Louisiana Believes

Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities
Supporting Guidance Documents

April 2020

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

Agenda + Logistics

I. Academic Resource Guidance for Students with Disabilities

II. Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services

III. Family Toolbox: Ways to Support Students with Disabilities During School Closure

IV. IDEA Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closure

V. Closeout

Logistics

If you are experiencing audio difficulties, please make sure that your speakers are on and that your volume is at a suitable level.

The call will be in the listen only mode to ensure we get through the information. Please type questions into the chat box as we go along.

Dial in by phone: 646 876 9923
Meeting ID: 515 598 121

Overview

Earlier this week, the Department released a suite of resources to support school systems in providing special education in a continuous learning environment. The resources are located on the Department's COVID-19 web page and the Students with Disabilities web page.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Accessibility of Instructional Materials PDF
- Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Accommodations PDF PDF
- Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services PDF
- Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Staffing Guidance PDF
- Family Toolbox: Ways to Support Students with Disabilities During School Closures PDF
- IDEA Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closures PDF

Academic Resource Guidance for Students with Disabilities

Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities

Last week, the Department released a suite of tools to support school systems in planning for continuous learning. This toolkit included the following resources:

- Louisiana Continuous Education Toolkit: Guidance and Tools
- Louisiana Continuous Education Toolkit: Academic Resources
- Louisiana Continuous Education Toolkit: Staffing

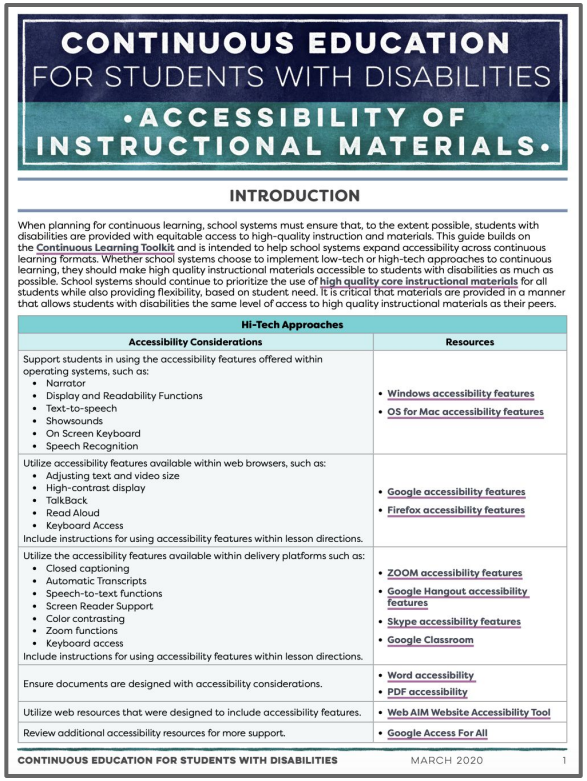
The Department is expanding each of these to address the needs of students with disabilities.

- Louisiana Continuous Education Toolkit - Staffing PDF
- Louisiana Continuous Education Toolkit - Guidance and Tools PDF
- Louisiana Continuous Education Toolkit - Academic Resources PDF
- Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services PDF
- Family Toolbox: Ways to Support Students with Disabilities During School Closures PDF
- IDEA Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closures PDF

Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities

As part of the Continuous Education Toolkit: Guidance and Tools resource, the Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities: Accessibility of Instructional Materials document assists school systems in:

- Planning a continuous learning delivery approach that incorporates accessibility from the start, and
- Ensuring instructional materials are accessible in hi-tech or low-tech approaches to continuous learning.



CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

•ACCESSIBILITY OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS•

INTRODUCTION

When planning for continuous learning, school systems must ensure that, to the extent possible, students with disabilities are provided with equitable access to high-quality instruction and materials. This guide builds on the Continuous Learning Toolkit and is intended to help school systems expand accessibility across continuous learning formats. Whether school systems choose to implement low-tech or high-tech approaches to continuous learning, they should make high quality instructional materials accessible to students with disabilities as much as possible. School systems should continue to prioritize the use of high quality core instructional materials for all students while also providing flexibility, based on student need. It is critical that materials are provided in a manner that allows students with disabilities the same level of access to high quality instructional materials as their peers.

Hi-Tech Approaches	
Accessibility Considerations	**Resources**
Support students in using the accessibility features offered within operating systems, such as: • Narrator • Display and Readability Functions • Text-to-speech • Showsounds • On Screen Keyboard • Speech Recognition	• Windows accessibility features • OS for Mac accessibility features
Utilize accessibility features available within web browsers, such as: • Adjusting text and video size • High-contrast display • TalkBack • Read Aloud • Keyboard Access Include instructions for using accessibility features within lesson directions.	• Google accessibility features • Firefox accessibility features
Utilize the accessibility features available within delivery platforms such as: • Closed captioning • Automatic Transcripts • Speech-to-text functions • Screen Reader Support • Color contrasting • Zoom functions • Keyboard access Include instructions for using accessibility features within lesson directions.	• ZOOM accessibility features • Google Hangout accessibility features • Skype accessibility features • Google Classroom
Ensure documents are designed with accessibility considerations.	• Word accessibility • PDF accessibility
Utilize web resources that were designed to include accessibility features.	• Web AIM Website Accessibility Tool
Review additional accessibility resources for more support.	• Google Access For All

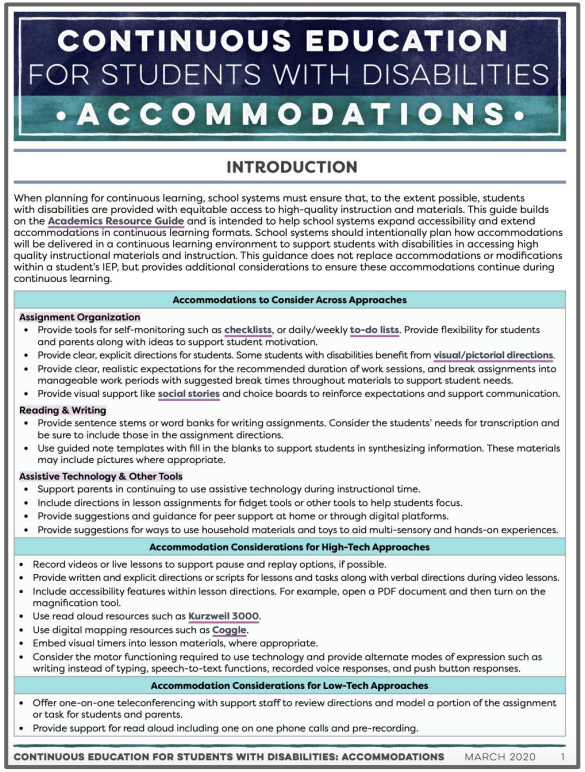
CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES MARCH 2020 1

Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities

As part of the Academic Resource Guide, the Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Accommodations document assists school systems in extending accommodations across continuous learning environments (high-tech, low-tech) with focus on:

- organization,
- reading and writing, and
- assistive technology and other tools.

This resource does not replace accommodations and modifications within a student's IEP, but gives additional considerations to expand them into continuous learning.



CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

• ACCOMMODATIONS •

INTRODUCTION

When planning for continuous learning, school systems must ensure that, to the extent possible, students with disabilities are provided with equitable access to high-quality instruction and materials. This guide builds on the Academics Resource Guide and is intended to help school systems expand accessibility and extend accommodations in continuous learning formats. School systems should intentionally plan how accommodations will be delivered in a continuous learning environment to support students with disabilities in accessing high quality instructional materials and instruction. This guidance does not replace accommodations or modifications within a student's IEP, but provides additional considerations to ensure these accommodations continue during continuous learning.

Accommodations to Consider Across Approaches

Assignment Organization

- Provide tools for self-monitoring such as checklists, or daily/weekly to-do lists. Provide flexibility for students and parents along with ideas to support student motivation.
- Provide clear, explicit directions for students. Some students with disabilities benefit from visual/pictorial directions.
- Provide clear, realistic expectations for the recommended duration of work sessions, and break assignments into manageable work periods with suggested break times throughout materials to support student needs.
- Provide visual support like social stories and choice boards to reinforce expectations and support communication.

Reading & Writing

- Provide sentence stems or word banks for writing assignments. Consider the students' needs for transcription and be sure to include those in the assignment directions.
- Use guided note templates with fill in the blanks to support students in synthesizing information. These materials may include pictures where appropriate.

Assistive Technology & Other Tools

- Support parents in continuing to use assistive technology during instructional time.
- Include directions in lesson assignments for fidget tools or other tools to help students focus.
- Provide suggestions and guidance for peer support at home or through digital platforms.
- Provide suggestions for ways to use household materials and toys to aid multi-sensory and hands-on experiences.

Accommodation Considerations for High-Tech Approaches

- Record videos or live lessons to support pause and replay options, if possible.
- Provide written and explicit directions or scripts for lessons and tasks along with verbal directions during video lessons.
- Include accessibility features within lesson directions. For example, open a PDF document and then turn on the magnification tool.
- Use read aloud resources such as Kurzweil 3000.
- Use digital mapping resources such as Coggle.
- Embed visual timers into lesson materials, where appropriate.
- Consider the motor functioning required to use technology and provide alternate modes of expression such as writing instead of typing, speech-to-text functions, recorded voice responses, and push button responses.

Accommodation Considerations for Low-Tech Approaches

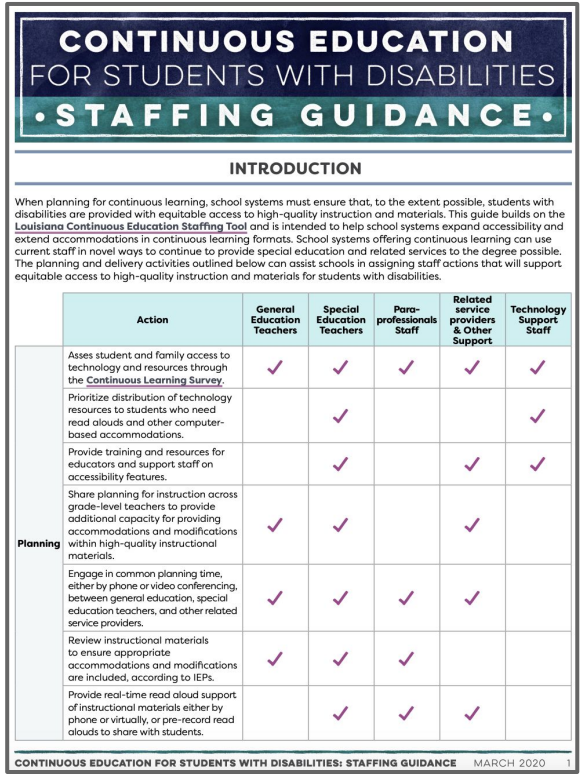
- Offer one-on-one teleconferencing with support staff to review directions and model a portion of the assignment or task for students and parents.
- Provide support for read aloud including one on one phone calls and pre-recording.

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: ACCOMMODATIONS MARCH 2020 1

Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities

As part of the Louisiana Continuous Education Toolkit: Staffing, the Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Staffing Guidance supports school systems in:

- Thinking through ways to use staff across a school building to support students with disabilities,
- Assigning specific actions to staff members to ***plan*** for high quality instruction for students with disabilities during continuous learning, and
- Assigning specific actions to support the ***delivery*** of high quality instruction for students with disabilities during continuous learning.



CONTINUOUS EDUCATION
FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES
•STAFFING GUIDANCE•

INTRODUCTION

When planning for continuous learning, school systems must ensure that, to the extent possible, students with disabilities are provided with equitable access to high-quality instruction and materials. This guide builds on the **Louisiana Continuous Education Staffing Tool** and is intended to help school systems expand accessibility and extend accommodations in continuous learning formats. School systems offering continuous learning can use current staff in novel ways to continue to provide special education and related services to the degree possible. The planning and delivery activities outlined below can assist schools in assigning staff actions that will support equitable access to high-quality instruction and materials for students with disabilities.

	Action	General Education Teachers	Special Education Teachers	Para-professionals Staff	Related service providers & Other Support	Technology Support Staff
Planning	Asses student and family access to technology and resources through the **Continuous Learning Survey**.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Prioritize distribution of technology resources to students who need read alouds and other computer-based accommodations.		✓			✓
	Provide training and resources for educators and support staff on accessibility features.		✓		✓	✓
	Share planning for instruction across grade-level teachers to provide additional capacity for providing accommodations and modifications within high-quality instructional materials.	✓	✓		✓	
	Engage in common planning time, either by phone or video conferencing, between general education, special education teachers, and other related service providers.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Review instructional materials to ensure appropriate accommodations and modifications are included, according to IEPs.	✓	✓	✓		
	Provide real-time read aloud support of instructional materials either by phone or virtually, or pre-record read alouds to share with students.		✓	✓	✓	

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: STAFFING GUIDANCE MARCH 2020 1

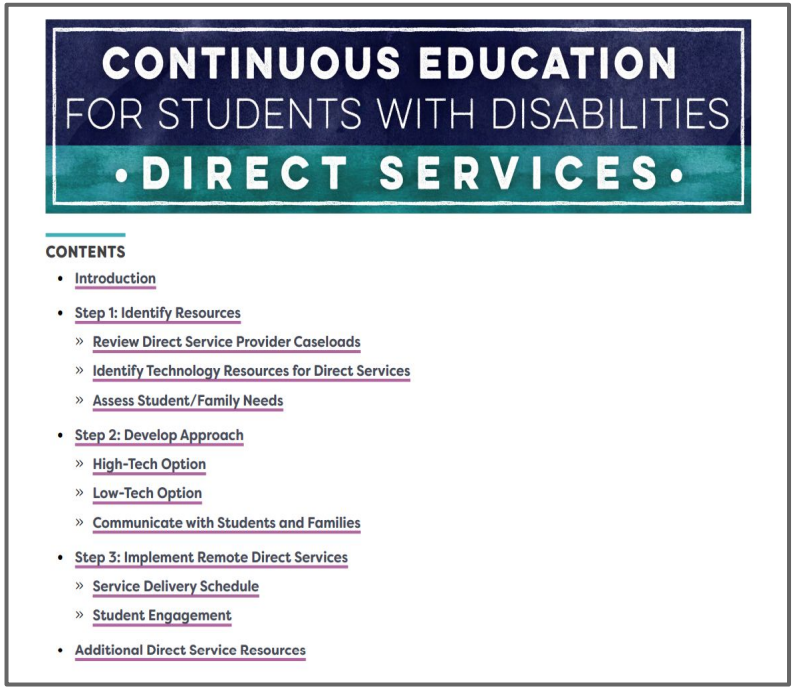
Direct Services Guide for Students with Disabilities

Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services

The Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services guide builds on the Continuous Education Toolkit to support school systems in adapting direct services to continuous learning.

The guide provides:

- A three-step process to identify resources, develop an approach, and implement remote direct services, and
- Concrete resources and other tools to guide the planning process.



CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

•DIRECT SERVICES•

CONTENTS

- Introduction
- Step 1: Identify Resources
  - Review Direct Service Provider Caseloads
  - Identify Technology Resources for Direct Services
  - Assess Student/Family Needs
- Step 2: Develop Approach
  - High-Tech Option
  - Low-Tech Option
  - Communicate with Students and Families
- Step 3: Implement Remote Direct Services
  - Service Delivery Schedule
  - Student Engagement
- Additional Direct Service Resources

Direct Services
Step 1: Identify Resources

To ensure direct services continue during continuous learning, the Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services guides school systems through identifying resources by completing the actions outlined below.

1. Review direct service provider caseloads.
2. Identify technology resources available to continue direct services.
3. Assess student and family needs.

Direct Services
Step 2: Develop Approach

After identifying resources, the Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services guide assists school systems in developing an approach to provide direct services to students with disabilities during continuous learning.

School systems explore high-tech and low-tech options for service delivery and approaches to communicating with students and families.

Direct Services
Step 3: Implement Remote Direct Services

To support the implementation of direct services remotely the Continuous Learning for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services guide provides additional resources to assist school systems in:

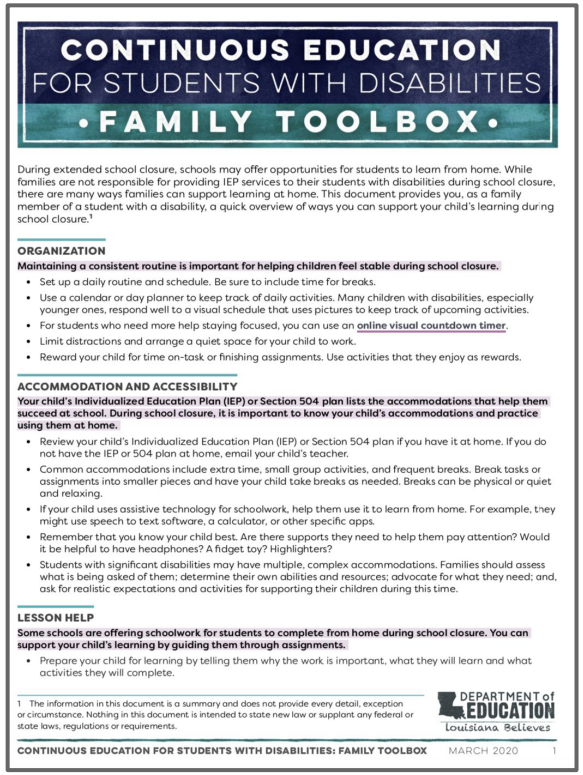
- Establishing a service delivery schedule, including a sample for school system use.
- Providing strategies to support student engagement during direct service delivery in a continuous learning environment.

Family Toolbox: Ways to Support Students with Disabilities During Extended School Closure

Family Toolbox: Ways to Support Students with Disabilities During Extended School Closure

There are many ways families can support students with disabilities with continuous education during extended school closure. The Family Toolbox provides strategies and resources for families in the following areas:

- Organization,
- Accommodation and Accessibility,
- Lesson Help,
- Supplemental Learning,
- Communication, and
- Non-Internet Resources.



CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

• FAMILY TOOLBOX •

During extended school closure, schools may offer opportunities for students to learn from home. While families are not responsible for providing IEP services to their students with disabilities during school closure, there are many ways families can support learning at home. This document provides you, as a family member of a student with a disability, a quick overview of ways you can support your child's learning during school closure.[1]

ORGANIZATION

Maintaining a consistent routine is important for helping children feel stable during school closure.

- Set up a daily routine and schedule. Be sure to include time for breaks.
- Use a calendar or day planner to keep track of daily activities. Many children with disabilities, especially younger ones, respond well to a visual schedule that uses pictures to keep track of upcoming activities.
- For students who need more help staying focused, you can use an online visual countdown timer.
- Limit distractions and arrange a quiet space for your child to work.
- Reward your child for time on-task or finishing assignments. Use activities that they enjoy as rewards.

ACCOMMODATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 plan lists the accommodations that help them succeed at school. During school closure, it is important to know your child's accommodations and practice using them at home.

- Review your child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 plan if you have it at home. If you do not have the IEP or 504 plan at home, email your child's teacher.
- Common accommodations include extra time, small group activities, and frequent breaks. Break tasks or assignments into smaller pieces and have your child take breaks as needed. Breaks can be physical or quiet and relaxing.
- If your child uses assistive technology for schoolwork, help them use it to learn from home. For example, they might use speech to text software, a calculator, or other specific apps.
- Remember that you know your child best. Are there supports they need to help them pay attention? Would it be helpful to have headphones? A fidget toy? Highlighters?
- Students with significant disabilities may have multiple, complex accommodations. Families should assess what is being asked of them; determine their own abilities and resources; advocate for what they need; and, ask for realistic expectations and activities for supporting their children during this time.

LESSON HELP

Some schools are offering schoolwork for students to complete from home during school closure. You can support your child's learning by guiding them through assignments.

- Prepare your child for learning by telling them why the work is important, what they will learn and what activities they will complete.

1 The information in this document is a summary and does not provide every detail, exception or circumstance. Nothing in this document is intended to state new law or supplant any federal or state laws, regulations or requirements.

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CONTINUOUS EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: FAMILY TOOLBOX MARCH 2020 1

IDEA Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closure

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Federal regulations govern most special education compliance timelines including, but not limited, to Part C to B transition, initial IEP development, and reevaluation timelines.

- The U.S. Department of Education (ED) has issued guidance on available flexibilities for IDEA Part B timelines.
- The CARES Act

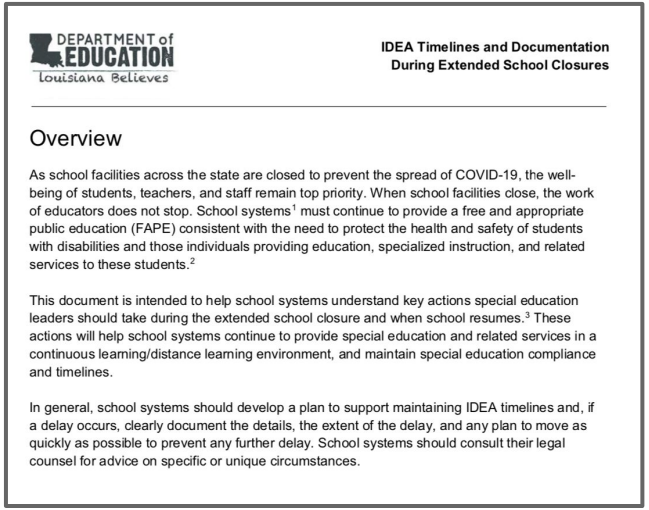
A very small number of IDEA compliance timelines are defined by state regulations. BESE approved initial waivers on those timelines, including

- initial evaluations for students with disabilities, and
- reevaluations for students with a developmental delay turning 9.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

The Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure resource supports special education leaders to understand key actions to take during the extended school closure and when school resumes, such as:

- Providing special education and related services, to the extent possible.
- Maintaining special education timelines, to the extent possible.
- Developing a plan to document decisions.



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IDEA Timelines and Documentation During Extended School Closures

Overview

As school facilities across the state are closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the well-being of students, teachers, and staff remain top priority. When school facilities close, the work of educators does not stop. School systems[1] must continue to provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students.[2]

This document is intended to help school systems understand key actions special education leaders should take during the extended school closure and when school resumes.[3] These actions will help school systems continue to provide special education and related services in a continuous learning/distance learning environment, and maintain special education compliance and timelines.

In general, school systems should develop a plan to support maintaining IDEA timelines and, if a delay occurs, clearly document the details, the extent of the delay, and any plan to move as quickly as possible to prevent any further delay. School systems should consult their legal counsel for advice on specific or unique circumstances.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

In general, school systems should develop a plan to support maintaining IDEA timelines and, if a delay occurs, clearly document the details, the extent of the delay, and any plan to move as quickly as possible to prevent any further delay. School systems should consult their legal counsel for advice on specific or unique circumstances.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Annual Review IEP Meeting

During school closure, all school systems should continue to annually review IEPs to the extent possible. IEP team meetings can be conducted through alternate means including video conference or telephone conference calls.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

IEP Amendment Process

School systems should continue to provide special education and related services to students with disabilities to the extent possible, though extended school closure may affect how such services are provided. If a school system needs to modify the special education and related services in an IEP to adapt to student needs during continuous learning/distance learning, the school system should:

1. Notify the parent or guardian of the modification (e.g. call or email to discuss) and obtain agreement.
    a. **If the parent or guardian agrees** to the modification without convening the IEP team, document the modification through an IEP amendment or an individualized log.
    b. **If the parent or guardian does not agree** to the modification or requests an IEP team meeting, an IEP team meeting would need to be held.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Reevaluations

IDEA requires school systems to reevaluate each child with a disability at least every three years, unless the parent or guardian and the public agency agree that a reevaluation is unnecessary. School systems should conduct reevaluations to the extent possible during school closures.

School systems:

- Should conduct reevaluations that can be completed remotely or that do not require in-person assessment. School systems should continue to meet standard timelines.
- May delay reevaluations that require in-person interaction, assessment, or observation until school reopens. School systems should develop a plan to complete these evaluations and reevaluations as soon as possible once school reopens and notify parents.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Reevaluations

School systems should carefully document:

- All reevaluation activities carried out remotely during extended school closure,
- All postponed in-person activities or reevaluation components, and
- A plan for completing outstanding reevaluation requirements after school closure ends.

School systems must act in good faith in conducting and attempting to complete reevaluations during school closure.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Initial Evaluations

In general, an initial evaluation must be conducted within 60 days of receiving parental consent under IDEA. During school closure, BESE provided an initial waiver that extends initial evaluation timelines to 90 calendar days of receiving parental consent.

School systems should conduct initial evaluations to the extent possible during school closures. School systems:

- Should secure written consent to evaluate from the student's parent or legal guardian.
- Should conduct components of initial evaluations that do not require in-person interactions, assessments, or observations.
- May delay components of an initial evaluation requiring face-to-face assessment and observations until school reopens. School systems should develop a plan to complete these evaluations as soon as possible once school reopens.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Initial IEPs

After a school system completes an evaluation that determines a student is eligible for special education and related services, it has a maximum of 30 calendar days to complete the initial IEP placement document. Parents must provide written consent for school systems to provide services contained in the initial IEP.

During extended school closure, the school system may:

- Mail parents a copy of the initial IEP to review, sign, and mail the signature page back to the school system.
- Obtain parent consent signatures via email as long as parents have consented to use email and the document is sent securely.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Delivery of IEP Services

Although federal law requires distance instruction to be accessible to students with disabilities, it does not mandate specific methodologies.

During extended school closure, school systems may use personnel to provide support to students with disabilities in novel ways and adjust the instructional delivery method of special education and related services.

Where technology itself imposes a barrier to access or where educational materials simply are not available in an accessible format, educators may still meet their legal obligations by providing children with disabilities equally effective alternate access to the curriculum or services provided to other students.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Documenting Services Provided During School Closures

School systems should document modifications, delays, inability of service, and other changes to special education and related services provided to students with disabilities during extended school closure. At minimum, this documentation should include the following:

- Date(s) provided
- Education/related service minutes (both offered and delivered)
- Service provided to student (both current and modified)
- Staff who provided the service
- Accommodation/modification provided to student, based on updated IEP
- Student response to services and accommodations
- Notes

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Compensatory Education

After an extended closure, IEP teams are responsible for reviewing how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to students with disabilities. A data review should be conducted on all students with disabilities. If the student lost progress, IEP teams will need to reassess services and determine whether the student requires compensatory education.

School system closed, not providing continuous learning/distance learning. Even if a school system closes schools and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, the school system must consider compensatory services. A full school closure does not exempt a school system from obligations to provide compensatory services for lost learning.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Compensatory Education

School system closed, providing continuous learning/distance learning. The school system should document all activities, programs, and related services it offered to provide an eligible student FAPE. Special education and related services during the school closure can provide educational benefit to the student and reduce or eliminate compensatory education when school resumes.

IEP teams should make their compensatory education offer decisions on a case-by-case basis. When determining whether an individual student is entitled to compensatory education, IEP teams should use a systematic approach and individual student data in their decision-making.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Compensatory Education

Some illustrative, non-exclusive elements school systems should consider include:

- If special education and related services could not be modified to a continuous learning/distance learning environment,
- If some special education and related services were modified but did not fully meet the student's education needs,
- The student's IEPs: pre-extended closure, amended, and revised, and
- The duration and circumstances of the school closure (e.g. full closure or continuous learning/distance learning).

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Written Notifications to Parents

Federal rules require school systems to provide written notification to parents:

- A reasonable time before the public agency proposes to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of FAPE to the child; or refuses to initiate or change the identification, evaluation, or educational placement of the child or the provision of FAPE to the child,
- Of procedural safeguards on initial referral or parent request for evaluation, receipt of the first state complaint and receipt of the first due process complaint in a school year, in accordance discipline procedures, and request by a parent, and
- Regarding due process complaints.

These notifications can be provided via email if parents agree to email communication.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Parental Consent

Federal rules require parental consent for:

- Initial evaluations,
- Delivery of special education and related services, and
- Reevaluations.

Under federal rules, consent means:

- The parent has been fully informed of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought, in his or her native language, or through another mode of communication.
- The parent understands and agrees in writing to the carrying out of the activity for which his or her consent is sought, and the consent describes that activity and lists the records (if any) that will be released and to whom.
- The parent understands that the granting of consent is voluntary on the part of the parent and may be revoked at any time.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Other Parent Communications

Schools systems must discuss other special education topics with parents. Examples include:

- Delivering services using non-public video conferencing platforms (consent), and
- The content of an IEP and/or modifications to an existing IEP.

School systems should document these communications in writing (which may include emails or other correspondence with parents) to the extent possible.

Special Education Compliance During Extended School Closure

Privacy

For the most current guidance regarding student privacy during school closures and continuous learning please refer to the Louisiana Department of Education's Privacy and Security for Distance Learning guidance document.

Act 833

Graduating Seniors

The spring end-of-course testing window has been cancelled and the requirement has been waived for currently enrolled graduating seniors who will graduate by August 31, including Act 833 eligible seniors.

The Department will provide additional guidance on documenting the goal summary in SER in the coming weeks.

Closeout