

# Issues Related to School Reopening

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# Process for District Fall Reopening Plans

7/15/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2020-0715two-step-process.docx>

## TWO STEP PROCESS:

- ▶ **Step 1: By July 31**, districts must complete and submit a *preliminary reopening plan summary* to DESE.
- ▶ **Step 2: By August 10**, districts must finalize their *comprehensive plan documents*, submit them to DESE, and release them publicly to their communities.

Must include three plans

- In-Person Instruction
- Remote
- Hybrid

PARENTS CAN CHOSE

PARENTS CAN SWITCH

# Special Education Services

7/09/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2020-0709special-ed-comp-guide-memo.docx>

- ▶ Must provide FAPE
- ▶ Students with disabilities, particularly preschool-age students and those with significant and complex needs, should be prioritized for receiving in-person instruction during the 2020-2021 school year
- ▶ Should get as much in-person instruction as possible

# Not adhering to IEP

- ▶ If special education services are provided differently than as they are described in a student's IEP, parents must be notified in writing with specific information about how those services will be provided after they have discussed such matters with a teacher or IEP liaison
- ▶ Parental consent is not required to implement modified in-person, hybrid or remote special education services; however, such documentation should describe the school's and district's efforts to provide services as closely aligned to the way they are described in the IEP as possible

- ▶ If in-person instruction cannot be provided and students with disabilities must receive instruction remotely in full, or in part, through a hybrid model, they must receive special education instruction and related services necessary to provide FAPE through an Instruction and Services model of delivery (e.g., structured lessons, teletherapy, video-based lessons, etc.) instead of relying solely on a Resources and Supports model (e.g., packets and assignments).
- ▶ For students with more significant and complex disabilities, providing one-on-one in-person instruction in the home or in a community-based setting should also be considered and made available as feasible, if it is not possible to provide instruction in an in-school setting.

- ▶ Students must receive all services documented in their IEPs through in-person instruction, remote instruction, or a combination of both, with a strong emphasis on providing in-person instruction to the greatest extent possible, while abiding by the current necessary health and safety requirements.
- ▶ In particular, the Department urges schools and districts to prioritize in-person instruction for two particular groups of students with disabilities: preschool-aged students, and students with significant and complex needs. Remote learning is often more challenging for these students.
- ▶ Even if the rest of the school has entered into a hybrid or remote model of instruction, schools and districts must make every effort to maintain in-person instruction for students with disabilities, particularly those with complex and significant needs and preschool-aged students

- ▶ For example, if a school or district needs to implement a hybrid model of instruction for its students, teachers may be able to simultaneously maintain full-time in-person instruction for students in self-contained special education classes.
- ▶ In such situations, schools and districts should first attempt to maintain full-time in-person instruction (i.e., having the students remain in school for the entirety of their school day).
- ▶ If this is not possible, schools and districts are encouraged to provide as many in-person services as possible on a part-time basis (such as having the students come into school for related therapies, social skills groups, or Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services).

# Remote Learning

- ▶ Plan should be “more robust” than the Spring 2020 model
- ▶ For school year 2020-2021 Instruction and Services must include the following components:
  - ▶ A regular and consistent schedule of classes, interventions, services and therapies as required by the student’s IEP, offered synchronously or asynchronously;
  - ▶ Structured learning time designed so that the student can access state standards; and
  - ▶ Frequent interactions with teachers and other staff members to ensure participation.

# Hybrid Learning

- ▶ When planning for hybrid learning models, consideration for continuing to maximize in-person learning for students with disabilities should be prioritized. Preschool-aged students with disabilities and students with significant and complex needs should be considered for continuous in-person learning to the greatest extent possible.
- ▶ For example, even if most students are not in school each day, schools should consider scheduling small groups of students with significant and complex disabilities for daily in-person instruction. Where appropriate, peers without disabilities should also be included to ensure inclusionary services.

# Inclusion/LRE

- ▶ Schools and districts should carefully develop classroom assignments and service delivery schedules for students with disabilities so that they receive services consistent with their IEPs in the least restrictive environment, as defined in [603 CMR 28.02\(12\)](#), while also maintaining the current health and safety protocols.
- ▶ For example, special education teachers and related service providers (speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, etc.), could provide special education services in the general education setting ("B Grid") services remotely from within the school building via video conference, instead of coming into the classroom to provide services. This practice would help to minimize foot traffic in and out of classrooms while also providing access to services that support the inclusion of students with disabilities.
- ▶ To support this model, schools and districts could train paraprofessionals to serve as facilitators for push-in services. Training should address technology-related issues, such as device use, electronic platform use, troubleshooting procedures, and other student-specific needs and strategies.

- ▶ Consider using strategies to pair peer models with students with disabilities to promote social interaction
- ▶ In light of the Department's guidance that students at the elementary level remain in one classroom for the majority of the day, districts may want to consider whether pull-out services can be offered in accordance with the health and safety guidelines or, instead, if services should be pushed into the classroom.

# Students now have greater or new needs

- ▶ Keep in mind that school closure can be traumatic, students may have regressed, and may have developed new disability-related areas of need, e.g. anxiety

# Regression?

- ▶ Districts are supposed to check for regression of students when returning
- ▶ Consider private testing and documenting regression

# Technology and Parent Training

- ▶ Schools and districts must support the infrastructure needed to put in place the required Instruction and Services, including availability of computer devices and internet connectivity in students' homes, appropriate communication platforms, and educator and parent training.
- ▶ Parent training topics might include the use of devices and electronic learning and communication platforms, troubleshooting technology issues, expectations for structured learning time, supporting students' social/emotional needs, etc., and trainings need to be offered in parent's primary language

# Additional supports to teachers

- ▶ Provide additional training time for educators who will provide direct physical support to students with disabilities on the use of the additional protective supplies they will need, including appropriately donning and doffing disposable gowns, face shields, etc.

# Must Work and Communicate with Families

- ▶ Family engagement is a critical component of school reopening.
- ▶ The Department strongly recommends that schools and districts cultivate excellent two-way communication with families. For example, schools and districts should ensure that classroom teachers, special education teachers, or related service providers communicate regularly with parents

# Transition from EI

- ▶ An extension of Early Intervention (EI) services is available for children who turned 3 between March 15, 2020 and August 31, 2020. For those students, EI services can continue until special education eligibility determination can be completed and the child has transitioned to special education, or until October 15, 2020.
- ▶ In partnership with EI providers, districts should develop a plan that explicitly outlines the transition process for each child with extended EI services and who are potentially eligible for school-based services.

# Initial Evaluations, Reevaluations and IEP Team Meetings

- ▶ Schools and districts will need to plan for addressing the backlog of assessments and meetings while simultaneously addressing the need to maintain timelines for annual review Team meetings and evaluations for students who are newly referred and/or due for an evaluation. Schools and districts should continue to follow the direction on meeting special education timelines as described in the Department's [Implementation of Special Education Timelines During the COVID-19 State of Emergency](#) issued May 2020. Gave a 3 week pause in the timelines for testing.
- ▶ IEP Teams must continue to conduct annual review Team meetings as they are due, in accordance with [603 CMR 28.04 \(3\)](#).

# Transition Programs

- ▶ Although in-person participation in community-based programs and inclusive concurrent enrollment programs at institutions of higher education may be limited at this time, schools and districts should make best efforts to develop plans collaboratively with community-based providers, colleges, parents/guardians, and students in order for students to access as much transition programming as possible.

# Stay-put Rights

- ▶ It is important to note that a change in the delivery of services due to a school's change in learning model, in-person, hybrid or remote, as a result of COVID-19 **does not result in a change in placement**. The services outlined in the IEP remain and are considered "stay-put."

# Fall Reopening Frequently Asked Questions

7/10/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2020-0709special-ed-comp-guide-memo.docx>

# Protocols for responding to COVID-19 scenarios in school, on the bus, or in community settings

7/17/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2020-0717protocols-document.docx>

- Families are to be notified about positive test by staff or student without disclosing the identity
- Protocols for close contact, isolation, etc.
- Monitoring of students and staff
- Masks - exceptions for those who cannot tolerate them for medical or behavioral reasons

# Fall Reopening Facilities and Operations Guidance

7/22/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2020-0722facilities-operations-guide.docx>

# Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance

7/22/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2020-0722transport-guide.docx>

- If transportation is in the student's IEP, the district must still provide it
- DESE has provided detailed policy about capacity, seating, ventilation, etc.

# Guidance for Courses Requiring Additional Safety Considerations for Fall 2020

7/24/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/supplement/2020-0724add-safety-guide.docx>

- For band, gym, ...classes

# Remote Learning Guidance for Fall 2020

7/24/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/2020-0724remote-learning-guide.docx>

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN  
THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION,  
THE MASSACHUSETTS TEACHERS ASSOCIATION,  
THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS, MASSACHUSETTS and  
THE BOSTON TEACHERS UNION Regarding Additional Staff Training Days  
7/27/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop/2020-0727mou.docx>

# Career/Vocational Technical Education Reopening Guidelines

7/29/20

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/ccte/2020-0729cvte-reopening-guide.docx>