

FAQ on State and District Response to COVID-19 Outbreak

What are some methods of providing online instructional support for students with disabilities?

Regional Educational
Laboratory
Northeast & Islands

From the National Center for Education Evaluation at IES

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- The [U.S. Department of Education](#) has made it clear that districts offering instruction remotely **MUST** make the instruction accessible to students with disabilities. Some state officials and disability rights advocates are encouraging full school closure with school time to be made up later.
- The **Washington State Board of Education** made [the following statement](#) regarding requirements for an online distance learning model: “Ensuring the online learning system can effectively support the district’s different learning and teaching needs, including the ability to provide differentiated instruction as well as one-on-one support for students who need it. Regardless of where the learning is happening, supports identified on a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) must be provided if the district is operating.”
 - See section of [memo to districts](#) on distance learning.
 - All students in the school district must have access to the learning and required materials, including technology.
 - Staff, students, and parents and guardians need training on how the system works and expectations from the district.
 - System must be secure and not allow the release of protected student and staff information.
 - Both student and staff attendance must be tracked.
 - [Special Education Technology Center](#)
- **New York**
 - Plans for 300,000 iPads to be distributed to children without computers at home.
 - Some districts are looking into delivering services via tele-therapy in addition to remote instruction.
 - Special education services that require physical exercises can be difficult to deliver and home visits are unlikely during social distancing. Parents worry the mandated services (including speech therapy, occupational therapy and counseling) will not be provided.
- **New York City**
 - [Success Academy](#), the largest charter school network, moved to remote learning for 18,000 students across 45 schools beginning Thursday, March 19; Democracy Prep is going virtual through April 19.
 - Google Classroom will be used including a video conference system for teacher-led lessons. Success Academy students received Chromebooks in grade 4. Younger students were sent home with books and teachers will be in regular daily communication with parents and children.

- Before shutting down, a few districts in **Illinois** piloted e-learning days where students in life skills and transitional programs were sent home with hard copies of assignments or e-learning binders for special education students with severe and profound disabilities, including instructional materials designed by a special education case manager or teacher.
- **Colorado:**
 - Jeffco Public Schools, west of Denver, created a schedule for students with teacher input that would not require all students to do the same thing at once unless a group lesson led by the teacher is involved. The plan will require all students to participate in activities with adult help as well as reaching students for speech pathology and mental health services remotely and finding ways to serve students with more severe needs.
 - In Westminster district, northwest of Denver, online learning is optional, avoiding penalties for not serving all students. Students at elementary schools picked up Chromebooks and paper copies of schoolwork with low-cost internet information.
- **Detroit, Michigan** has [prepared learning packets and online lessons](#) for students during a planned three-week shutdown and a home hotline will be available for families and students for academic help from educators 9 am–4 pm, and 5–9pm.
 - K–8 learning packets on math, ELA, science and social studies will be available for pickup and all materials will be available online through the mobile app Clever.
 - Students in grades 8–12 will be able to use Khan Academy for free online instructional videos for PSAT and SAT prep. Workbooks will also be available for pickup.

Related links

Organizations addressing online learning for students with disabilities:

- U.S. Department of Education: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdeltrs/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf>
- National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools: <https://www.ncsecs.org/news/covid-19-and-students-with-disabilities/>
- Michigan Virtual: <https://michiganvirtual.org/research/publications/supporting-students-with-disabilities-in-k-12-online-and-blended-learning/>
- Urban Collaborative: <https://www.urbancollaborative.org/spring-2020-member-meeting-latest-updates>
- Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities: <http://www.centerononlinelearning.res.ku.edu>

Examples of district strategies:

- <https://chalkbeat.org/posts/us/2020/03/12/school-closures-coronavirus-remote-learning-students-with-disabilities/>
- <https://chalkbeat.org/posts/ny/2020/03/13/success-academy-nycs-largest-charter-network-announces-move-to-remote-learning-amid-coronavirus-concerns/>
- <https://chalkbeat.org/posts/detroit/2020/03/13/learning-packets-and-online-lessons-will-be-available-to-detroit-students-starting-next-week/>
- <https://chalkbeat.org/posts/co/2020/03/13/colorado-school-districts-online-learning-coronavirus-closures/>

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