Q & A - Addressing IEP Goals while Following Safety Guidelines

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How can teachers develop plans for addressing individual needs and safety guidelines?

The impact of schools being closed may have been greater for students with disabilities. Staff and families should not expect that all students will return to school with the same levels of skills as before the switch to remote instruction. The priority for addressing IEP goals and other related concepts should focus on the following:

- Review students' IEP's before the start date for students. Check that materials to address their individual needs are available and plan for any additional supports that will be needed in following safety guidelines
- Consider safety, cleaning, and sanitation needs for
  - Assisting students with toileting and other self-care
  - Location, use, and cleaning of special seating equipment
- Understand students' IEP's in order to plan for providing accommodations. *Remember that many students with delays and disabilities might experience challenges in returning to school.* Be ready with visuals, social scripts, and social-emotional supports.
- Build and maintain routines and structure
  - Safety guidelines should be the foundation for your routines (i.e. handwashing, staying in areas of activities, distancing)
  - Teach classroom rules with emphasis on safety guidelines
- Focus on relationships and social-emotional development
  - Lessons and activities should emphasize safety and should help students use calming strategies
  - Develop strategies for providing social interactions while maintaining safety guidelines
- Plan activities that embed learning opportunities within daily routines so that students receive multiple lessons and extra practice with the concepts.
- Refer to district guidelines and develop a consistent plan for maintaining communication with families. Document contacts and conferences with families in order to record their concerns and needs and to provide information about classroom and school procedures.

Resources: https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Leadership_ReOpening_Guide.pdf

Source: Be Informed. Be Involved. Toolkit for Teachers and Families, Louisiana Department of Education https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/covid-19-resources/louisiana-continuous-education-toolkit---guidance-for-early-learning-at-home.pdf

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What are some suggestions for progress monitoring (i.e. virtual, inconsistent attendance)?

Per the Florida Executive Order (Number 20-52) (DOE Order 2020-EO-06) related to reopening schools: "*Robust progress monitoring must be extended to all students in the same district or public charter school with tiered support for students who are not making adequate progress. Students who are receiving instruction through innovative teaching methods must be provided additional support and the opportunity to transition to another teaching method if they fail to make adequate progress. Progress monitoring data must be shared regularly with the Department, as prescribed, to help ensure that resources are rapidly deployed to support students who are failing to make adequate progress.*"

Although IEP teams should begin to review data collected during remote instruction and monitor to identify students who may have regressed during school closures, it is important to allow teachers and staff adequate time to review the current information about students and to plan accordingly.

Emphasize that there should not be a rush to change IEP goals or services and that time should be allowed for students to adjust to the return to school and for teachers and therapists to gather observational and evaluative information. Collaborate with families to gather and share information related to students' performance during remote instruction and current needs.

Expand progress monitoring to include aspects of development that might have been most impacted by school closures. Explore methods of providing meaningful data related to the following:
- Social emotional needs related to trauma and being in situations of uncertainty
- Development of self-care and independent functioning skills
- Gaps in skill development
- Difficulty transitioning back to school
- Understanding of and use of safety measures

The impact of schools being closed may have been greater for students with delays and disabilities. Begin progress monitoring as part of the procedures for re-teaching skills and routines. In addition, monitor students' progress on learning and using the new skills associated with returning to school (i.e. social distancing, cleaning and sanitation, masks).

Collaborate with all staff in the classroom and with therapists to prioritize skills for teaching and monitoring. Select skills which will be essential for student participation during their return to school. Monitor curricula and emerging academic skills as much as possible during daily routines and activities. Coordinate efforts related to types of forms used, communication among staff, and each person's role in documenting and noting each student's progress and needs.

Collaborate with families in order to coordinate efficient methods for communicating needs, as well as progress. Contacts and conferences with families should be documented.

What are the suggested guidelines for limiting number of visitors in the classroom (guidelines for family members, volunteers, therapists, and resource specialists who provide coaching)?

Classroom staff and therapists should be aware of district and school policies related to school reopening and collaborate with each other and with family members to determine additional supports that might be required in helping students follow safety and distancing practices. Prepare the environment so that natural supports are provided (i.e. furniture arrangement, visual reminders, staff zoning).

Collaborate with therapists to develop policies for entering the classroom and schedules that respect rules related to the number of people allowed in classrooms. Review IEP's in order to determine opportune ways to use sections of the classroom and group students in ways that facilitate delivery of their therapy and related services.

Consult district guidelines and school administration when considering permitting visitors to enter the classroom. Refer to district guidelines and consult with school administration when discussing drop-off and pick-up procedures with families.

Many schools will likely limit the number of individuals in a facility at a time. Drop off and pick up procedures might be restructured. Collaborate with classroom staff in order to plan times during arrival and dismissal when their assistance might be needed to support students.

Communicate with families regarding best times and methods to contact the teacher and therapists and document contacts and conferences.

Source: Safe Start, Washington State Department of Health, Child Development During the Covid-19 Outbreak, June 30, 2020.

What are suggestions for maintaining safety guidelines for medically fragile students?

When developing classroom plans and procedures it is vital to consider the medical and health concerns for students who have extensive needs for physical care and assistance. Listed below are suggestions to consider when planning supports for students with medical and physical needs:

- Allow for additional training needed by their teachers and service providers.
- Be certain that information about their medical needs is provided and that additional precautions related to COVID-19 are included in the information and training provided to staff.
- Collaborate with families, therapists, classroom staff, and medical providers to ensure that needed supplies and equipment are available and that training has occurred related to their use.
- Establish methods for documenting the ongoing medical and health status of these students. Maintain a written consultation log in order to document the sharing of information with district nursing staff and family members.

Depending on the needs of each individual student, it may not be feasible to adhere both to distancing guidelines and the criteria outlined in a specific IEP. Plans for addressing physical and medical needs of students are made on a case-by-case basis with the health and safety of the student being prioritized. Additional cleaning and sanitation of supplies and equipment beyond that used in some areas of the classroom might be required.

No student should be excluded from school unless required in order to adhere to local public health mandates or because of unique medical needs. Pediatricians, families, and schools should partner together to collaboratively identify and develop accommodations, when needed.

Source: https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/covid-19-planning-considerations-return-to-in-person-education-in-schools/

Amendments to a student's IEP might be needed in order to provide additional accommodations for health and safety needs. Changes in the IEP that address program or service delivery should be made only if warranted for the student's medical welfare; and after consultation with family members, student's pediatrician, district nursing staff, and classroom staff; and should include review of classroom and medical data. Maintain and document consistent communication with families regarding progress, needs, and ongoing plans.

What are the suggested guidelines when a student or adult who has been in the classroom tests positive for COVID-19?

Classroom staff should be aware of district and school guidelines related to screenings and actions in response to suspected or confirmed illness of classroom staff or students. It is important to follow the guidelines consistently, and it is equally important to inform and prepare students and their families of the guidelines.

Classroom staff should remain calm if there are reports of symptoms of COVID-19 among staff, family members, or students. Respond in a manner that does not disturb or alarm students and their families. Report information that you have received to your school's designated contact person or administrator. Follow the district guidelines for notifying family members. If information needs to be shared, do so privately so that students do not overhear.

Important: Follow guidelines given by your district. Remember the federal, district, and school guidelines regarding student and family confidentiality, as well as Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) policies. Staff members who receive questions from families should document the communications and concerns along with their responses to them, while being sure to note federal, district, and school guidelines.

<u>Source</u>: Joint Guidance on the Application of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) And the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA) To Student Health Records, Student Privacy Office, US Department of Education. <u>https://tats.ucf.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2020/03/2019-HIPAA-FERPA-Joint-Guidance-508-1.pdf</u>

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References are arranged in order of the agency or department that developed the documents cited.

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American Academy of Pediatrics, ***Return to School During COVID-19, Healthy Children.***
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Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services. Michigan, ***Considerations for Planning Return to In-person Education,*** June 4, 2020. Source:
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ECTA Resources:
Child Find and Identification: https://ectacenter.org/topics/earlyid/earlyid.asp
Part B Section 619 Eligibility: https://ectacenter.org/topics/earlyid/partbelig.asp
Transition: https://ectacenter.org/topics/transition/transition.asp
IEP's: https://ectacenter.org/topics/iep/iep.asp

IDEA Guidance: https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus
Part B Procedural Safeguards, June 30, 2020. Source: https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus
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