

Arlington Public Schools



SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEETING

**DESE GUIDANCE ON FALL 2020 SPECIAL EDUCATION
SERVICES**

JULY 23, 2020

DESE Special Education Guidance



- Issued July 10th
- Supplements the Initial Fall Reopening Guidance by providing further information on supporting students with disabilities during the upcoming school year.
- Provides necessary information in support of schools and districts, as they develop the portion of their reopening plans specifically related to special education.

FAPE



- School districts must provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. **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.**

Equity



- These students should receive as much in-person instruction as is feasible within the health and safety parameters in effect at each particular time. **Even if schools or districts are operating in a hybrid or remote model, educators and administrators must make every effort to continue to provide up to full-time in-person instruction to such students.**

Instruction and Services



- 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).

Location of Instruction & Service Delivery



- 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.

Delivery of IEP Services



- 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.
- **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**

Students with Complex and Significant Needs



- Students already identified as “high needs” through the IEP process on the IEP form entitled “[Primary Disability/Level of Need-PL3.](#)”
Such students must meet at least two of these criteria:
 - Services provided outside of the general education classroom;
 - Service providers are special education teachers and related service providers;
 - Special education services constitute more than 75% of the student’s school day;
- Students who cannot engage in remote learning due to their disability-related needs;
- Students who primarily use aided and augmentative communication;
- Students who are homeless
- Students in foster care or congregate care; and/or
- Students dually identified as English Learners.

Learning Models: In-Person



- Considerations for maximizing in-person learning for students with disabilities should be made when developing schedules.
- When considering staffing alternatives for reducing class size, students with disabilities must receive specialized instruction and supports from qualified professionals.
- Flexible solutions for reducing the mixing of student groups should be considered to ensure students with disabilities are receiving services safely in the least restrictive environment.
- When considering the use of alternative school spaces or external facility spaces, considerations for providing students with disabilities with inclusive learning must be made and placement of students with disabilities in groupings or cohorts that support learning goals in the least restrictive environment should be prioritized.

Learning Models: Remote



- During the Spring of 2020, the Department described two models of service delivery that could be used to satisfy the requirement to provide a FAPE to students with disabilities: Resources and Supports (e.g., sending packets and assignments home coupled with frequent communication with parents) and Instruction and Services (e.g., structured learning time, teletherapy and video conferencing).
- With the ability to plan for the possibility of remote service delivery during the 2020-2021 school year, schools and **districts must be prepared to provide services through “Instruction and Services”** mode of delivery. The “Resources and Supports” delivery model can only be used on a temporary basis for a limited period of time (no more than two weeks), until which time the school or district has overcome the hurdles preventing service delivery through an “Instruction and Services” delivery model.

Learning Models: Hybrid



- 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.

IEP Teams



- IEP Teams must continue to conduct annual review Team meetings as they are due, in accordance with [603 CMR 28.04 \(3\)](#). Districts are advised to update the IEP as though the student will be attending school full time in-person; however, given the unpredictable nature of the COVID-19 virus, schools and districts must be prepared to be adaptable in their approach to delivery of IEP services, based on the current health information and trends at that time
- 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.**