MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services
IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES & CONSIDERATIONS
Marcella E. Franczkowski, M.S., Assistant State Superintendent

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TIPs to Implement Specially Designed Instruction through Varied Service Delivery Models

As local school systems (LSSs) plan for the reopening of schools, it is important to consider how the recursive processes of specially designed instruction (SDI) development, implementation, and evaluation factor into the individualized decision making about service delivery for students with disabilities. Systems are reminded to make individual, child-specific determinations about the delivery of SDI and IEP implementation in collaboration with the student's parent, through the amended IEP process or IEP meeting if necessary.

The DEI/SES recognizes that service delivery models will shift based on health and safety metrics, community spread of the virus, and other locally determined factors. The following table offers tips for implementing SDI and a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in a variety of alternative service delivery models, including the continuation of a virtual and/or distance learning approach, a blended approach mixing virtual/distance learning with face-to-face instruction or a fully face-to-face approach. It is important to keep in mind efficiency and effectiveness when planning for and implementing SDI for students with disabilities. A proactive planning approach will support educators, families, and students during these challenging times.

The table below is organized around different elements of students' SDI and includes implementation tips and strategies for system leaders, educators, and families.

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IEP Goals and Objectives	• Plan ahead to embed opportunities in daily/weekly schedules to address IEP goals and objectives adhere to these times dedicated to addressing IEP goals and objectives and progress monitoring (this is especially true for IEP goal and objective skills that are not naturally occurring in the grade-level curriculum). • Determine how instruction and practice on social/emotional and behavioral goals will be provided. Consider additional opportunities that may need to be facilitated in a virtual environment to practice these skills, such as virtual recess, lunch bunches, etc. • Consider how exit tickets or questions of the day used in synchronous opportunities can be individualized as a "built-in" data collection tool on IEP goals and objectives. • If a hybrid model is in place, consider ways to address IEP goals during face-to-face instruction with additional practice opportunities during distance learning activities, if needed. • Utilize support staff (paraeducators, instructional assistants) to progress-monitor IEP goals and document them on pre-loaded data collection sheets. • Test the use of different accommodations across environments and make the adjustments based on the context and student response/family input. • Pre-load social stories at the beginning of synchronous learning opportunities that would serve as a prompt traditionally provided in person during face-to-face instruction.
Accommodations and Supplementary Aids	• Obtain information from families about what may exist in the home and serve the same purpose as a specific support in the school environment (i.e., Can LEGOs be used instead of manipulatives? Can assignments be pre-loaded and sent to the student in advance to use a tablet or phone to read aloud?) • Create videos modeling the use of accommodations and supplementary aids for families. • Plan ahead as school operations change, and explicitly teach students how to use strategies in different environments. • Ensure that all needed accommodations and supports are provided outside of ELA and Math (don't forget related arts, science, health, etc.)
Accessibility and Assistive Technology	• Ensure the assistive technology tools used by students are compatible with learning platforms, apps, and other tools that will be used to deliver learning. • Provide guidance on the selection and creation of documents and other learning tools that are compatible with screen readers, refreshable braille, speech to text software, and other tools. • Ensure captioning of videos and remember to include related arts, elective, CTE, and other teachers in this guidance/training.

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Behavioral Supports	• Plan ahead to alternate preferred and non-preferred activities, to increase engagement and build stamina for participation in distance learning activities. • Set clear expectations for student response methods during synchronous instruction and how to ask for help during asynchronous independent activities. • Revisit the training needs of adults who are at home during distance learning to promote consistency (this is especially important for students who require frequent or immediate reinforcement as part of their behavior support plan). • When face-to-face opportunities are phased in, prepare students for this transition by explicit modeling and proactive expectation setting.
Synchronous Learning Activities	• Consider ways to pre-teach or reinforce concepts before and/or after the whole group live instruction. • Implement co-teaching models to support students in the whole group and breakout room settings, where individualized supports can be delivered in small groups.* • Maximize the benefit for students with disabilities during synchronous opportunities by using evidence-based instructional practices such as explicit instruction. *For more information about co-teaching in the virtual and/or distance learning environment, please refer to the following supplement to TAB #20-03: Teaching/Learning and the Least Restrictive Environment in Alternative Service Delivery Models.
Asynchronous Learning Activities	• For recorded lessons, use video editing software to include visual cues, reinforcers, and other individualized supports. • For hard copy packets, consider ways to front-load accommodations before they are distributed (i.e., highlight keywords, add pictures to support comprehension, attach an annotated or model color-coded equation). • Build-in individualized asynchronous learning activities, taking care to balance this with the amount of independent work expected to be completed by all students to avoid overwork and fatigue.

As staff and students continue to acclimate to new and different methods of teaching and learning, it is important to consistently monitor student engagement, participation, and progress to determine if adjustments are needed to further accelerate student progress. For additional information and tips on monitoring the progress of students with disabilities during physical school closures, please refer to the following supplement to TAB #20-03: Tips for Formative Assessments to Guide Student Learning.

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Resources

Council for Exceptional Children and eLuma: Best Practices for Educating Online

Council for Exceptional Children: Quick Take: What You Need to Know About Accessibility

National Center on Intensive Intervention: Using Sample Lessons to Support Continuity of Learning During COVID-19: Tips for Educators

National Center on Intensive Intervention, Center on PBIS and I-MTSS Research Network: Support Students with Disabilities at School and Home: A Guide for Teachers to Support Families and Students

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Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Schools

Clarence C. Crawford, President, Maryland State Board of Education

Larry Hogan, Governor

Carol A. Williamson, Ed.D., Deputy State Superintendent for Teaching and Learning

Marcella E. Franczkowski, M.S., Assistant State Superintendent**,** Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services

200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201
MarylandPublicSchools.org
MarylandLearningLinks.org