SPECIAL EDUCATION & ONLINE LEARNING

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FAMILIES & SCHOOLS TOGETHER (FAST)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Define** the key differences between "emergency remote learning" and "distance learning" and what it means for families this fall
2. **Support** parents with collaboration and advocacy strategies they can use with their child's IEP team to ensure the most successful provision of services possible during distance learning.
3. Help parents **identify** realistic strategies they can use to support their child with special needs at home

PART 1:
THE EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE DURING COVID-19

- There have been some changes in education since COVID-19 originally forced schools to close last spring
- “Emergency Remote Learning” vs. ”Distance Learning”
- Minimum required daily instructional minutes

KEY DIFFERENCES

Learning Components	Spring 2020 Emergency Remote Learning	Fall 2020 Distance Learning	Explanation of Changes
Full Academic Content	✗	✓	California Assembly Bill (AB 77 Ed Code 43503) mandates that distance learning shall include: "Content aligned to grade level standards that is provided at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction."
Consistent Learning Platform	✗	✓	All teachers and students use Google Classroom as the primary learning management platform to manage their coursework and streamline delivery of content and resources. Teachers may supplement Google Classroom with additional district-approved tech tools.
Live Instruction (Synchronous)	✗	✓	State mandates daily live (synchronous) instruction ((AB 77 Ed Code 43503) and required number of instructional minutes (AB 77 Ed Code 43502) Daily live instruction includes activities such as check-ins/office hours, whole class discussion, small group discussion, progress monitoring, etc.
Independent Student Work (Asynchronous)	✓	✓	Research indicates that no more than 50% of online instruction should be synchronous to support equity, comprehension, and to reduce screen fatigue. Daily asynchronous learning includes independent learning activities such as watching tutorial videos, reading, synthesizing information and responding to prompts/instruction, etc.
Attendance	✗	✓	State mandates daily attendance and record keeping (AB 77 Ed Code 43504) Continue to focus on student check-ins and access
Bell Schedule	✗	✓	Clear bell schedule supports students access to live instruction (synchronous) and independent work (asynchronous), while eliminating overlap between courses.

"DISTANCE LEARNING" DEFINITION

- (a) **"Distance learning"** means instruction in which the pupil and instructor are in different locations and pupils are under the general supervision of a certificated employee of the local educational agency. Distance learning may include, but is not limited to, all of the following:

  - **Interaction, instruction, and check-ins between teachers and pupils** through the use of a computer or communications technology.
  - **Video or audio instruction** in which the primary mode of communication between the pupil and certificated employee is online interaction, instructional television, video, tele-courses, or other instruction that relies on computer or communications technology.
  - The use of print materials incorporating assignments that are the subject of written or oral feedback.

REQUIRED INSTRUCTIONAL MINUTES

- For the 2020–21 school year, **instructional minutes shall be determined as follows**:
  - **For in-person instruction,** instructional minutes shall be based on time scheduled under the immediate physical supervision… of an employee of the [district]
  - **For distance learning, instructional time shall be based on the time value of assignments.**
  - **For a combined day of instruction delivered through both in-person instruction and distance learning**, time scheduled under the immediate supervision of an employee can be combined with assignments.

REQUIRED INSTRUCTIONAL MINUTES (CONT'D)

- **For distance learning, instructional time shall be based on the time value of assignments.**

- For the 2020–21 school year, the minimum school day for a [district] is as follows:
  - 180 instructional minutes in kindergarten.
  - 230 instructional minutes in grades 1 to 3.
  - 240 instructional minutes in grades 4 to 12.
  - 180 instructional minutes for pupils enrolled in a continuation high school.

SYNCHRONOUS VS. ASYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTION

- Synchronous Instruction = refers to all types of learning in which learner(s) and instructor(s) are in the same place, at the same time, in order for learning to take place. This includes in-person classes, live online meetings when the whole class or smaller groups get together (e.g., live zoom meetings, google classroom, google meet).
- Asynchronous Instruction = refers to instruction that does not occur in the same place or at the same time, such as prerecorded video lessons that students complete on their own—that is not being delivered in person or in real time (e.g., pre-recorded zoom/google presentations or lessons, online discussion boards, and any independent work)
- Instructional time includes BOTH synchronous AND instruction (research indicates instruction should be no more than 50% synchronous to support equity, comprehension)

WHAT IS THE DISTRICT REQUIRED TO DO?

- **Confirm or provide access for all students** to connectivity and devices adequate to participate in the educational program and complete assigned work.
- **Content aligned to grade level standards** that is provided at a level of quality and intellectual challenge substantially equivalent to in-person instruction.
- **Academic and other supports designed to address the needs of pupils who are not performing at grade level,** or need support in other areas (e.g., ELL, SPED, students in foster care or experiencing homelessness, and students requiring mental health supports.)

WHAT IS THE DISTRICT REQUIRED TO DO?

- Special education, related services, and any other services required by a student's IEP (**FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF IEP IN DISTANCE LEARNING**), including accommodations necessary to ensure that IEP can be executed in a distance learning environment.

- Designated and integrated instruction in English language development

- **Daily live interaction with certificated employees and peers** for purposes of instruction, progress monitoring, and maintaining school connectedness (i.e., video or phone communication).
  - If daily live interaction is not feasible as part of regular instruction, district and parent may create an alternative plan for frequent live interaction that provides a comparable level of service and school connectedness.

WHAT IS THE DISTRICT REQUIRED TO DO?

- Must offer 180 days of instruction
- Must take attendance
- *"Each local educational agency shall ensure that a **weekly engagement record is completed for each pupil** documenting synchronous or asynchronous instruction for each whole or partial day of distance learning, verifying daily participation, and tracking assignments."*
- *"Each school shall **regularly communicate** with parents and guardians regarding a pupil's academic progress."*

- *AB 77, Section 34. Part 24.5. 43504*

BY SEPTEMBER 30, 2020 DISTRICTS SHOULD HAVE A "LEARNING CONTINUITY AND ATTENDANCE PLAN"

- Most districts have a template already, which outlines some of the following:
  - "…the actions the school district, county office of education, or charter school will take to offer classroom-based instruction whenever possible, **particularly for pupils who have experienced significant learning loss due to school closures**."
  - "What **additional supports for pupils with unique needs will be provided**, including for English learners, [and] pupils with exceptional needs served across the full continuum of placements."

PART II:
SUPPORTING PARENT COLLABORATION & ADVOCACY

- School IEP teams will be VERY busy this fall.
- SPED assessments?
- IEP timelines and special education services must continue without interruption.
- Encourage parents to be proactive in contacting their school IEP team to determine:
  - Distance learning schedule (when is synchronous and asynchronous instruction taking place?)
  - When are services being provided?
  - Who can I contact with concerns and what is the best way to reach them? **(especially important if parent is unable to support student with academics)**

PROGRESS ON IEP GOALS

- Encourage parents to take whatever data they can on their child's IEP goals.
- It might be difficult to gather quantitative data in the home setting – qualitative data are better than nothing!
- If parents are having concerns about any issue at home, consider whether this is something that can be added to the IEP. Perhaps they weren't aware it was an issue before, but it's something that a service provider (e.g., SLP, OT) can help with.

CONSULTATION, CONSULTATION, CONSULTATION.

- Even though schools are required to have daily live interactions with students/parents, the IEP has more teeth.
- Encourage parents to request an IEP meeting to discuss their concerns:
  - They should have a list of concerns, but choose 1 or 2 that are most critical (remember, IEP teams will be SWAMPED, so we want to maximize the time a parent has with the team)
  - It's ideal if parent can collect some data on goals to discuss student progress (or lack thereof)
  - **MOST IMPORTANTLY – have parent request the addition of consultation minutes (parent training) as a related service on the IEP**

AND MORE CONSULTATION.

- Consultation/parent training as a related services will allow the parent to have virtual "face-to-face" time with:
  - Teachers
  - School Psychologists
  - Board Certified Behavior Analysts
  - Speech and Language Pathologists
  - Occupational Therapists
  - Physical Therapists
- These staff members can be great sources of support when problem-solving home behaviors, discussing daily schedules, supporting instruction, finding creative ways to measure progress and prevent regression.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR IEP TEAM

- Assume good intentions (districts are learning to adapt to the new educational landscape, just like the rest of us)
- Identify priorities
- Focus your efforts (avoid a laundry list to clarify your message)
- Ask (for what your child needs - more minutes? Parent training/consultation?)
- Craft a powerful story – create a narrative to help the team empathize – GIVE EXAMPLES
- Hold the school IEP team accountable
- Avoid threats

THE QUESTIONS

- What is the policy?
- Are their directives..?
- What's the plan for…?
- How can we…?
- Why/why not?
- Who can help?

PART III:
IDENTIFY STRATEGIES TO USE AT HOME

- Parents should do their best to maintain realistic expectations – they are balancing a lot!
  - Support child's school work
  - Communicating with school
  - Work responsibilities
  - Other family members/children
  - Cooking, cleaning, shopping, etc.
  - Technology needs
  - Financial strain
  - Physical and mental health needs

SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

- Parents should NOT expect to play the role of teacher. Instead they should focus on:
  1. What skills their child appears to have generalized?
  2. What supports their child may need in order to be successful with distance learning?

- Keep in mind: some students will do BETTER during distance learning, some will do MUCH WORSE (both academically, and social/emotionally)

POSITIVE PRAISE

- Among other things, the student has likely experienced a decrease in positive adult attention – let them know when they are doing well, no matter how small the behavior.
  - Give small rewards for the effort – reserve the bigger rewards for the big successes.
  - Aim for a ratio of 3:1, positive to corrective comments at home, whenever the child is not engaged in live instruction activities.

ROUTINE AND PHYSICAL SPACE

- Work with your child to find/create a space with the least amount of distractions - let them help set it up, choose materials, and take ownership (whenever possible) over their workspace.
- During distance learning, most bell schedules will take place the first half of the day
- Create a schedule with you and your child for the remainder of the day to provide structure! Considering their input will increase follow through on their part.

WHAT ABOUT PUSH BACK?

- Consider the cause of the child's resistance. Often this occurs because of a lack of clear understanding of what's expected.
- Enlist help from the school IEP team, especially the school psychologist or BCBA if available. The teacher will be LESS AVAILABLE as they are not only providing synchronous instruction but reviewing/grading assignments, lesson planning, calling parents, and more!
- Is school avoidance an issue?
  - *"Each local educational agency shall develop written procedures for tiered reengagement strategies for all pupils who are absent from distance learning for more than three schooldays or 60 percent of the instructional days in a school week."*
- *AB 77, Section 34. Part 24.5. 43504*

MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS

- During times of social isolation, there is a greater risk of anxiety, depression, and suicidality – especially with teens.
- Encourage parents to TALK TO THEIR CHILD – especially if there is a history. Give them the resources so that parent will never be a barrier to seeking support. Let them know, talking to your child about suicide DOES NOT give them the idea to do it – the research indicates the opposite.
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
  - 1-800-273-T**ALK** (8255) for English
  - 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish
  - text the Crisis Text Line by texting 'TALK' to 741741
- *NOTE: the FCC is requiring all carriers to implement a national 9-8-8 suicide hotline number by July 2022.*