

Providing Supports to Students with Low-Incidence Disabilities

This document provides schools and families with ways to serve students with low-incidence disabilities. Due to COVID-19, providing support and services to students with exceptional needs outside of the school setting has created disadvantages and barriers, especially for students with low-incidence disabilities. This working document provides a variety of resources and ideas for creating consistent structures and routines during the duration of school closures, which is critical for students who have exceptional needs. The following topics will be covered, with examples from different student disabilities:

- Establishing Partnerships with families
- Clear Communication with Students
- Ways to Deliver Adaptive Activities and Instruction
- Coordination between Service Providers
- Other Considerations

Audience: Special Education Teachers, General Education Teachers, Administrators, Families

Related resources can be found in the following links:

- [Navigating Virtual IEP Meetings](#)
- [Creating Accessible Virtual Learning Environments for SWD](#)
- [Supports for families on student engagement](#)
- [Sample - Template for specially designed instruction/specialized academic instruction](#)
- [Sample - Service matrix for scheduling students](#)

Set up strong, regular partnerships with families:

Talking about COVID-19

For students who struggle with social or other types of communication, it can be helpful to provide **visuals** to describe and explain a situation or an experience. For example, “What to expect when you go to the dentist,” or, “What you do when you go to the store.” During this pandemic, these guiding documents and social stories can help families navigate conversations about COVID-19.

- Talking with students about COVID
 - [Simple Ways to Talk about COVID-19 in multiple languages](#)
 - [How to Explain our global health crisis to children with Autism](#)
 - [A Guide for Using AAC to Talk about COVID-19](#)
- Social Stories
 - [Social Story for Staying Healthy](#)
 - [Social Story - What is the Coronavirus?](#)
 - [Flu Picture Story](#)

Set families up for virtual / distance learning success

Teacher and family communication are critical during this time of uncertainty, especially for students with more moderate and severe disabilities. Setting up consistent communication structures between the special education teacher/case-manager and these families eases the variability of a student's day and increases their engagement in learning. Here is a [one-pager on school - family communication](#) that provides basic guidance on what and how to communicate with families. Additionally, best practices within the special education context include:

- Establishing beginning, middle, and/or end of the day check-ins with a special education teacher or para-educator. This is especially important for students that struggle with hearing and vision, who have developmental cognitive disabilities, severe multiple impairments, and/or who are on the severe side of the autism spectrum.
 - Check-ins can be conducted through phone, Zoom, Google Hang-out, Facetime, or email
 - These check-ins provide an opportunity to monitor and track student progress, as well as teach new routines and expectations in the home learning environment
- Sending home packets for students to work on weekly
 - Prioritize IEP goal-related work, such as math problem solving worksheets and sight-words to practice spelling, saying and writing
 - Modify core instruction, for example reduce the number of problems or types of problems; provide 'fill in the blanks' for completing sentences.
- Equipping families with social/emotional and behavior strategies
 - Send home student Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs)
 - Send home strategies and coping mechanisms tailored to each student directly from their IEPs
 - Include PT/OT/SLP into conversations, if applicable
 - Determine any at home incentives that the student can work towards at home (i.e., earning more time watching a favorite show or playing a game, earning a sweet treat)
 - Provide families with information on how their student learns best
 - [Sample - Learner Profiles](#))
- Equipping families with communication strategies for augmentative or alternative communication (AAC)
 - Share AAC Manuals for Caregivers:
 - [English sample](#)
 - [Spanish sample](#)
 - Create at home activities for daily communication
 - [This google site offers weekly AAC home activities](#)

Communicate Clearly and Effectively with Students:

Set and communicate a consistent schedule

Having a visual schedule that is similar to what the student has at school is helpful, especially for students who benefit from predictability and routine. In addition, keeping a student's morning and afternoon/evening routines the same adds to the consistency. The information below provides types of visual timers for schedules as well as sample schedules students and family/parents can create on a daily basis.

- Apple apps of schedule - *these should be free*
 - ["Visual timer"](#) - or Youtube

- [“Class Timetable”](#)
- [“Handy Timetable”](#)
- [“Visual Schedules Lite”](#)
- [“This for That: Visual Schedules”](#)
- [“Choiceworks”](#)
- Additional Resources
 - [Video](#) on developing a new routine - it is helpful for students with autism but these tips can work for many other students
 - [Here](#) is a sample schedule and additional resources that can be created at home
 - [OT Tips for Creating Positive Learning Environments During COVID](#)
 - [Padlet](#) - This resource provides a variety of ways to support distant learning for students with significant needs

Provide structure to at-home student work time

Chunking out assignments (breaking tasks down into short ones with embedded breaks) and activities is critical for student engagement and for reducing a feeling of being overwhelmed.

- [First, Then](#) (add in ‘next’ can also be considered)
- [Up to 5 things to complete/all done section](#)
 - Print out schedules and put into a sheet protector - in each of the boxes families can write the activities with a marker (on--sharpie) if they do not have pictures
 - Writing out a schedule with timings can be helpful
 - It helps to have these paired with a visual timer

Adapt Activities and Instruction to Meet the Needs of Students with Low Incidence Disabilities

During this time, it is beneficial to prioritize instructing on IEP goals including adaptive, daily living and life skills. Below are common types of IEP goals students may have, with ideas and resources linked as sub-bullets. Each goal type has a [PECS \(visual\)](#) for students and their families linked below. The images can be used to populate the students’ personalized schedules, as described above.

- Reading
 - [ReadWorks](#) - Free online stories that can be read online and sorted by grade-level. Readings can also be read out loud and printed. Readings are paired with questions to support independent or guided work at home.
 - [IXL ELA](#) - Free online adaptive and interactive educational website. Personalize work based on student grade-level and content/subject.
 - [Newsela](#) - Free online resource with current and real-life events. Readings are student friendly and tailored to interest and instructional reading levels.
 - [Tween Tribune](#) - Free online newspaper of current events, tailored to students ages 8-15.
- Writing
 - [Writing Prompts](#) - Free creative writing prompts for students to choose from when practicing writing, spelling, and fluency.
 - Provide students with pictures and have them write details about what they see in the photo
 - Spelling words to practice (e.g., sight words)

- Math
 - [IXL math](#) - Free online adaptive and interactive educational website. Personalized work based on student grade-level and content/subject.
 - [Education.com](#) - Print out or find types of problems to write down for students to complete.
- Physical/Sensory Activity
 - Walk
 - Catch a ball
 - Stretching
 - Kinetic Sand/Play-Doh/etc.
- Life Skills
 - Wash dishes
 - Laundry
 - Shower/Bathe
 - Make the bed
 - Count money
 - Telling time
 - Personal info practice
 - Help with making meals
 - Tie shoes, button shirts, jackets, etc.
 - Following routines
 - Social problem solving
- Art
 - Drawing
 - Painting
 - Coloring
 - Assembly of Legos or another type of manipulative
- Relax / Access educational stories and content
 - [Scholastic reader](#) (The site includes learning journeys across four different grade spans—PreK/K, Grades 1–2, Grades 3–5, and Grades 6–9+. Learning experiences cover ELA, STEM, Science, Social Studies, and Social-Emotional Learning), [virtual field trip](#), [educational youtube channels](#), [The Kid Should See This](#), [National Geographic](#), [PBS Kids](#)

Coordinate with service providers to ensure consistent, quality service delivery

Students with low-incidence disabilities who receive services from related service providers should continue receiving services during school closures where possible. This is critical for students to maintain structure and progress towards IEP goals.

- Talk with SELPA/Attorney about providing services and/or consultation to students during this virtual learning period, as well as compensatory services once school is back in session.
- OT/SLP/PT/counseling/others can provide virtual services
 - [Sample - Teletherapy Consent Form](#) - A
 - [Sample - Teletherapy Consent Form](#) - B
 - Consider [small group service options](#)
 - Record sessions and activities for students to do

Final Word

When creating support for students with low-incidence disabilities during school closures, educators and families can partner to create a smooth transition. We recommend: (1) supporting students in understanding why their schedule has changed and meeting their social-emotional needs, (2) creating a system and structure for clear communication between the special education teacher and families (3) creating and maintaining a consistent schedule with familiar activities and supports.



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Appendix

First - Then

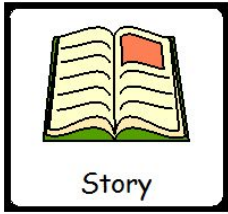
| FIRST → | THEN |
|---------|------|
| | |

Things to Complete

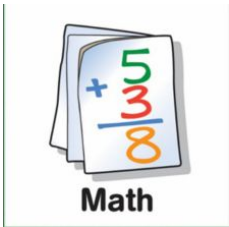
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PECS Visuals:

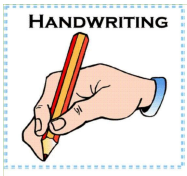
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Math:



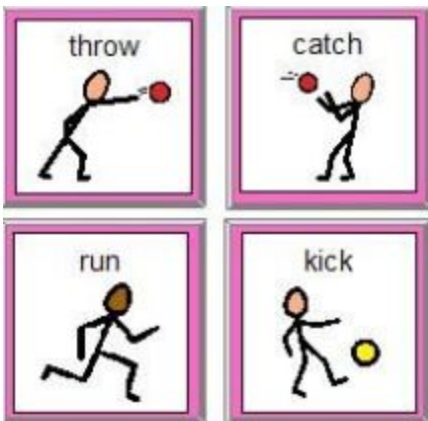
Writing



Art



Physical Activity



Life Skills



Relax



Break

