.
	• Create a list of sensory tools that are commonly found at home (e.g., sand, beads, Velcro, weighted blanket).
	• Develop a positive behavior/work incentive program. Perhaps providing access to the teacher or another reinforcer as approved by the teacher and the family. The TBSPs created a [YouTube video](#) about this.
	• Provide opportunities for students to identify how they are feeling and discuss strategies for dealing with stress, anxiety, worry, fear, etc.

Service Delivery

No matter how the LEA chooses to provide educational opportunities, every effort should be made to provide the services on the student's IEP, ILP, or 504 plan to the greatest extent possible in light of the current circumstances. If the type or amount of services listed in the IEP, ILP, or 504 plan can only be provided face-to-face and not virtually, the LEA may convene a meeting to discuss what is appropriate in light of the current circumstances. IEP goals and services do not need to be adjusted to reflect the current state of school closures. The following outlines how LEAs can provide the indicated services during periods of distance learning and/or school closure.

Tier 1—Content Instruction Aligned to Standards

Standards-aligned learning opportunities, activities, or instruction is the core foundation of Tier I instruction. Utilizing universal designs for learning when developing lessons and learning activities will lead to lessons that are accessible for the majority of students. There are additional considerations to ensure access and meaningful participation for students with disabilities, including English learners with disabilities. This is true for students who traditionally attended instruction within the general education setting, with or without support(s), and for students who require a highly modified instruction. The following is intended to help

guide planning for students whose IEP services were provided during Tier I instruction.

Inclusive General Education

As teachers strive to meet the needs of all students, the most successful models of instruction will be those promoting a responsive environment that is sensitive to the learner. Since there is no one single process for teaching and learning, having access to the opportunity to collaborate with various school educators will be key in striving to build an inclusive learning culture as educators provide distance instruction.

Please refer to *Accessibility of Instruction* and *Practices and Strategies for Disability Types* within this document for additional Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies to meet the needs of all learners.

Modified General Education

Modified instruction should still be aligned to grade-level state standards, regardless of the "classroom" or teacher providing this instruction. Course requirements have been developed for grades 5-12 in English language arts, math, science, and social studies to support the teachers in developing accessible, meaningful, and engaging lesson plans.

Transitioning to distance learning is not a question of geography, but the transition to a variety of communications, technology, and self-advocacy skills. Students with complex needs that require modifications may have needs in deficit areas that will impact in many of the skills needed to access and participate online. Care must be given to ensuring students have access, not simply a computer, but the skills necessary to navigate, participate, and problem solve within the virtual setting.

General Education Teacher Providing Modified Instruction

Some students who require modified content instruction were receiving that instruction within the general education setting prior to the transition to distance learning. The planning and delivery of instruction should be delivered in a similar manner virtually to the greatest extent possible. The teacher will need to plan for the modifications to the lesson and communicate them to the student. The following are some example strategies for providing the modifications virtually.

- Provide the student with a checklist of their educational goals prior to the lesson. Email, text, or call a parent ahead of the lesson to communicate this to the student. Or, have the student attend a "pre-class" meeting virtually for the two of you to talk about what you will be teaching and what you want the student to learn.

- Communicate in advance to the parents a list of helpful resources, manipulatives, or materials for the lesson. For example, if doing a math lesson on measurement, area, and volume, tools such as measuring cups, a ruler, and blocks can help the student to work through some of the modified

work.

- Collaborate with the SLP or special education teacher to pre-teach vocabulary, key concepts, or to provide the student with modified materials like an outline, graphics, communication symbols, or modified activity.

- Utilize the course requirements to help define the student's goals for the lesson.

- Provide the student additional breaks or permission to opt out. A student with complex needs being asked to complete multiple difficult or challenging skills simultaneously within the virtual setting and may become overly stressed or fatigued.

- Provide an online or video tutorial for the student to watch and mirror as they practice.

Many students had previously been supported through an added adult in the classroom, either a special education teacher or a paraprofessional to ensure access and engagement. When possible, continue to work as a team to support the student. Perhaps the paraprofessional is guiding the student through the modified work, providing extra incentives or positive encouragement, and taking some data regarding the student's response. The special education teacher can collaborate and plan with the general education teacher.

Special Education Teacher Providing Modified Instruction

A few students who require modified content instruction also required a smaller, specially designed classroom such as a comprehensive development program. The special education teacher who led this classroom will want to set up a distance learning classroom setting with the same care and considerations for access.

Setting Expectations and Distance Learning Norms

- Reach out to each parent by email or phone to begin a partnership but also to remind the parent that you do not expect them to replicate school but want to provide resources for them to support their student's learning while at home.

Sample Letter to Parent(s):

Dear (Parent),

As we transition to distance learning, I want to thank you in advance for your partnership. As we work together to support your student in meeting their goals, I will try to send you resources, videos and tools, particularly for the skills that require hands-on support, such as your child's toileting, fine motor, self-help, and PT goals. Today I have included a video, data collection sheet, daily schedule, and a reinforcement chart for (skill or goal) and I will continue to develop resources and tools for each goal as quickly as I can.

I recognize that you have many responsibilities to your employer and family. If at any time this becomes overwhelming or you need to change the plan, please feel free to reach out to me. I do not want you to feel that I expect you to be a full-time teacher while also being a parent.

Also, we are working hard to ensure that all students have access through technology to the instruction and teachers. If your student needs help with anything in order to participate, please let us know immediately so we can help problem-solve.

I am so grateful to you and would love to check in with you by phone on (date and time). In the meantime, I am available by email and phone from 8:00-3:30 CST Monday through Friday.

Thank you for your patience, understanding, and support as we all work to provide distance learning and protect our community from COVID-19.

Sincerely,

(Name)

- Connecting with students through technology can help maintain rapport. Students with complex needs are probably not going to engage independently for extended periods of time. The daily schedule should consider if the visual contact will be a short time daily, a few times a day, or a few times a week. Perhaps the expectations will be different for various students based on the student and the family needs. Whenever possible, creating a predictable schedule will help the teacher, student, and parent establish a routine.

- Create a visual schedule, checklist, or tool for each student. This may need to be a schedule that is deliver to the home by mail or other delivery option, or it may be a schedule the parents can print at home. The daily schedule may include time for standards-aligned instruction as well as time for specific intervention, related services, or other supports.

- Include time for planning, collaboration with general education teachers, and parent calls and emails.

- Create short tutorial videos such as the ones below to help the student and/or parent access the instruction and resources.
  - Connecting AT-AAC devices to the computer or workspace
  - Trouble-shooting AT-AAC
  - Using software selected for use in the instruction
  - Prompting and errorless teaching
  - Using hand-under-hand supports
  - Specific behavior intervention strategy guidance
  - Providing positive reinforcement and encouragement
  - Completing a progress monitoring chart

- Set-up your own daily schedule. Be mindful to set time for planning, collaboration, and unexpected occurrences. The daily schedule will also help to create boundaries as you try to support students and their families virtually.

Considerations for Delivering Instruction and Intervention

- Plan ELA, math, science, and social studies lessons and activities for each day. The lessons may be much shorter than they would be face-to-face in order to honor the attention and time-on-task skills of the student.
  - Consider integrating the subjects for a week or multi-week unit of study. For instance, ELA lessons using books and reading materials on ecosystems. For science, create experiments, simulations, models, of on ecosystem. For writing create a travel brochure to a country or area of the globe that has the studies ecosystem including historical facts, information about the government and economy of the locations, etc.
  - Integrate the student's non-academic goals and short-term objectives whenever possible

into the instruction. For example, consider a student who has a goal on making a choice from a field of four. When presenting a topic on lesson, consider providing choices for students to select through eye gaze or pointing to the screen. For a student who has a goal of time-on-task, consider timing your instruction in segments aligned to the goal. For a student who has a goal on letter identification, use the content to help reinforce the letter. In the example above, you could have the student identify the letters in the words "ecosystem," "desert," "ocean," etc., as you introduce the different ecosystems.

- Think creatively on utilizing common household items or routines as a learning experience.

  - Utilize toys, crayons, small rocks, snacks, etc. as math manipulatives.

  - Ask students to describe or write the directions to completing a household task.

  - Play a board game adding a twist or challenge (e.g., play Yahtzee but students add their scores using a calculator or scratch paper or play Clue practicing asking questions or using an AAC device).

- Plan for the student's attention span. It will be hard to redirect a student, so shorter engaging activities may be more successful. As students become familiar with the distance learning or online platform, their attention span may increase, providing an opportunity for richer lessons.

- Decide how to reinforce the student regularly.

  - Play a fun sound or music after three answers.

  - Find a video the student enjoys watching when the work is completed.

  - Provide videos to encourage or teach skills.

  - Record skills to mimic or mirror (e.g., fine motor skills like snaps, buttons, or tying shoes).

  - Talk a student through the steps of a process (e.g., how to write their name or the steps to brush their teeth).

  - Create a video of encouragement (e.g., a pep talk for a student working on toileting skills, emotional regulation, or transitions between activities).

- Encourage communication and student participation.

  - Utilize online polling like PollEverywhere to provide communication choices and interactions for students.

  - Create communication templates for students to participate in learning, interact socially, or reflect on a lesson.

Story Elements Template

One main character is _____.

The setting is _____.

The most important event is _____.

The problem was solved when _____.

Math Template

The first step is _____.

I need to _____ the numbers.

_____ is larger than _____.

_____ is smaller than _____.

The answer is _____.

I estimate _____.

Discussion Template

I am wondering about _____.

I need more help with _____.

I think that is a _____ idea.

I don't understand _____.

I have a question about _____.

Please tell me more about _____.

- Provide opportunities to practice. Students will continue to need the modeling and practice that is provided when attending school. Plan ample time for students to practice skills, particularly new or novel applications of a previously learned skill.

- Plan transition skills instruction for students of appropriate age (prior to the 9th grade or age 14 or younger, if determined appropriate by the IEP team).

   - Utilize online resources such as Deafverse (free) and WORK (small fee).

- Create a back-up plan

   - Send parents a few ideas to do if the internet is not working or the student needs a break.

   - Utilize the online free learning experiences available online (e.g., free dance classes, art lessons, or celebrities reading stories).

Special Education Intervention Services

Interventions are provided as a direct service to address students' deficits as decided by the IEP team through the student's PLEPs and MAGs. As IEP teams meet to construct their plans for intervention services to meet the IEP goals of students learning from home, programs previously used for intervention may not be an option virtually or may need to be tweaked for an online/paper platform. Educators will need to be creative and be willing to consider new strategies as they brainstorm ways to meet the IEP goals of individual students. Below are a few ideas to assist educators as they brainstorm intervention options.

- Schedule and provide 1:1 or small group distance learning.

- Provide online practice opportunities. If possible, assign the practice on websites where you can view the student's results.

- Create schedules for students using a blended learning approach (i.e., time for distance learning and time for online assignments).

- Use the structure of your program but supplement online accessible texts/problems for the student to use at home.

- Scan, copy, or take a picture of resources from a program for students to use at home.

- See if there is an online component to the program that may be of use in this new setting.

- Create short tutorial videos for the student to watch and participate with at their own leisure.

- Assign a small task to be completed so that you can ensure attendance.

- Frequently provide opportunities to assess where the student is at in relation to their goal. Keeping a record of where students are at can be done through observations during distance learning, an assigned online/paper task, and over the phone.

- Create a daily/weekly checklist with tasks of learning activities for students and parents.

Supporting Students Working Towards the Occupational Diploma

When planning distance learning instruction, include lessons and activities that align to the Skills, Knowledge, and Experience Mastery Assessment (SKEMA), including the two years of work experience.

Required Skills
- Attendance and punctuality can be evaluated based on evidence of the skill. Some example sources of data include the student:

  - logging onto a classroom virtual platform on time,

  - returning or submitting work to the teacher,

  - completing a daily schedule on time as reported by the parent or adult in the home; or

- participating in a virtual check-in through chat, phone calls, or video phone

- Compliance with basic safety procedure includes the student's prior success during fire, tornado, or other school safety drill practiced regularly. Distance instruction could also include opportunities to discuss safety with home appliances, stranger danger, or work safety simulation instruction. Be mindful of the impact that the tornados and/or COVID-19 have had on the family while planning this instruction.

  - Visit the Occupational Safety and Health Administration for more information on basic workplace safety.

  - Industry safe provides state specific information on workplace safety.

Critical Skills

- Routines, following schedules, or new procedures, following multi-step directions and similar skills can be taught and assessed as you teach the students the software, hardware, or procedures needed for distance learning. Many of the tools used during distance learning are the same tools and technology used within professional settings on a regular basis.

- Communication skills including verbal (AAC, sign language, verbal speech) and written skills are naturally measured within all courses and learning. The communication does need to be vocation specific to meet the requirements of the SKEMA.

- Problem solving and self-advocacy skills will be necessary as schools transition to a distance learning experience. The teacher is no longer present to anticipate or directly witness the student's difficulty and therefore structures and supports need to be in place to ensure the student knows how to access or request help, troubleshoot common problems, or reach out to peers, parents, or other resources. The student's use of the strategies can help provide valuable data related to these skills.

- Workplace tools safety and use may be possible within the home depending on the student's career goals. Common household items include appliances, basic tools (e.g., hammer, screwdriver, etc.), computer or other technology, camera or cell phone, clothing, etc. For many careers these tools can provide simulations of work. For example, a student who wants to be a fashion designer may have the opportunity to creatively use some of their current clothing to create a new look or fashion portfolio. A student who wants to be a chef may be challenged to create dish using the items in the home, much like the Chopped challenges. The student who is interested in carpentry may be challenged to use scrap wood or materials to create a birdfeeder or dog house. A future landscape architect might use online software to design a city rooftop garden.

Work Experience

- There are many jobs within the home that can be leveraged to provide the student a meaningful work experience. Consider a discussion with the student and parent(s) to determine household jobs or projects that the student can do for several days or weeks to simulate work and refine skills.

- "Work experience" does not have a weekly or daily time requirement. Focus on work related to the student's career goals to the greatest extent possible and the opportunity to learn and apply the required and critical skills of the SKEMA.

Early Childhood

The following are considerations for supporting early childhood educational needs:

- **Daily Schedules:** Encourage families to establish a schedule that may mimic their child's preschool schedule. Providing a copy of the classroom schedule may be helpful as they establish a set breakfast time, indoor play time, lunch time, story time, rest time, and outdoor play time. Recognizing that children learn through play and spend most of their time at school experiencing hands-on learning activities. Avoid sending home packets of worksheets to complete or activities that require preschool children to sit still for extended periods of time.

- **High Quality Materials:** Consider using the district's early childhood classroom curriculum as a resource for sharing information and suggestions for activities that families can do at home with their children. Highlight those major areas of focus such as unit themes and learning objectives and share ideas to help families support their children.

- **Parent Communication:** Teachers should explore various communication channels to best meet the needs of families. They are encouraged to make themselves available to answer questions as parents are working with their children in these activities.

- **Learning Resources:** Provide a list of appropriate websites (such as the one below) that families might access to find activities for their preschool child at home:

  - Langwitches
  - Fun and Learning for Parents and Children: An Activities Handbook
  - Support Writing at Home
  - Big Jobs at Home
  - The Secret to Keeping Your Kids Happy, Busy and Learning if Their School Closes Due to Coronavirus
  - Scholastic Learn at Home: Grades PreK-K
  - Free Classes for Families Affected by U.S. Public School Closures
  - Story Pirates
  - GoNoodle
  - Georgia Aquarium
  - LUNCH DOODLES with Mo Willems!
  - Bedtime Math
  - 60 Everyday Playful Learning Activities to do with Preschoolers

- **Student Communication Resources:** Young children with developing language skills may need

communication supports available at home. Districts can provide parents with resources to support their child.

- PICTO4me
- Lessonpix
- Boardmaker

- **Behavior Supports:** With a change to their routines, children may experience challenging behaviors. Social stories are one way to help children identify their feelings and find acceptable ways to express their emotions. An early childhood special education teacher can provide scripted stories to parents via email or a school website. (Here is a book called Why is My School Closed? and one that is similar to what is used at school on behavior.) Parents may also appreciate these infographics for children on coping with stress and challenging behavior.

  - Help Us Stay Calm (English)
  - Help Us Stay Calm (Spanish)
  - Help Us Have a Good Day (English)
  - Help Us Have a Good Day (Spanish)

- **Autism Support:** The Treatment and Research Institute for Autism Spectrum Disorders (TRIAD) provides some online resources for caregivers in the form of brief online training sessions (BOTS). Early childhood special education teachers could help parents with login steps and in finding helpful sessions.

- **Parent Resources:** Provide parents with resources such as a Family Staycation Kit and Learning at Home during Trying Times.

- **Related Services:** Consider opportunities for related service providers (e.g., speech-language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, etc.) to connect with families to deliver interventions or provide consultation and parent coaching. While not intended to be a replacement for face to face intervention, this can serve to equip family members to support continued learning and to minimize the potential for regression.

English Learner (EL) Activities and Language Practice

Communication with EL families is crucial when establishing a new learning expectation for students. Some ELs and/or their families may be new to the U.S. school system expectations. Building communication and partnerships with EL parents can go a long way. To begin strong communication with EL parents, the district may have the family liaison coordinator or ESL teacher communicate with families about the learning that will completed via distance learning. Parents may have questions or need clarification regarding distance learning. School communities understand the importance of consistency. Regular support is needed for students who speak a language other than English as it relates to English-

acquisition. An important part of that directly connects to the amount of exposure that children have to the English Language.

For students who do have access to a device and the Internet, there are several activities and resources they can access with the support of the district or school. Please keep in mind, ELs in a district may be at different levels of language proficiency and may require language scaffolds to support discussions and work that is to be completed on an online platform. Clear expectations written in short clear steps can be very helpful for ELs. Consider the following for EL students and families:

- Does the distance learning plan take ELs and their families into consideration?

- Do families have access to information about distance learning that they can access in their native language? (If the parent is not able to read, how will they understand the expectations?)

- Do all families have access to a device/Internet?

- If a household has multiple students, does each student have access to a device? Keep in mind students may not have a quiet space to complete tasks or engage in distance learning if multiple families live in the home.

- Is there a way to make access to distance learning more equitable before or during a lesson? This may be where collaboration between the general content and ESL teacher takes place.

- How is the district addressing ELs with disabilities? Is there a time in the schedule for the ESL teacher to work with the special education teacher for students who are dually identified?

- Some students may not be comfortable navigating online platforms on their own without modeled instruction or steps for guidance. It may be helpful to create instructional steps documents with screenshots that are student friendly.

- Students may rely on public Wi-Fi access for their internet usage. It is important to provide families with available options to internet access in their community.

- Students in more rural areas may not be able to get a signal even with reliable Internet providers and routers. Educators providing support in rural areas may have to work on alternative options for work completion or academic check-ins with ELs.

Staying Connected with Students and Families
- Designate a drop off location for school supplies for migrant families who live in the community.

- Set up a contact system for student check-in.

- Share virtual contact information is an opportunity for students to keep in touch. This also provides the access to practice conversations with peers and teachers.

- Provide language support strategies and activities to students and families, such as TDOE Suggestions for ESL Classes and Activities: COVID-19 Guidance.

- Provide instructional support and activities that do not require technology such as [ESL At Home: 8 Weeks, Tech Free.](#)

Language Barriers

Each district in Tennessee has a unique population of ELs. A helpful way to provide accessible support to parents and guardians is to have various language communication support available based on the languages represented in the school community. For example, a small rural district in the South-Central region of Tennessee has parent liaisons who are fluent in Spanish and Arabic. Though this model may be ideal for many districts, some languages represented in Tennessee schools may not have an ideal liaison for communication. In this instance, it is helpful to be aware of the text or conversations shared with parents to avoid heavy language loading. Important information can be shared in limited print with visuals to support comprehension. Keep in mind families need someone they can trust as they communicate with schools about instructional needs or concerns.

Services and Technology to Help Support Multilingual Communication

Some helpful tools and support for communicating with families of ELs are, but are not limited to:

- [Microsoft Immersive Reader](#) is a free tool available through Microsoft office to help support student reading and writing. Embedded features like dictation and read aloud allow students to be able to listen to their work to help support making edits and revisions.

- [Talking Points](#) provides the capability to reach students' families in home languages to support building partnerships. Talking Points is offering free access during the impact of school closures due to COVID-19.

- [Tennessee Language Institute](#) provides professional translators and interpreters to help communicate effectively through a written translation of documents as well as in-person or via telephone spoken interpretation services.

- [TransPerfect](#) provides multiple levels of translation service ranging from document translation to support with meetings person-person as well as phone calls.

English Learners with Disabilities

As educators begin to collaborate, to meet the needs of students with disabilities who are also English learners, it is important to understand the academic goals that have been put in place by the student's IEP and Individual Learning Plan (ILP). Sharing a common knowledge base of language acquisition and the student's disability needs is critical to planning for student growth and success. A student's IEP and ILP provide important information to help the understanding of the instructional considerations that need be considered prior to presenting a lesson. The instructional goals in an IEP and ILP also provide an insight to

what a student is able to do academically. Educators involved in providing instruction to ELs with disabilities should consider the following:

- Plan for a team discussion prior to providing instruction to find ways in which learning can be maximized for a student.
- Discuss the goals in the student's ILP and IEP to identify alignment or possible obstacles.
- Discuss and plan for the use of accommodations that will be needed for the understating of content.
- Encourage all educators to share instructional practices that have been successful when instructing the student.
- Set up a time to have a discussion after instruction has taken place to discuss successes or need for refinement.

ELs with disabilities present a unique situation when planning instructional practices. The following are suggestions that may be helpful:

- Provide expectations up front, set up a daily routine or schedule.
- Provide visuals to support academic work
- Provide clear and concise steps.
- Allow for processing time or think time.
- Allow the opportunity to provide additional time to finish assignments.
- Write hints or reminders in the text. Analyze text structure of the materials read and highlight or bold key characteristics and content.
- Encourage re-reading or revisiting of tasks or instructions (this may need to be modeled for the student).
- Use real life experiences when discussing the reading material.
- Set up a peer system for the student with another EL.
- Encourage the use of audio books. Have students develop podcasts or recordings of their own dual language stories, memories, or reports.
- Allow students preview content visually, orally and through literacy (if available) in their non-English language before reading/learning about content in English.
- Actively invite student languages and cultures into the learning.
- Use familiar text when teaching a new skill.
- Develop the steps the student will need to reach out for support.
- Involve the student's family when possible to help support learning at home.

English Learner Identification and Exit during School Closure

The Tennessee State Board of Education approved changes to 3.2017, English as a Second Language (ESL) Program Policy regarding provisional identification and exit criteria.

The changes to the policy are:

- Identification and Entrance Criteria for English Learners

- 2(c) Special Considerations Due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency in spring 2020. LEAs shall have a provisional method that uses existing data and information for identifying students as NELB students and for determining entrance into an ESL program if the student has not completed either the W-APT screener or WIDA screener. Tennessee Department of Education may provide best practice guidance for identifying NELB students for districts to reference. Students identified as NELB students and enrolled in ESL services using a provisional method shall be given provisional NELB status. Formal NELB identification and screening for ESL support using the W-APT screener or WIDA screener shall take place as soon as possible once school resumes for any student who has been given a provisional NELB status.

- Exit Criteria for WIDA Access Assessment

  - 7(e) Special Considerations Due to the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency in spring 2020. If an English Learner does not have 2019-20 WIDA ACCESS scores, LEAs shall use multiple data points approved by the Tennessee Department of Education to exit a student from ESL direct services. Students who exit ESL direct services shall be considered transitional.

Schools need to continue to ensure documentation is archived for EL student identification (this is an Office of Civil Rights (OCR) requirement as well as Title III requirement)

- The Home Language Survey (HLS) should be archived as well as a note documenting how it was administered to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) parents (i.e. virtually, over the phone, online packet, etc.)

Highly Mobile or At-Risk

For highly mobile or at-risk students, LEAs should establish a more frequent communication plan for each individual student with one school-based staff member responsible for carrying out the support and communication plan. It is likely that our students who are highly-mobile or at-risk could benefit from additional supports such as time with counselors or frequent updates regarding access to meals. Weekly, if not daily, communication related to individual non-academic student needs should be established.

Guidelines and Sample Procedures

When planning for instructional continuity during school closures, the following guidelines and sample procedures will facilitate the provision of educational opportunities.

Timelines and Requirements

Meeting deadlines and requirements associated with special education can be challenging during these times. IDEA allows the parent and LEA to agree to use alternative means of meeting participation, such as video conferences and conference calls. In light of the current circumstances, LEAs are encouraged to discuss these options with parents when a meeting is necessary during closure. However, IEP team meeting

timelines may be extended if:

1. The LEA has reasonably determined the use of virtual technology is not a suitable method of conducting the required meeting; or

2. The information necessary for the IEP team's deliberation is not attainable due to recommendations of the state or local health departments.

The following chart outlines some of the IDEA requirements and the flexibility that is allowed during this time.

	IDEA Requirement	Flexibility
Initial Evaluations	Must be conducted within 60 calendar days of receiving parental consent or within a state established time frame	Timelines have been extended for evaluations initiated or in process on or after March 3, 2020. See SBE rule and guidance.
Re-evaluations	Must be conducted at least once during a 3-year period	When appropriate, a reevaluation may be conducted through a review of existing evaluation data, and this review may occur without a meeting and without obtaining parental consent. Reevaluations requiring a face-to-face assessment or observation may be delayed until school resumes.
Initial IEP Team Meeting	Must convene within 30 days of eligibility determination	Meetings can be held using alternative means of participation.
Annual IEP Team Meetings	Must review the IEP at last annually	Meetings can be held using alternative means of participation; parents can agree to changes without convening a meeting.
Addendum IEP Team Meetings	No specific requirement to hold	Parents can agree to changes without convening a meeting.
Required IEP Team Members	Includes the five required members	Parent can excuse members not needed or allow members to submit input in writing prior to the meeting.

Signatures	Signature of parent required for initial consent and placement	Signatures can be obtained electronically consistent with IDEA and FERPA or by US Mail.

General Checklists

Before closing or at start of closure

☐ Develop communication plans and protocols for the district and recommended protocols for schools.

☐ Announce allowable building activity to teachers to allow for the preparation of student work that will be sent home (i.e., device check out, assigning of books, packaging school materials, etc.) Any gatherings within school facilities should comply with applicable social distancing guidance as well as health safety recommendations.

☐ Establish how updates based on student learning will be collected by collaborating educators for the monitoring of student goal progress on Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and Individual Learning Plans (ILPs).

☐ Establish process for accommodating and or modifying work for students.

☐ Determine the process of how teachers will log or note important parent communication that the school will need to be aware of when school schedules resume.

☐ Determine the evaluations, reevaluations, and annual IEP team meetings that are due during the closure period.

☐ Contact parents to inform them about the required evaluations and/or meetings and how each will be handled. See the guidance document for the specific requirements in each situation.

☐ Complete the Students with Disabilities Protocol for School Closure for students with IEPs or 504 plans. Complete the Individual Student Support Template for other special populations.

During closing

Daily:

☐ Log/note key communication from parents or guardians in district or school logs.

☐ Communicate with students to provide services or check-in.

Weekly:

☐ Update school websites and district or school(s) social media.

☐ Continue the process for two-way communication with school families and the community for updates and learning opportunities.

☐ Accommodate and or modify work for students.

☐ Document fulfilled and unfulfilled service hours required through IEPs or 504 plans (see template)

☐ Designate and announce when sites will be available to produce more learning packets, gather needed resources for student projects, or refill student learning packets if needed.

☐ Provide ongoing tips for families to practice healthy habits and routines with students.

Periodically:

☐ Check in with assessment specialists on preparation of written reports for evaluations in process, preparation of paperwork to the best extent possible for reevaluations that are coming due, and the provision of resources for school personnel regarding student needs.

☐ Begin developing compensatory education plan for when school reopens and/or when social distancing recommendations are lifted.

☐ Provide support for answering questions students may have about COVID-19. Keep in mind in some cultures health and sickness may be considered private matters, so it is important to build relationships with families.

Upon reopening

☐ Establish welcome back messages for teachers, families, and the community.

☐ Communicate the importance of revisiting daily routines with students. It should not be assumed all students will recall routines previous to schools closing.

☐ Allow time to have personal learning based on experiences while on school closure.

☐ Develop and communicate the check-in procedure for materials that have been assigned to students for learning.

☐ Complete any evaluations, re-evaluations, and annual meetings as soon as possible.

   o   Make sure the prior written notices completed include any information related for reasons for delay in the "other factors" section (Item #6 on the prior written notice).

   o   If timeline exceeds deadlines due to factors unrelated to reasons outlined in the guidance documents or for lengths longer than those included in the guidance documents, follow the normal steps to document delays or extension requests.

☐ Review student progress and determine on an individual basis if compensatory services are necessary. Utilize these questions for determining the need:

   o   How long was the student's school closed?

   o   Was the student provided instruction or services via an alternative method (such as online instruction, online speech therapy or other related services, or instruction provided telephonically) during the closure?

- Was the student able to consistently access the instruction and services?

- Were alternative methods of instruction and services (e.g., online instruction, online provision of related services, etc.?) provided to the student as beneficial to the student as the methods normally used to serve the student?

- Is there documentation of the amount of instruction and services the student was provided during the closure (including dates, times, and duration)? What percentage of the student's IEP-required instruction and services did the student receive?

- Are there indications that the student regressed during the closure? Has the student lost any specific skills?

- Is there a possibility that the student will require extended school year services due to regression?

- Did the closure and/or illness create any new special education needs for the student (e.g., emotional, medical, academic) such that the student should be provided additional services or be reevaluated?

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Process/Document Checklists

When conducting IEP team meetings and placement meetings, the parent of a child with a disability and an LEA may agree to use alternative means of meeting participation requirements, such as video conferences and conference calls.

LEAs may choose to obtain electronic signatures for annual IEP, initial eligibility, initial consent, and/or re-evaluation meetings held virtually, provided that the LEA ensures that there are appropriate safeguards, consistent with the requirements in IDEA and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Under FERPA, electronic consent may serve as written consent provided that the "Signed and dated written consent" includes a record and signature in electronic form that--"(1) Identifies and authenticates a particular person as the source of the electronic consent; and (2) Indicates such person's approval of the information contained in the electronic consent." 34 CFR §99.30(d).

Alternatively, LEAs may also choose to obtain parent signatures via US mail. This option may delay the attainment of the required signatures; however, as a reminder, once parents are provided written notice of any changes or updates to an IEP, the IEP may be implemented as proposed unless the parent requests due process within 14 days.

Districts should work with their local board attorneys to ensure their processes for obtaining consent comply with state and federal law.

Finally, certain members of the IEP team may be excused from an IEP meeting under specific conditions. These conditions will vary depending on whether the team member's area of expertise is going to be discussed or modified in the meeting. The parent and the school system must both agree in writing that the member's attendance is not necessary.

Initial IEP

Pursuant to 34 CFR §300.323(c), a meeting to develop an IEP for a child must be conducted within 30 days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services. As soon as possible following the development of the IEP, special education and related services must be made available to the child in accordance with the child's IEP. "As soon as possible" recognizes that there may be some isolated circumstances where, because of damage caused by the storm, power outages, closure due to pandemic, etc., an LEA may need to delay the start of special education and related services to a particular child.

Districts and schools are strongly encouraged to document decisions related to the initial IEP development timelines and maintain that decision-making rationale in the student's file.

- ☐ Contact the parent to explain the reason that a meeting is required during this time. Discuss the various ways that the meeting can occur which protects the health and safety of the team members.

- ☐ Explain to parents IDEA guidelines for excusing an IEP team member if necessary. The parent's written agreement for excusing an IEP team member must be obtained prior to the meeting.

- ☐ Generate an Invitation to Meeting based upon the conversation with the parent. Be sure that the invitation includes the purpose of meeting, if the parent waived the 10-day notice, and the parent's decision to participate.

- ☐ Create the initial IEP.

- ☐ Generate a Prior Written Notice, which includes how the parents participated in the meeting (e.g., conference call, virtual meeting, etc.), if IEP team members were excused, and how those excused members provide input.

Annual IEP

The IDEA requires that the child's IEP be reviewed periodically, but not less than annually, to determine whether the annual goals for the child are being achieved; and revise the IEP, as appropriate. LEAs should make every attempt to conduct annual IEP team meetings that are due during periods of school closure. However, IEP Teams are not required to meet in person while schools are closed. If there is a need to have an IEP meeting, the parent of a child with a disability and a public agency may agree to use alternative means of meeting participation requirements, such as video conferences and conference calls. Further, if changes need to be made to the IEP, the parent of a child with a disability and the public agency may agree not to convene an IEP Team meeting for the purposes of making those changes, and instead may develop

a written document to amend or modify the child's current IEP. IEP team meeting timelines may be extended if:

- The LEA has reasonably determined the use of virtual technology is not a suitable method of conducting the required meeting; or

- Information necessary for the IEP team's deliberation is not attainable due to recommendations of the state or local health departments that limit access to important student records.

These decisions must include the child's parent or guardian and meaningfully work towards ensuring that each child receives an IEP review commensurate with the intent of the law, and in the best interest of the child.

<u>Districts and schools are strongly encouraged to document decisions related to annual reviews and maintain the decision-making rationale in the student's file.</u>

☐ Contact the parent to explain the reason that a meeting is required during this time. Discuss the various ways that the meeting can occur which protects the health and safety of the team members.

☐ Explain to parents IDEA guidelines for excusing an IEP team member if necessary. The parent's written agreement for excusing an IEP team member must be obtained prior to the meeting.

☐ Generate an Invitation to Meeting based upon the conversation with the parent. Be sure that the invitation includes the purpose of meeting, if the parent waived the 10-day notice, and the parent's decision to participate.

☐ Generate the annual IEP.

☐ Generate a Prior Written Notice, which includes how the parents participated in the meeting (e.g., conference call, virtual meeting, etc.), if IEP team members were excused, and how those excused members provided input.

Addendum to the Annual IEP

In making changes to a child's IEP after the annual IEP Team meeting for a school year, the parent of a child with a disability and the LEA may agree not to convene an IEP Team meeting for the purposes of making those changes, and instead may develop a written document to amend or modify the child's current IEP.

☐ Contact the parent to explain the reason some adjustments to the annual IEP are needed during this time. Discuss the various ways that the meeting can occur which protects the health and safety of the team members and the option to agree to changes without an IEP team meeting.

☐ If the parents agrees to allow changes without convening an IEP team meeting, complete waiver document with proposed changes to the annual IEP and reasons for the proposed changes.

☐ Generate addendum to the annual IEP.

☐ Generate a Prior Written Notice, which includes that the parent agreed to changes without convening an IEP meeting if applicable.

Templates and Sample Letters

The following are some templates that can assist with the management of educational opportunities and services to special populations.

Template: Individual Student Support Plan

Student Name: [Insert]

School-based POC: [Insert]

Method for Communication (select one)

☐ Call

☐ Virtual conference

Weekly Schedule

Monday: [Insert duration of time] at [Insert time am / pm]

Tuesday: [Insert duration of time] at [Insert time am / pm]

Wednesday: [Insert duration of time] at [Insert time am / pm]

Thursday: [Insert duration of time] at [Insert time am / pm]

Friday: [Insert duration of time] at [Insert time am / pm]

Services

The following is a list of services provided to the student

Services as identified through IEP/504	Expectations – How services were provided

Resources

List additional resources that could benefit the student:

Resource	How to acquire/access the resource

Documentation of Services

List the services that were provided

Date of Service	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided/Notes

Template: Teacher or Student Support Staff Service Plan

Teacher Name: [Insert]

Schedule

Monday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Tuesday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Wednesday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Thursday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Friday:

Student	Time of Service	Type of Service Provided

Template: Student with Disabilities Protocol for School Closure

Student Name: [Insert]   **School**: [Insert]

IEP Date: [Insert]   **Evaluation Date:** [Insert]

Case Manager: [Insert]   **Date School Closed:** [Insert]

During Closure:

Date(s) school closed and instructional opportunities provided:

Beginning Date: [Insert]   Ending Date: [Insert]   #of School Days: [Insert]

☐ Learning Packets   ☐ Learning Opportunities   ☐ Distance learning

Services Addressed in the IEP:

Service:	Initiation Date:	Frequency:	Location:	Duration:	Staff Responsible for Delivery:	Provision of Services:
						☐Provided ☐Compensatory ☐ESY ☐Waived
						☐Provided ☐Compensatory ☐ESY ☐Waived
						☐Provided ☐Compensatory ☐ESY ☐Waived
IEP Services Notes: (Use the space below to describe how service was provided during closure. decisions made to not provide services at this time, or services unable to be delivered.)						

After Closure:

Date(s) educational services were provided to students, but this student did not receive services:

Beginning Date: [Insert]   Ending Date: [Insert]   #of School Days: [Insert]

Data Prior to Closure (i.e. benchmarks, universal screeners, progress reports, etc.)	Current Data After Reopening	Determination	Recommendation
		☐Progressed ☐Regressed ☐Maintained	
		☐Progressed ☐Regressed ☐Maintained	
Plan for providing compensatory services, if needed.			

Template: Evaluation/Reevaluation Timelines

Date evaluation is due:	Due during closure?
If yes, what is the plan for completion of the evaluation, including the participation of the parent in the process?	
Was parent notified of plan?	If yes, date & method:
Was the evaluation completed? ☐ Yes ☐ No	If yes, how was the evaluation completed?

Template: IEP Timelines

Date IEP is due:	Due during closure?

If yes, what is the plan for completion of the IEP, including the participation of all IEP team members, including the parent (and student if appropriate)?	
Was parent notified of plan?	If yes, date & method:
How was the meeting completed?	☐ Video Conference Call ☐ Telephone Conference Call ☐ Documented approval to amend without meeting
Other Information (use the space below to document any additional relevant information):	

Template: Documentation for Service Provision

Date Provided:	Service Provided:	How Provided:	Notes/Considerations:

TN Department of
Education

Template: Student Distance Learning Plan

The purpose of this plan is to communicate how educational opportunities and services will be delivered to your student during the COVID-19 emergency. Special education services for your student will look different during this period of national and state public health emergency. **This is not an IEP amendment.** As the district continues to develop and improve distance learning systems and opportunities, this learning plan may be modified.

Student Name: [Insert]   **School**: [Insert]

Case Manager: [Insert]   **Date School Closed:** [Insert]

Beginning Date: [Insert]   **Ending Date:** [Insert]

Description of how your child's general educators, special educators, and related service providers will continue to collaborate while school is closed.

Resources and Supports	

Strategies, assignments, projects and packets expectations	*Examples: (These should be individualized for students.)*
	
	 ● *Every Friday, your child's teachers will send home content for the week.*
	
	 ● *Your child's case manager will individualize the content and add specific targets for your child's unique learning needs.*
	
	 ● *Strategies, assignments, projects and packets might include:*
	
	     o *A list of everyday things around the home your child may need for exploration, hands-on projects, and/or use for a related services session*
	
	     o *Reading assignments for background and context*
	
	     o *Reading, writing, mathematics, science, technology/engineering, history, social studies, and social/emotional learning assignments*

	o *Assignments provided through Google Classroom*
	o *Assignments related to television programming (WGBH)*
	o *Suggested physical activities and movement breaks*
	o *Links to online learning activities including videos, games, art, music, and other resources*
	o *Due dates, and*
	o *How to submit assignments for educator feedback.*
	Younger students – may receive a visual daily schedule or you can set one up with them using these tools....
Regular and ongoing communications expectations	*Examples: (Customize based upon district/school/teacher procedures).* • *Email to student from [Insert Teacher's Name] on each Monday morning* • *Student has video conference check in for homeroom with the class every Tuesday at 9 AM* • *Student office hours with Mr. White every Wednesday at 12:00 pm* • *Email to parent each Friday afternoon* *Your liaison will call you every other week, as previously scheduled with you*

Services and Instruction	
Educators and/or related service providers that will be providing services through distance, online, or telephonic instruction	Name: Role: Contact Information: Name:

	Role: Contact Information:
Service to be provided, when, and how	*Example:* *Service: Speech/Language* *When: Monday 10-10:30* *How: Online skill practice*

Preparation for Remote Service Delivery
Example: ● *Try to set up a daily routine so your child is aware of the expectations for the day.* ● *Encourage your child to engage in the classroom resources provided and make sure to give them praise when they do (Great job! I like that you are trying your best, nice work! Are you proud of your work too?).* ● *Ask your child if they need help or if they would like you to join in during structured activities.* ● *Free time, movement breaks, coloring, snacks, technology, etc.* ● *Find time each day to engage with your child in a preferred activity to encourage positive social interactions.*

Sample Parent Letters

Initial Evaluation

Dear Parent,

Your child was referred for an initial evaluation for special education services. Due to the pandemic and resulting school closures, the evaluation or portions of the evaluation may be delayed. Typically, initial evaluations are completed within 60 calendar days; however, as there are limitations on completing portions of the evaluation, the timeline may be extended. If you would like more information on timeline extension, see the State Board of Education rule and guidance.

We will do our best to complete portions of the evaluation which can be done remotely. However, any evaluation procedure that requires a face-to-face assessment or observation with your child will need to be delayed for the safety of your family and our staff per federal guidance.

Please contact [Name] at [phone/email] if you have questions or concerns about your child's evaluation and the timeline to complete it.

Thank you,

[Case Manager]

Reevaluation-No Assessments Needed

Dear Parent,

Your child's reevaluation deadline for special education services is approaching. Due to the pandemic and resulting school closures, we wanted to share information about next steps.

A reevaluation of each child with a disability must be conducted at least every three years. When appropriate, the reevaluation may be conducted through a review of existing evaluation data. The review may occur without a meeting and without obtaining parental consent unless it is determined that additional assessments are needed.

Based on a review of records, it does not appear that additional assessments of your child are needed at this time. However, your input is valuable and if you do not agree, then the team will discuss assessment needs with you.

Please contact [Name] at [phone/email] if you have questions or concerns about your child's reevaluation and the timeline to complete it.

Thank you,

[Case Manager]

Reevaluation-Assessments Needed

Dear Parent,

Your child's reevaluation deadline for special education services is approaching. Due to the pandemic and resulting school closures, we wanted to share information about next steps.

A reevaluation of each child with a disability must be conducted at least every three years. When appropriate, the reevaluation may be conducted through a review of existing evaluation data. The review may occur without a meeting and without obtaining parental consent unless it is determined that additional assessments are needed.

Based on a review of records, it appears that additional assessments of your child may be needed at this time. We would like your input into those assessment needs, and [Name] will be contacting you to schedule a time to meet virtually.

If the team determines that additional assessments are needed, we will do our best to complete evaluation pieces that can be done remotely. However, any evaluations that requires a face-to-face assessment or observation of your child will need to be delayed for the safety of your family and our staff.

Thank you,

[Case Manager]

Resource List

Health Resources
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

US Department of Education Resources
- [US Department of Education Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak](#)
- [US Department of Education Supplemental Fact Sheet (3/21)](#)
- [US Department of Education COVID-19 Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel](#)
- [Letter to Leaders Preventing and Addressing Potential Discrimination Associated with COVID-19](#)
- [Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil Rights of Students](#)

Captioning and Accessibility Resources
- [DeafTEC](#)

Distance Learning and Special Education Services
- [Free Educational Resources for Distance Learning](#) from the California Department of Education
- [Educator Resources to Support Remote Learning from Wested](#)
- [Teaching Remotely to DHH Students (PDF)](#): This document was originally published by the Council for Exceptional Children's Division for Communication, Language, and Deaf/Hard of Hearing and shared with permission. It has tips on working remotely with students who are deaf or hard of hearing. [Visit the CEC-DCD website](#).
- [Education Companies Offering Free Subscriptions Due to School Closings](#)
- [Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center Virtual Toolkit](#): free online modules on dozens of topics, tips for strengthening online engagement, and many other resources, **including how to take advantage of a free Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) membership until May 31.**
- [Joint National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)/Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE)/Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) webinar on COVID](#)
- [Providing Transition-Focused Activities Online and At Home](#) (National Technical Assistance Center on Transition)
- Online Learning for Students with Disabilities: [Considerations for LEA Policies, Practices, and Procedures](#)

Distance Learning and English Learners

- [A Round-Up of Multilingual Resources on COVID-19](#)

- [Colorin Colorado: School Responses to COVID-19: ELL/Immigrant](#) Considerations

- [Empowering LLs Podcasts](#)

- [ESL At Home: 8 Weeks, Tech Free](#)

- [ESL/ELL Education: Interactive Websites for Learning](#) (University of Wisconsin)

- [Google Classroom: Teach.Learn.Innovate COVID-19 Distance Learning](#)

- [NAELP: Response to COVID-19 Pandemic: Resources for Educating English Learners Online](#)

- [TESOL International Association's COVID-19 Resources](#)

Related Service Resources

Applied Behavior Analyst

- [Rules of the Applied Behavior Analysts Licensing Committee](#)

- [Tennessee Association of Behavior Analysis COVID-19 Notice](#)

- [BABC COVID 19 Updates](#)

- [The Professional and Ethical Compliance Code for BCBAs](#)

Occupational Therapists

- [American Occupational Therapy Organization (AOTA)](#)

- [American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA): Telehealth Resources](#)

- [Rules of the Tennessee Board of Occupational Therapy](#)

- [The American Occupational Therapy Association Advisory Opinion for the Ethics Commission - Telehealth](#)

- [Occupational Therapy and Ethics](#)

Physical Therapists

- [American Physical Therapy Association (APTA)](#)

- [American Physical Therapy Association (APTA): Telehealth](#)

- [Rules of the Tennessee Board of Physical Therapy](#)

- [American Physical Therapy Association's (APTA) Coronavirus Information for APTA Members](#)

- [Code of Ethics for the Physical Therapist](#)

School Counselors

- [American School Counselor Association Response to COVID-19](#)
- [ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors](#)
- [Planning for Virtual/Distance School Counseling During an Emergency Shutdown](#)

School Psychologists

- [Tennessee Association of School Psychologists (TASP)](#)
- [NASP Health Crisis Resources](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)](#)
- [NASP Webinars on Telehealth](#)
- [Virtual Service Delivery in Response to COVID-19 Disruptions](#)
- [Principals of Professional Ethics](#)
- [Family and Educator Resources](#): Resources to support student mental health challenges, motivation and engagement at home, and caregiver self-care. Resources available in multiple languages.

Speech Language Pathologists and Audiologists

- [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)](#)
- [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA): Telepractice](#)
- [ASHA's Telepractice Resources During COVID-19](#)
- [Rules of Tennessee Board of Communication Disorders and Science for Speech Pathology and Audiology](#)
- [Code of Ethics](#)

Other Resources

- [Considerations for Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE) Members](#)
- [A Round-Up of Multilingual Resources on COVID-19](#)
- [Common Sense Media](#) lists top apps for student learning experiences including visiting a museum, math tutoring or learning, digital libraries, meditation, and much more.
- [Khan Academy for Kids](#)
- [Recorded discussion panel](#) in Oklahoma regarding communication between parents and teachers.
- Downloads for AAC Users
    - [Tobii Dynavox COVID-19 Support Materials - Free Downloads](#)
    - [Boardmaker-To-Go Free Activities](#)