

Best Practices in Remote Instruction

For Special Education Teachers



The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted educational systems worldwide, leading to school closures affecting millions of learners ¹. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020) 7.1 million (14%) of all public-school students, ages 3-21, received special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in the 2018-2019 academic year ². This is a significant number of students affected by school closures due to the pandemic. As a result, the Bresnahan-Halstead Center at the University of Northern Colorado would like to present some best practices for special education teachers in remote learning.

Bookmark-Worthy Resources

- ❖ [Educating All Learners Alliance \(EALA\)](#): A library of curated, searchable resources, access to experts, and exemplars from the field.
- ❖ [State Educational Technology Directors Association \(SETDA\)](#): Quick handouts in developing accessible educational materials.
- ❖ [The Michigan Virtual Learning Research Institute](#): A report on pedagogical considerations for virtual special education for recognized eligibility categories.
- ❖ [Assistive Technology Tools \(Reading, Writing, and Math\)](#): A list of free online AT tools that help students with reading, writing, and math.

Ensuring compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act should NOT prevent any school from offering educational programs through distance or virtual instruction ³.

If my school has moved to remote learning or if my student has opted for online learning, where do I start?

- ❖ Review the student's IEP or 504 plan to identify the most important goals and services for the student ⁴.
- ❖ Meet with the multi-disciplinary team including parents to determine how remote services will be different or similar to in-person services for your student.
- ❖ Follow your district protocol for IEP or 504 Plan amendment for online services ⁴.

How can I make my remote instructions most impactful?

- ❖ Maintain as much consistency as possible in delivery of specialized instructions, including the same tools used in school ⁵.
- ❖ 60% of special education students spend 80% of their time in general education classes ⁶. Coordinate with the general education teachers to ensure that your shared students' accommodations and modifications are provided during remote lessons ⁵.
- ❖ Use explicit instruction method by modeling for students and allowing students to succeed on the task by giving ample time to practice ⁷.
- ❖ Know the assistive technologies (AT) used by your students. Make sure AT is tested for interoperability with the district mainstream technology. If problems are evident, coordinate with educational technology or assistive technology personnel ⁵.

Bookmark-Worthy Resources

- ❖ [HyperDocs](#): A new way by which students can independently move through the lessons allowing teachers to instruct small groups and provide individual support.
- ❖ [Template for Mini-schedule/Visual schedule](#): Different templates that can be used to create task lists and mini schedules for students.
- ❖ [Go Noodle](#): A repository of short videos encouraging movement and exercise for both families and students.
- ❖ [Shared Reading with AAC](#): Different ways to use AAC devices with students during shared reading created by the SWAAC team at Douglas County School District in Colorado.

How can I support families during remote instructions?

- ❖ Be flexible and accommodating. Understand that communication with families may be challenging as some of them may lack technological skills, do not speak English, or are preoccupied with more pressing matters like unemployment, sickness, or homelessness ⁸.
- ❖ Families need support from you to use learning materials or devices, follow lesson plans or procedures, address challenging behaviors, or use structural routines and methodologies that are familiar to the student in school ⁹.
- ❖ For students with multiple service providers, having ONE point of contact will not overwhelm families. Collaborate with families and develop a plan on who will be the contact person and how often will they communicate with them ⁹.

How can I evaluate student needs remotely?

- ❖ Evaluate the assistive technology needs of your students. Does the AT device or online assessment technology allow the student to successfully complete the assessment ¹⁰?
- ❖ Progress monitor IEP goals during regular remote instructional times, ask parents/guardians to track student learning, or assign paraprofessionals to collect data as the student performs the task, or teach students to self-monitor their progress ¹¹.
- ❖ Evaluate assistive technology needs, as services delivered online may be different from services delivered face-to-face.
- ❖ Get creative with using technology tools for online assessment.

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3. "Addressing the Risk of COVID19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities" (United States Department of Education: Office for Civil Rights, March 21, 2020),

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/rr/policyguidance/Supple%20Fact%20Sheet%203.21.20%20FINAL.pdf>

4. "5 Tips for Teaching Special Education Online" (Learners Edge: The Chalk Blog, March 19, 2020),

<https://www.learnersedge.com/blog/5-tips-for-teaching-virtual-special-education>

5. "Accessible Materials for All Students" (SETDA: eLearning Coalition, September 20, 2020), <https://www.setda.org/main-coalitions/elearning/accessibility/>

6. "New website offers tips for teachers about virtual special education" (EdSource: Highlighting Strategies for Student Success, September 20, 2020), <https://edsources.org/2020/new-website-offers-tips-for-teachers-about-virtual-special-education/628741>

7. "Explicit Instruction: What You Need to Know" (Understood, September 20, 2020), <https://www.understood.org/en/school-learning/for-educators/universal-design-for-learning/what-is-explicit-instruction>

8. "Virtual Special Education Meetings Popular in Some Districts, But a Major Hurdle in Others" (EdSource: Highlighting Strategies for Student Success, September 20, 2020), <https://edsources.org/2020/virtual-special-education-meetings-popular-in-some-districts-but-a-major-hurdle-in-others/632332>

9. "Remote Learning for Students with Significant Intellectual or Multiple Disabilities" (Illinois State Board of Education, April 2020), <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Intellectual-Disabilities-Ideas-During-Pandemic.pdf>

10. "5 Tips to Promote Access for Students Who Use Assistive Technology during Distance Learning" (Johns Hopkins School of Education, September 20, 2020),

<https://education.jhu.edu/2020/04/5-tips-to-promote-access-for-students-who-use-assistive-technology-during-distance-learning/>

11. "IEP Progress Reporting Distance Learning" (Educating All Learners Alliance, September 20, 2020), <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sxxvGXDftrnFuve8irgCJnTmi6fLJnHY/view>