

Summer Planning: Student Support and Transitioning Back to School

As schools near the end of the school year in distance learning, there is much to be considered for summer and fall planning in our uncertain context. Specifically for students in Special Education, it is critical that they have support transitioning between grade-levels, learning environments, or schools and a plan to continue with compliance documentation. The current guidance from federal and state departments of education is still broad or uncertain at this time. This document will be updated as more specific information and guidance is released.

In this guide, you will find:

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Audience: Special Education Teachers, Directors of Special Education/Special Education Leads, and School Directors/Principals

Additional Resource:

- [National School Boards Association - Preparing for Widespread Illness](#)

Support Considerations for Students with Disabilities

Social-Emotional Learning and Behavioral Needs

Students with social-emotional learning and behavioral needs, such as, but not limited to, other health impairments, ADHD, students who have anxiety, depression, autism, may have a more difficult time transitioning back to school. Major interruptions to their daily routine, experiencing unexpected changes, being around more stimuli, such as peers and noises, can all trigger social-emotional and behavioral needs. Therefore, it's important for schools to consider which students may require additional support and possibly reflect any changes in student IEPs.

These supports can include:

- Additional counseling and group support

- Increasing family communication
- Gradually increasing the amount of time a student is at school
- Inviting students and their families to come to school before school starts to reorient, review supports, closeout with old teachers and introduce new teachers
- Coordinating and reviewing with staff about specific supports students have and reinforcing the needs for reteaching and positively reinforcing more frequently
- Coordinating with community support providers working with the student's IEP and support team

Protocol for Self-Contained Classrooms

Often students in a self-contained classroom or special day class have a 1:1 aide/small teacher to student ratio and need support with eating, bodily functions, and other physical supports. Schools need to consider how to keep both the students and staff/personnel safe given the proximity of students and staff with one another. Additionally, students and staff in these classrooms utilize a variety of materials, resources, and manipulatives (including oral and physical devices). Therefore, the staff needs to follow a strict sanitizing protocol and possibly consider temporarily removing excess materials and resources.

Academic Supports to Address Learning Gaps

Giving all students time to learn concepts that they missed is critical, especially for students with disabilities. Schools may be planning a [summer bridge program or extending the year](#) to target missed instruction. During this time, schools may want to consider how to best assess student progress or regression towards IEP goals to inform the IEP process and instruction once the year reconvenes, as well as develop materials that address specially designed instruction for in-person or virtual learning environments. Careful consideration of equity in opportunities and burdens on students and families should be taken into account when making decisions about academic support for students and their diverse learning needs.

- **ESY:** Providing students with IEP goal instruction during summer can be captured during a summer bridge or extended school year. Students who regress towards their IEP goals due to an extended lapse in instruction time require ESY and the need for instruction is documented in students' IEPs.
- **Compensatory Services:** If a district was unable to provide services as outlined in a student's IEP, the district should consult with their SELPA representative to determine whether those services are compensatory and can be provided during summer bridge or extended school year.

It is important for schools to determine what is most equitable for students and their families during summer. If summer instruction can support students in getting closer to grade-level content and IEP goal progress, summer opportunities may be of benefit, while students who struggle to be in school, physically or virtually, may experience undo hardships and burdens resulting from expectations to engage in summer learning.

In these cases, districts should consider:

- Transportation to and from school
- Timing of the any summer programs (full days vs. half days)
- Providing options for how students engage in the summer program
- Determine what most critical for students to be working on

Resources:

- [Center for Positive Behavior Intervention Supports](#)
- [PBIS Social Stories](#)
- [Second Step - COVID Resources](#)
- [Transition Planning for Juniors and Seniors](#)

Compliance Considerations for Schools

Because guidance can vary state to state, district by district, it's important to receive guidance from your SELPA. However, below are questions and considerations for your school and SELPA representative when planning for summer and fall. These considerations may be helpful during summer, as well as once school reconvenes.

- How will your school address the backlog of evaluation deadlines? How will your school prioritize those evaluations and deadlines once you are back in session? **Process considerations include:**
 - Make a list of missed deadlines and outstanding action items
 - Discuss with your team and determine if your school has the resources (personnel and materials) to coordinate assessments during the summer to reduce the amount in the fall
 - Determine how you are prioritizing evaluations based on student needs, current open evaluations (those started by never finished) family situation, comprehensive evaluations vs. records review, intake referrals
- Discuss with your team and SELPA how your school will handle potential short term closures throughout the year, and what impact that has on the validity of the evaluation results and IEP meetings. **This can include:**
 - Create short-term remote learning plans
 - Proactively moving IEPs/evaluations up when possible to create a more manageable timeline
 - Ensure families can access remote resources, equitably
 - Communication and co-planning with related service providers

Resource:

- [Sample - Makeup Session Tracker](#)
- [Sample - Evaluation/Triennial Tracker](#)

Transition Activities to Support Incoming Students

- Invite families and students to “Virtual Open House” sessions or “Meet and Greets”

- Hold Transition IEP meetings with outgoing and incoming IEP team members, families and students to discuss updates to IEPs and plans for handoff
- Schedule phone or video meetings with role-alike staff to plan internally for incoming student needs (e.g. Middle School and High School Special Education Teacher collaboration, School Psychologist collaboration)
- Conduct virtual peer panels for incoming 6th and 9th grade students to learn about the school and special education programs
- Send and request IEP paperwork, including records and protocols, according to site protocol at end of the school year for outgoing and incoming students
- When school buildings reopen, offer in-person campus tours or meet and greets before the start of school to introduce students and families to the new school
- Prepare students for transition to middle school or high school with activities such as “Dear Future Teacher” letters or personal introduction presentations for students to share their learning profile and needs with new teaching staff
- Communicate with families by phone, email, standard mail, and video updates to address frequently asked questions, share updates, and begin building relationships with new students

Frequently Asked Questions for IEP Compliance During School Closures:

Part of supporting students in Special Education is ensuring IEP documentation remains compliant. However, due to COVID-19 and school closures, schools face difficulty in completing some of the requirements. These FAQs are geared towards information schools may need for planning summer and fall work specific to IEP compliance. The following FAQ table provides **direct quotes** from the links cited:

Compensatory Services and Extended School Year
<p>Question: <i>If distance-learning is provided in some capacity but does not mirror the offer of FAPE in the IEP, will compensatory services be required once an LEA resumes the regular school session?</i></p> <p><i>Answer: Once the regular school session resumes, LEAs should plan to make individualized determinations, in collaboration with the IEP team, regarding whether or not compensatory education and services may be needed for a student. The educational need can be measured by assessing whether or not the student continued making progress in the general education curriculum, or alternative course of study specified in their IEP, or toward meeting their individualized IEP goals and/or if any regression occurred during the period of school site closure. (California Department of Education - SPED)</i></p>
<p>Question: <i>When normal school operations resume, will districts need to review every student who has a 504 plan or IEP to determine if compensatory services are needed?</i></p> <p><i>Answer: Yes, districts will likely need to look at each individual student to determine whether compensatory services are needed. There is no exception to the requirement to provide FAPE to</i></p>

students with disabilities and if the district is providing general education services to students without disabilities, then it must also provide FAPE to students with disabilities. However, due to the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting school facility closures, districts will likely need to determine whether and to what extent compensatory services are necessary when normal school operations resume in the event that the district is unable to provide appropriate IEP services during the school facility closure. The extent of a student's compensatory services, if needed, must be an individualized determination made by the IEP team. ([WA - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#))

Question: What is the difference between compensatory services and extended school year (ESY)?

Answer: Compensatory services enable the student to continue to make progress (towards IEP goals), ESY services are for maintaining skills. Compensatory services are determined after normal school operations resume and are determined on a case-by-case basis. Districts should examine the effect of the closure on the student's progress toward their IEP goals. ESY is required if the student needs it (ESY) as a result of regression and recoupment time, or if they are at a critical stage in learning based on documented evidence. The need for ESY should be examined on a case-by-case basis for each student, as already required in IDEA. Districts should consider how to address current ESY needs of students whose IEP teams have already identified the need in their IEPs and prepare to provide needed ESY services after the end of the 2019-20 school year. ([WA - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#))

Question: It may be very difficult for districts to hire staff to provide ESY services. Do you think that the federal government may step in and issue some form of "hold harmless"?

Answer: All of the federal guidance issued thus far, including the [March 21, 2020 Supplemental Fact Sheet](#), indicates that districts must maintain a free appropriate public education (FAPE) and civil rights for students. Districts should not expect to be "held harmless" with respect to providing FAPE or providing ESY services. ([WA - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#))

- Questions like these help provide a lens on likeliness of an outcome rather than what we think will happen.
- [DeVos](#) may recommend waiving parts of IDEA that are believed "to provide limited flexibility to states and school districts during the emergency."

IDEA Timelines

Question: What is the impact of school site closures on special education monitoring timelines and processes?

Answer: For annual or triennial IEP reviews that fall on a day when the LEA is closed Under SB 117 - committee on budget and fiscal review (students and school personnel not in physical buildings) due to COVID-19, the CDE will take the exceptional circumstances causing the delay into consideration for purposes of LEA compliance monitoring. In addition, due dates issued by the CDE for Special Education Division monitoring activities, including Targeted Monitoring, Intensive Monitoring, and Significant Disproportionality have been extended for a minimum of two months from the date of this

notice. The CDE will continue to evaluate the need for further extensions and will work with LEAs to be reasonable and accommodating given these exceptional circumstances. At this time, the USDOE has not extended the allowable Comprehensive Coordinated Early Intervening Services budget period of 27 months. If an LEA is having difficulty meeting timelines or has questions related to timelines, please contact your regional Intensive Monitoring Consultant. A list of regional consultants for California is available at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/qa/fmtacnct.asp>.

Assessment Plans

Existing Education Code sections 56043(a) and 56321(a) require a local educational agency (“LEA”) to develop an assessment plan within 15 calendar days from referral (or within 10 calendar days of the start of the school year if the referral was made within the last 10 calendar days of the prior school year), not counting calendar days between the regular school year sessions or terms or calendar days of school vacation in excess of five days.

- **For example:** A request for an evaluation comes in on May 19th and the schools academic year ends on May 22nd. 4 out of 15 days of the timeline has transpired. Upon the start of school on August 26th the school would have 11 days of the timeline remaining (e.i. September 5th) to respond to the request for evaluation. (In each case LEAs should continue to respond to assessment requests within the 15 day timeline, noting the stop of timelines with school breaks of 5 days or more.)

Under SB 117, the days that a school is closed due to COVID-19 are considered as days between a regular school session up until the time the school reopens and the regular school session reconvenes ([Fagen Friedman & Fulfrost](#)).

Additionally, IEP Teams are not required to meet in person while schools are closed. If an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face assessment or observation, the evaluation would need to be delayed until school reopens. Evaluations and reevaluations that do not require face-to-face assessments or observations may take place while schools are closed, so long as a student’s parent or legal guardian consents. These same principles apply to similar activities conducted by appropriate personnel for a student with a disability who has a plan developed under Section 504, or who is being evaluated under Section 504 ([United States Department of Ed](#)).

- Until the United States Department of Education states otherwise, schools may be expected to continue with the timelines upon their school reopening. More guidance is expected in late April.

Guiding Questions for Updated Version (V2)

- What happens with ESY if the school is unable to re-open over the summer?
- Does ESY apply to any distance learning environments?
- What happens if the criteria for ESY still apply for a student at the beginning of the next school year?
- How do governments and LEAs suggest providing ESY services?

- How will DeVos waiver recommendations impact IEP compliance requirements for the Fall and what should school plan for and prioritize during the summer?



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