



**SOUTH PLAINS
EDUCATIONAL CO-OP**
A Special Education Shared Services Arrangement

July 24, 2020

Dear Parents,

You are receiving this letter and attached Reentry Plan because you have a child that receives special education or Section 504 services from your school district. South Plains Educational Coop (SPECO) serves the following districts with their special education programs: Levelland ISD, Anton ISD, Morton ISD, Ropes ISD, Whiteface CISD, Sundown ISD, Whitharral ISD, Smyer ISD and Meadow ISD. Section 504 services are provided by your District. Each district will be posting their plans for reentry. It will be important that you let your district know which option you will be choosing for your child. This letter is to provide you with information regarding your child's continuing special education and Section 504 services.

The reentry plan will include two options for instruction. Parents will be asked by their Districts to choose one of the options in the upcoming weeks.

Option 1: Enrollment in an **in-class direct instruction** model. This model is consistent with typical operations (five days a week) with enhanced precautions to reduce the risk associated with COVID-19.

Option 2: Enrollment in **remote** instruction. This model will be designed by the District with the same attendance requirements, pace and rigor as the students receiving in-class instruction. The requirements will be more extensive than in the spring for participation/attendance.

Please take the time to read the attached Reentry Plan for students with disabilities. If you have any questions or need further clarification, please contact me at khutchinson@levellandisd.net or (806) 894-6858, ext. 1223.

Sincerely,

Kathy Hutchinson

Director of Special Education
806-894-6858

Special Education and Section 504 Reentry Plan 2020

(Updated July 21, 2020 and Subject to Change)

Summary

- ✓ **This District acknowledges, despite its best efforts, that remote instruction does not replace in-class direct instruction, and many students with disabilities are at risk of failing to meet their developmental, academic and social learning targets (IEP goals) during the delivery of remote instruction.**
- ✓ **Safety will remain the District's priority in creating a special education and Section 504 reentry framework that balances the equity needs of students with disabilities and a parent's ability to determine the best time for their child to return to a traditional school setting.**

Similar to the overall reentry plan for all students, parents of students served in Special Education or Section 504 will select from either an in-class direct instruction (traditional school setting) or a remote learning environment (at home). Admission, Review and Dismissal (ARD) and Section 504 committees will consider exceptions to these options on an individual basis.

"Above all, LEAs should prioritize health and safety of students, staff and communities. LEAs should identify and acknowledge service delivery limitations, as well as the need for LEAs to make reasonable efforts to fully implement a student's IEP once school resumes."

- Texas Education Agency, 2020

In-Class Direct Instruction for Students with Disabilities

In-class direct instruction is consistent with traditional operations of a campus and the district's calendar.

- **All active Individual Education Programs (IEP) or Section 504 plans previously agreed upon by ARD or Section 504 committees will restart immediately once in-class direct instruction resumes.**
- **New ARD committee meetings and IEPs are not required to resume in-class direct instruction in the fall semester.**
- **New Section 504 committee meetings are not required to resume in-class direct instruction in the fall semester.**
- **ARD and Section 504 committee meetings will resume at the beginning of the fall semester based on their due date, or earlier if requested by the parent/guardian or teacher.**
- **ARD and Section 504 committees will convene remotely or by phone conference until otherwise notified.**
- **Any student in Special Education for whom a parent/guardian selects the in-class direct instruction option, but later decides to choose remote instruction, will need an ARD committee meeting to promptly address the change in instruction unless a prior Contingency Plan was completed. Changes may be made at the end of a six weeks grading period.**

Significant safety precautions will be in place during the school day, particularly for students with disabilities in low incidence programs: Early Childhood Special Education – ECSE (formally PPCD), Life Skills, high school 18+ programs and any other Special Education settings.

Special Education setting precautions include:

- ✓ Face covering (shields or masks) for all students, when feasible in Special Education settings
- ✓ Availability, when appropriate of transparent barriers, when face shields or masks cannot be worn by students
- ✓ Desks three to six feet apart when feasible
- ✓ Frequent hand-washing
- ✓ Established hand-washing routines between special education and general education settings
- ✓ Hand sanitizing stations
- ✓ Enhanced cleaning in classroom areas of self-care (changing or toileting)
- ✓ Explicit instruction and/or social stories embedded into teaching to emphasize importance of safety precautions

Safety considerations for students in Special Education and Section 504 receiving instruction in general education settings are consistent with the precautions in place for all students. Parents of students in Special Education and Section 504 should consider the positive and negative implications of **in-class direct instruction** for students with disabilities.

POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS

1. Increased individualization
2. Full implementation of the student's IEP
3. Full implementation of IEP related services (OT, PT and Counseling)
4. Full implementation of speech and language services
5. Full implementation of dyslexia intervention

6. Greater access to accommodations and instructional supports
7. Social interaction
8. Frequent ability for clarification and re-teaching

NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS

1. Mitigated, but not zero risk to COVID-19
2. Minimum instructional time lost due to possible staggered arrival and dismissal schedules for students utilizing special transportation, consistent with instructional time impact of all students arriving and dismissing at varied times in the morning and afternoon.

Remote Instruction for Students with Disabilities

Remote instruction for students with disabilities is consistent with the remote environment for all students. Changes from the 2020 spring semester of remote instruction include more rigorous attendance requirements, blended asynchronous (pre-recorded lesson and/or print materials), synchronous (live or in real-time lessons with the teacher) and a return to standard grading expectations (unless otherwise noted by the IEP). The pacing of the curriculum within a remote environment will also increase during the 2020-2021 school year. Start and end times for synchronous (real-time) instruction for the remote environment will vary based on the class, but will remain within the period of a typical school day.

- Most IEPs cannot fully be implemented in a remote environment. Your district however, will provide a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) for any student in Special Education or Section 504 receiving instruction in a remote environment as reasonably as possible. Missed services will be discussed once the student returns to school.
- IEP goals and objectives should not change from an IEP designed for in-class instruction if a parent selects a remote environment.
- ARD committees must agree to an ARD amendment to design a remote learning plan for students in which a remote learning plan is not currently in place.
- An ARD committee may NOT object to a parent's choice for their child to receive instruction in a remote environment.
- ARD and Section 504 committees will convene virtually or by phone conference until in-person meetings are allowed.
- Significant cyber safety and confidentiality precautions will be in place during the school day for any student with a disability receiving instruction through a remote environment.

Parents of students receiving Special Education services and Section 504 considering a remote environment should consider the positive and negative implications of remote instruction.

POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS

1. Reduced risk of COVID-19 exposure
2. Embedded accommodations and modification supports
3. Accessible digital resources
4. Virtual options for speech, counseling, and in some cases, OT & PT

NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS

1. Limited access to individual and real-time intervention, clarification, language support and review

2. Limited ability to fully implement a student's IEP (services will be addressed in the ARD)
3. Difficulty implementing behavioral or social skills instruction
4. Difficulty measuring IEP goal progress
5. Reduced opportunities for social interaction

Special Education Transportation

Special Education transportation will continue for all students with disabilities who have a need for this related service. While the district, overall, is encouraging parents to transport their child to and from school to reduce large groups, Special Education transportation is still available based on the student's disability-related needs to access transportation. Parents of children with disabilities riding Special Education transportation are still required to be present upon arrival and departure of the bus.

Once a child with a disability has boarded a Special Education bus, students will be distanced from one another when possible – otherwise – masks will be encouraged. The bus attendant will monitor all safety precautions and assigned seating arrangements will continue to be in place.

Special Education FAQ

Will a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) apply for students in Special Education if a parent chooses to enroll their child in a remote environment? Yes, FAPE will apply for any student with an IEP in a remote environment. Many IEP supports and services, however, may not be implemented due to the constraints of a remote environment (physical prompting, behavior related goals, IEP minutes designed for in-person direct instruction, etc...). The method of instruction in a remote environment will also differ from an in-person direct instruction classroom. ARD meetings will be held prior to the student returning to the in-class environment to determine if any further services are needed.

Is a new IEP needed for the 2020-2021 school year to participate in remote learning? Students in Special Education accessing remote learning will require an amendment to their IEP.

Will my child receive their full IEP while in the remote setting? Most IEPs are designed for in-class direct instruction. Many accommodations, modifications and services cannot be delivered in a remote environment, despite the district's best efforts.

Will my child receive their related services while in the remote setting? Services such as occupational therapy, physical therapy and counseling can be delivered through tele-practice, but some individual goals may prevent the delivery of related services in a remote environment.

Will my child receive speech and language therapy remotely? Yes, speech and language services can be delivered through a tele-practice model in a remote environment.

Are there limitations in implementing an IEP remotely? Yes, immediate informal feedback is limited in a remote environment. Special and general education teachers will not have the same ability to provide immediate correction, clarification and explanations that many students need in order to access the curriculum. Students who require physical prompting or assistance to complete learning tasks will not experience the same level of support from a teacher in a remote environment.

I want my child to attend in person classes, but due to a disability-related medical condition, an in person environment is not safe. If your decision to opt for your child to learn remotely based on a medical condition, an ARD committee will be held to consider your doctor's recommendation for homebound services. For

eligible students, homebound services could include in-person instruction in the home combined with virtual instruction, as appropriate.

Will paper packets be distributed through the remote instruction when appropriate? Paper-packets and other accessible materials will be distributed as needed, on an individual basis, based on ARD committee decisions.

Section 504 FAQ

Will my child receive all supports and services described in the Section 504 plan? Most Section 504 plans are designed for in-class direct instruction. Many accommodations, modifications and services in Section 504 plans cannot be delivered in a remote environment despite the district's best efforts.

Is a new Section 504 plan needed for the 2020-2021 school year to participate remotely? Any student receiving Section 504 supports and services will require a Section 504 remote learning plan agreed upon by the Section 504 committee.

Are there limitations in implementing a Section 504 plan remotely? Yes, immediate informal feedback is limited in a remote environment. Teachers will not have the ability to provide immediate correction, clarification and explanations that many students need in order to access the curriculum. Students who require physical prompting or assistance to complete learning tasks will not experience the same level of support from a teacher in a remote environment.

I want my child in Section 504 to attend in person classes, but due to disability-related medical conditions an in-person environment is not safe. If your decision to opt for your child to learn remotely based on a medical condition, a Section 504 committee will be held to consider your doctor's recommendation for homebound services. For eligible students, homebound services could include in-person instruction in the home combined with virtual instruction, as appropriate.