



# Special Education

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The West Virginia Department of Education remains committed to the effective and efficient education of all students during the outbreak and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Student support as well as family engagement and outreach are core components of special education programs.

Even with the uncertainties imposed by the outbreak of the virus, essential services continued during the school closure. Moving into the 2020-21 school year, attention must be given to the transition back to school, instructional implications, procedural implications and family outreach necessary to properly support students. The information available on these pages will serve as a framework for the upcoming school year.

## Planning for Re-entry

Re-entry in the Fall

## **Family Engagement and Outreach**

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- ✓ Determine individual re-entry needs of students, including modified schedules, health care plans, behavior support and mobility issues.
- ✓ Provide informational sessions or trainings for parents to include frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- ✓ Provide families a list of local resources (e.g., basic needs, behavior support, counseling).
- ✓ Address specific anticipated changes with families to individualize re-entry needs for students (e.g., masks, differences in classroom structure and schedule, eating arrangements, classes, specials).
- ✓ Communicate drop-off and pick-up procedures, locations, times, etc.
- ✓ Provide technology devices, support and training to parents to facilitate virtual meetings and learning platforms.
- ✓ Provide social stories and videos to support families and students as they enter school with health and safety precautions (masks, differences in classroom structure and schedule, eating arrangements, classes, etc.).
- ✓ Share school protocol for following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines with families to help families feel that their children are safe.
- ✓ Assign appropriate staff to work with parents to address concerns.

## **Transitioning Students Back to School**

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- ✓ Provide opportunities for students and families to meet their teacher and visit their school (virtually, telephonically or in-person following health and safety guidelines).
- ✓ Have virtual Back-to-School nights.

- ✓ When moving to a different school, prepare a plan for the child to visit the school building either virtually or in person, to assist students in becoming familiar with the building, classroom(s), and new teacher(s).
- ✓ Provide professional learning opportunities for educators to prepare for the opening of the school.
- ✓ Provide social stories and videos to support families and students as they enter school with health and safety precautions (masks, differences in classroom structure and schedule, eating arrangements, classes, etc.).
- ✓ Determine a plan to transition medically fragile students or other students with health care needs, i.e., asthma, or make decisions with parent(s)/guardian(s) for students to continue accessing education at home.
- ✓ Plan to revise and distribute to staff Individual Nursing Health Care Plans based on the current status for students receiving nursing services, particularly for those with allergies attending a new school environment.
- ✓ Assess accessibility for children with mobility issues and communicate drop-off and pick-up locations, times, etc. in situations where traffic patterns, single entry/exit, etc. have been established to observe social distancing guidelines.
- ✓ Consider allowing time for students with specific needs (autism, challenging behaviors, etc.) to come to school to practice new procedures before school opens. (Consider having them help create training videos, with parent permission, to use with other students)

## **Instructional Implications**

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- ✓ Identify the potential learning gaps for students due to the pandemic situation.
- ✓ Use social stories and video modeling to explain the virus and its impact on young children and those with significant cognitive disabilities.
- ✓ Proactively establish a “quiet time” to allow downtime to support student self-regulation needs.
- ✓ Train staff and Student Assistance Team (SAT) members on appropriate West Virginia Tiered System of Support (WVTSS) procedures for students and the problem-solving process for potential referrals. Consider using the Speech Therapy Education and Prevention for Success(STEPS) Program for students with speech/language impairments.
- ✓ Review and update positive behavior intervention plans (BIPs).

- ✓ Prepare students for changes in school routines (arrival and departure, breakfast and lunch routines, classroom procedures, health and safety precautions, use of face masks/PPE, etc.).
- ✓ Implement age-appropriate learning regarding COVID-19 and ways to control the spread. This should include hand washing, physical distancing, appropriate use of face masks and the need to stay home when sick or displaying any symptoms.

## **Procedural Implications**

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- ✓ Verify service provisions are in place.
- ✓ Assess current skill levels and regression for each student with a disability.
- ✓ Provide remediation and monitor progress frequently to determine the recoupment of skills.
- ✓ Convene IEP Team meetings, as needed, to address additional or extended IEP services that may be necessary or required due to the COVID-19 school closures (COVID-19 Recovery Services versus Compensatory Services).
- ✓ Provide alternative or modified scheduling to provide needed services.
- ✓ Ensure that “Child Find” practices continue to be implemented, even in the event of remote learning.
- ✓ Schedule IEP Team meetings that were missed during the closure or are due after the opening of school.
- ✓ Begin scheduling evaluations that were not possible or are due after the opening of school, following health and safety guidelines, based on newly established prioritization timeline with parent input.
- ✓ Put procedures in place for addressing special education and related services to be prepared for subsequent building closures of varying lengths and creative modified schedules that may be implemented for future closures.
- ✓ Develop a Remote Learning Plan to activate immediately when school building closures are ordered by the Governor or Health Department
- ✓ Create guidelines and expectations based on CDC recommendations for handling students’ personal hygiene needs, especially body fluids.
- ✓ Complete overdue evaluations and IEP or Eligibility Committee meetings.



## Recovery 2021 and Beyond

## Resources

**USEFUL LINKS**

- > Awards & Recognitions
- > ESSA
- > School Finance
- > WV School Counselors

**W. Clayton Burch**

State Superintendent of Schools

**Miller L. Hall**

President, West Virginia Board of Education

**CONTACT INFO**

West Virginia Department of Education  
1900 Kanawha Boulevard East  
Charleston, West Virginia 25305  
Phone: 304-558-2681

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**CERTIFICATION CONTACT**

Phone: 304-558-7010

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