CONTINUOUS EDUCATION
FOR STUDENTS WITH SIGNIFICANT COGNITIVE DISABILITIES
•SUPPORTING GUIDANCE FOR SPECIAL EDUCATORS•

INTRODUCTION

During school closure, special education teachers should ensure students with significant cognitive disabilities have equitable access to and opportunity for learning, to the extent possible.[1] The Louisiana Department of Education offers supporting guidance for K-12 **continuous education**, as well as specific guidance related to special education **compliance**, **accommodations**, and **direct services**. This Continuous Education for Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities Guide builds on these available tools by addressing additional considerations for instructional and service design and delivery for students with complex needs. It includes:

- **Identifying Resources**
- **Planning Instruction**
- **Delivering Lessons and Monitoring Progress**

1 IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

When students with significant cognitive disabilities must shift from full-day, intensive instruction in brick-and-mortar classrooms to remote settings for learning, special education teachers must prioritize specific aspects of their own roles, determine instructional models appropriate for each student, and build home-specific instructional programs.

- **Special Education Teacher's Role:**
  - » Ensure students continue to receive all instruction and supports outlined in the Individualized Education Program (IEP).
  - » Keep students engaged in continuous learning by serving as their primary point of contact and the chief liaison between home and school.[2]
  - » Coordinate IEP team members to shape and integrate instruction and related services, coordinate scheduling, monitor progress, and adapt plans to meet students' evolving needs in the context of the home. Specifically, based on Department **staffing guidance**:
    - **General Educators:** share instructional plans to provide access and opportunities with a high-quality curriculum and inclusion in grade-level events;
    - **Paraprofessionals:** assess activities in the home well-suited to learning goals and help prepare customized learning materials for each student; and,
    - **Related Service Providers:** provide services, integrate planning, and provide training and support to IEP team members on accessibility features.

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1   See the Department's **compliance guidance** for further detail.

2   See **Appendix A** for a sample weekly instructional schedule for special education teachers and other team members.

- **Instructional Model:**
  - » Determine whether a digital, analog, or hybrid **instructional model** is most appropriate for each student.
  - » Tailor the approach for each student, based on his/her unique needs and resources available in the continuous education context.

- **Home Resources:**
  - » In addition to gathering information on all students through the **Continuous Learning Survey for Families**, build a home-specific instructional program that identifies discrete locations and regular activities within the home that are well-suited for meeting student learning goals. For an example process, see **Appendix B**.

② PLANNING INSTRUCTION

With a clear sense of the resources needed for impactful learning, the special education teacher should lead the IEP team in planning for context-specific instruction and support. The basics of effective planning—using the current curriculum, IEP goal alignment, backwards design, and coherent lesson objectives, assessments, and activities—remain the same in a continuous education environment. Specific steps for instructional planning include the following and are elaborated in the two student cases found in **Appendix C**:

- **IEP Goals**
  - » Follow **IDEA Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closure** guidance.
  - » Make academic goals the centerpiece of daily planning for continuous education, then integrate behavioral, social, functional, life skill, and transition goals accordingly.

- **Lesson Objectives**
  - » Create objectives based on the curriculum currently in use.
  - » Design learning objectives so that they are both aligned to the IEP goals and tailored specifically for building knowledge and skills within the context of the home environment.

- **Assessment Measures**
  - » Determine how to simply and concretely measure student learning for each objective regardless of instructional delivery model.
  - » Prioritize assessment measures teachers can easily capture.

- **Lesson Activities**
  - » **Plan activities** that cohere with natural routines in the home, reflect student interests, and teach important skills that are generalizable to other contexts.

- **Targeted Skills**
  - » **Name specific, observable skills** in clear terms that indicate performance and occur naturally in the home.
  - » Match skills with lesson activities that matter to the student in order to promote interest and engagement.
  - » Target skills that are applicable to other people and contexts outside of home.

3 DELIVERING LESSONS AND MONITORING PROGRESS

Special educators should select delivery methods appropriate to the home environment and ensure ways for monitoring progress and providing feedback on student learning. Over time, teachers should also vary delivery mechanisms to promote engagement, determine the most effective practices in a given household, and to assist the ability of the student to generalize learning across contexts. In delivering lessons and monitoring the progress of students with significant cognitive disabilities in the continuous education environment, consider the following components, which are further elaborated in the two student cases found in **Appendix D**:

- **Student Materials**
  - » **Develop materials** according to whether the lesson will be an interactive event between teacher and student or delivered in asynchronous time.
  - » Ensure access by individualizing methods for distributing materials to each student.

- **Lesson Delivery**
  - » **Customize implementation** according to lesson activities and chosen instructional delivery model.
  - » Enlist related service providers and other team members to deliver lessons and accommodations to secure access and opportunity to learn, integration of content and skills, and promote student interest.
  - » Establish weekly check-ins with families to discuss supports and services, ensure that family members receive **adequate support**, and problem solve challenges.

- **Progress Monitoring and Feedback**
  - » Customize methods for gathering work products from students based on the instructional delivery model.
  - » Provide specific, timely feedback to make sure students practice newly-acquired skills accurately.
  - » Monitor student progress closely, using both **concrete and anecdotal data** to drive continued planning.
  - » **Document** services provided, student responses, and progress for compensatory education review.

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE WEEKLY INSTRUCTIONAL SCHEDULE

Determine a schedule for weekly instruction based on the student's Individualized Education Program goals. This schedule should become predictable to support a consistent environment of learning for students at home. Families have found that it is helpful to receive the weekly schedule in advance.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Schedule physical/mental warm up with paraprofessional	Schedule physical/mental warm up with paraprofessional	Schedule physical/mental warm up with paraprofessional	Schedule physical/mental warm up with paraprofessional	Schedule physical/ mental warm up with paraprofessional
Provide direct instructional time	Provide direct instructional time	Provide direct instructional time	Provide direct instructional time	Provide direct instructional time
Schedule speech and language services with pathologist	Schedule life skills small group with Transition Coach	Schedule speech and language services with pathologist	Schedule life skills small group with Transition Coach	Host weekly virtual celebration with whole class
Hold office hours	Hold office hours	Hold office hours	Hold office hours	Hold office hours
Check in/planning with colleagues	Assess students' understanding of weekly content and plan next week	Check in/planning with colleagues	Assess students' understanding of weekly content and plan next week	Prepare and deliver Friday Memo including: • Next week's schedule, • Student materials, • Next week's office hours, • Shout-outs, and • Recommendations for improved learning experiences

APPENDIX B

BUILDING A HOME-SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM[3]

STEPS	EXAMPLES
1. **Identify potential focus areas for developing new skills.**	• Mealtime behavior, preparation, and cleanup; • housekeeping; clothing care and use; exercise
2. **Name specific locations in and around the home.**	• Kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, living room; yard, sidewalk, park
3. **Determine activities for specific locations in and around the home.**	• Bedroom - Dressing and undressing, making bed, putting away clothes, cleaning room
4. **Identify skills necessary for engaging in activities.**	• Selection of underwear, pants, socks, shirt, shoes; putting on underwear, pants, socks, shirt, shoes in correct order; buttoning/snapping pants and shirt, zipping pants
5. **Design, implement, and monitor progress of instructional program.**	• Teach cluster skills; for example, teach dressing as a sequence of skills that occur naturally together, and teach it during the time it normally should occur. Identify opportunities for teaching, adapting, and supporting students depending on need.

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3   The modified Ecological Inventory in this section is based on the work of Brown, Branston, Hamre- Nietupski, Pumpian, Certo, & Gruenewald (1979).

APPENDIX C

TWO STUDENT CASES: PLANNING INSTRUCTION

STUDENT PROFILES	
Joseph	**Jazmine**
Joseph is a ten-year-old fourth grade student diagnosed with spastic cerebral palsy. He has limited use of his arms and legs and relies on a wheelchair for mobility. He is currently diagnosed as having a severe intellectual disability. His communication system consists of symbols presented in an array of two presented approximately 8"-10"inches apart and at eye level.	Jazmine is 16 years old and in tenth grade. She has been diagnosed with Autism and has a moderate intellectual disability. She reads on a 3rd grade level and requires visual supports for both receptive and expressive language and communication.

IEP GOALS	
Follow **IDEA Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closure** guidance. Make academic goals the centerpiece of daily planning for continuous education, then integrate behavioral, social, functional, life skill, and transition goals accordingly.	
Academic: By the end of the year, and as demonstrated by 80% accuracy on graded teacher assignments and tests, Joseph will • Identify the appropriate 4th grade units of measurement for different purposes in a real-life context[4] • Explain events, procedures, ideas, or concepts in a 4th grade historical, scientific, or technical text based on specific information in the text. **Behavioral:** Given a five-step process, Joseph will allow and follow each step, in order, 9 out of 10 times. **Transition:** Given instruction with guidance and practice at home, Joseph will allow or follow through 80% of the daily living skills steps on the checklist for 5 consecutive days.	**Academic:** By the end of the year, and as demonstrated by 80% accuracy on graded teacher assignments and tests, Jazmine will • Use descriptive statistics to describe a data set (range, mean/average, median, mode, outliers/gaps)[5] • Use representations to describe the relationships among Earth systems and how those relationships are being modified due to human activity **Transition:** Given instruction with guidance and practice at home, Jazmine will perform 80% of the daily living skills steps on the checklist for 5 consecutive days.

LESSON OBJECTIVES	
Create objectives based on the curriculum currently in use. Design learning objectives so that they are both aligned to the IEP goals and tailored specifically for building knowledge and skills within the context of the home environment.	
Given the steps for making oatmeal, Joseph will...	**Given data on weather patterns, Jazmine will...**

• Use communication system to manipulate picture strips to
  » select the ingredients needed
  » select appropriate liquid measurement
  » put steps in process in the correct order
• Allow or follow through with the sequence for cooking oatmeal
• Allow or follow through with the sequence for five consecutive days
	• Identify outliers in a data set by using a scatterplot
	• Find data by category using a table
	• Use descriptive statistics to describe a data set (range, mean/average, median, mode, outliers/gaps)
	• Follow a daily schedule for recording and analyzing weather patterns

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4   The outline for this lesson is built from **Accessible Chef** resources.

5   The outline for this lesson is an adaptation from the National Center and State Collaborative's (2013) "**NCSC Math Activities with Scripted Systematic Instruction (MASSI): High School Data Analysis**".

ASSESSMENT MEASURES

Determine how to simply and concretely measure student learning for each objective regardless of instructional delivery model. Prioritize assessment measures that can be easily recorded asynchronously and at any time.

Joseph will...	**Jazmine will...**
• Submit a photo of correct liquid measurement • Submit a photo of sequenced photo strips • Submit a video demonstrating that he follows each step in the process • Complete the weekly checklist and submit a photograph of the final product for each day he prepares oatmeal	• Submit a completed packet for the Data Analysis Skills Test 1 • Complete the weekly checklist and submit the final product for each day she records and analyzes weather data

LESSON ACTIVITIES

Plan activities that cohere with natural routines in the home, reflect student interests, and teach important skills that are generalizable to other contexts.

Joseph will engage in the following activities:	**Jazmine will engage in the following activities:**
• Introduce steps to follow in a recipe • Watch a model of someone performing each step • Identify each step performed • Read recipe • Identify ingredients • Put steps in the proper sequence • Allow or follow directions step-by-step • Allow or follow directions 5 days in a row	• Introduce analyzing data on weather patterns • Look at data for how many hours it rained and how many inches of rain fell using scatterplot • Observe pattern that the longer it rains, the more inches it rains • Identify outliers • Look at data for rainfall and average temperature by month using table • Graph data from a table

TARGETED SKILLS

Name specific, observable skills in clear terms that indicate performance and occur naturally in the home. Match skills with lesson activities that matter to the student in order to promote interest and engagement. Target skills that are applicable to other people and contexts outside of home.

Joseph will...	**Jazmine will...**
• Read recipe • Select ingredients • Select appropriate liquid measurement • Arrange picture strips in order • Perform sequence • Repeat sequence over a period of five days	• Read scatterplots • Read tables • Convert tables into graphs • Gather weather data daily • Analyze weather data over course of one week

APPENDIX D

TWO STUDENT CASES: DELIVERING LESSONS AND MONITORING PROGRESS

STUDENT MATERIALS

Develop materials according to whether the lesson will be an interactive event between teacher and student or delivered in asynchronous time. Ensure access by individualizing methods for distributing materials to each student.

For low-tech options, Joseph will need a packet of printed student materials which include...	**For low-tech options, Jazmine will need a packet of printed student materials which include...**
• Communication system • Printed **visual recipe** cut into picture strips of ingredients and steps in the process • Printed visual schedule for the week with checklist	• Rainfall scatterplot • Monthly rainfall/temperature table • Equations for range and mean/average • Printed visual schedule for data capture for the week
For high-tech options, add... • **Meeting link** for live stream	**For high-tech options, add...** • **Meeting link** for live stream

LESSON DELIVERY

Customize implementation according to lesson activities and chosen instructional delivery model. Enlist related service providers and other team members to deliver lessons and accommodations to secure access and opportunity to learn, integration of content and skills, and promote student interest. Ensure that family members receive adequate support.

For low-tech delivery... **Model** • Explain today's lesson on the phone • Provide direction on partner-assisted scanning • Review cooking lesson from February • Ask Joseph to look at visual recipe • List ingredients with visuals • Narrate steps for making oatmeal **Lead** • Have Joseph select the list of ingredients using eye gaze and/or partner assisted scanning as per communication plan • Have Joseph select the visuals to complete the recipe in sequential order, given 2 visuals at a time. **Test** • Using partner assisted scanning, Joseph will indicate the sequential order of the recipe when given 2 of the sequence strips and respond with an eye gaze to "Is this the first step", then, "is this the next step", etc. • Joseph will actively participate by selecting visuals of ingredients and document with photo • Joseph will actively participate by selecting visuals for the sequence of the activity and document with photo • Joseph will actively participate by selecting visuals for the sequence of the activity for five days and document with photo **For high-tech delivery, add...** • Use video conference to conduct today's lesson • Watch video model together, naming steps as you watch	**For low-tech delivery...** **Model** • Introduce activity on analyzing data on weather patterns by phone • Ask Jazmine to look at scatterplot problem in student packet • List components found on scatterplot (x- and y-axis, variable, rainfall, time) • Model the process • Note trend/pattern and outliers **Lead** • Ask Jazmine to find outliers on scatterplot • Ask Jazmine name specific outliners **Model** • Introduce activity on reading a table • Ask Jazmine to look at table problem in student packet • List components found on scatterplot (columns, months of year, total rainfall inches, average high temperature) • Model the process **Lead** • Ask Jazmine to find amount of rainfall in a given month • Ask Jazmine to identify average temperature in a given month **Test** • Ask Jazmine to locate Data Analysis Skills Test 1 • Read directions for each problem • Ask Jazmine to select response • Record whether response is correct or incorrect • Provide praise for completing assessment (not for correct answers during testing) • Once finished, review missed problems **For high-tech delivery, add...** • Use video conference to conduct today's lesson

PROGRESS MONITORING AND DOCUMENTATION

Customize methods for gathering work products from students based on resources available in the home. Monitor student progress closely, using both concrete and anecdotal data to drive continued planning. Provide specific, timely feedback to make sure students practice newly-acquired skills accurately.

For asynchronous monitoring, the teacher will need the following permanent products (e.g., from phone "catch and capture") which include... • Analyze student permanent products (sequence strips, photographs, videos, checklists) • Document performance in progress monitoring tool	**For asynchronous monitoring**, the teacher will need the following permanent products (e.g., from phone "catch and capture") which include... • Analyze student responses from Data Analysis Skill Test 1 • Document performance in progress monitoring tool
For real-time, synchronous options, add... • Observe lesson implementation/student actions • Record whether response is correct or incorrect	**For real-time, synchronous options, add...** • Observe lesson implementation/student actions • Record whether response is correct or incorrect

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