



2020-2021 Special Education Plan Covid-19 Response

Dear Parent/Guardians:

The A-C Valley pandemic planning team has been working for some time now to provide a means for students in our district to resume their education for the fall 2020 school year. As you may recall from an earlier correspondence from the district, we will be offering three (3) options for schooling during the 2020-2021 school year. This will enable you to make a decision based upon your own specific set of concerns and circumstances. The options included:

- 1. Traditional Face-to-Face Learning:** This is a typical in-school classroom option, but with safety precautions in place.
- 2. Distance Learning:** This is an education provided by our ACV teachers using the same curriculum as the face-to-face learning, but one that can be accessed at home. It will still have the support and communication opportunities as face-to-face learning, just modified for learning that occurs in your home.
- 3. A-C Valley Cyber:** This is our district's full cyber program that utilizes curriculum in a 100% online platform. These courses are similar in nature to traditional learning, but without the support and communication of our local teachers. It would be comparable to a program such as PA Cyber and Commonwealth Connections Academy, and parents and students would still have access to communicating and help through the school. Unlike disconnecting from ACV by choosing an outside cyber program such as PA Cyber, students choosing the ACV Cyber program remain an ACV student. Our ACV cyber liaison is Mrs. Julie Raybuck. All computer equipment will be provided by the district.

The area of special education presents a unique scenario for those students who depend on those services to be successful in school and to grow as a learner. The following matrix is modeled after the previous version, but has been designed to explain what special education services look like in each learning environment.

Attributes/Phase	Traditional	Distance	AC Valley Cyber
Student reports to school.	X - Services provided as usual		
Student receives instruction from ACVSD Personnel	X	X	
Student receives one-on-one or small group instruction to work on IEP goals	X	X - at school or virtually	X - at school or virtually
Related services provided (Speech, OT, PT, Vision, Etc.)	X	X - at school or virtually	X - at school or virtually
Transportation to school**	X	X - parent/guardian drop off for services	X - parent/guardian drop off for services
Placement can be changed at any time by the IEP team based on the student's needs	X	X	X
Computer & Materials Provided to Student	X	X	X
Opportunity to interact with ACV teachers and classmates (in person or through Zoom)	X	X	
Required masks, social distancing, & other safety precautions	X - safety precautions will be determined by needs of the student	X - only if coming to school for services. Safety precautions will be determined by needs of the student	X - only if coming to school for services. Safety precautions will be determined by needs of the student
Will require significant parental support to monitor at home work completion		X	X
After school curriculars (sports, dances, etc.)	X	X	X
In-School Assemblies, Field Trips, etc.	X	X	
IEP/504 Meetings	X - in person or through Zoom if needed	X - in person or through Zoom if needed	X - in person or through Zoom if needed

**** Transportation can be arranged to provide IEP/Related services to students in a distance learning or cyber setting if parents/guardians are unable to bring their student to school.**

When school operations resume, will districts need to review every student who has an IEP to determine if recovery services are needed?

All students will be assessed during the first two weeks of returning to school. These assessments include district adopted diagnostic assessments, teacher created tests and assessment of current IEP goals. IEP teams will then convene within the first two months of school to discuss those results and develop a comprehensive plan to address any stagnation or regression of progress a student may have experienced. The plan may be as simple as continuing the current program outlined within the IEP or an increase in services to strategically address identified concerns.

Documentation of the degree to which services were offered and accessed during the closure, as well as data documenting progress (or lack of) toward the student's IEP goals, will assist the team in determining the amount of recovery services needed after school facilities re-open. The extent of a student's recovery services, if needed (based on data), must be an individualized determination made by the IEP team. Recovery services should be provided outside of the district's school day or be reflected as increased or supplemental services in the student's IEP (in limited circumstances). Recovery services are not provided in the same amount that was missed (i.e., minute for minute, hour for hour). Services are dependent on the student's progress as well as the amount and type of services that were provided during the school facility closure.

What is the difference between recovery services and extended school year (ESY)?

Recovery services are intended to enable the student to make progress on IEP goals, used if students have not been provided or were unable to access IEP services during COVID-19.

ESY services are intended to support students with maintaining skills during school breaks, if without them, the student is not provided with a FAPE.

Recovery services will generally be determined after in-person school operations resume and are determined by IEP teams on a case-by-case basis. Districts should examine the effect of COVID19 and the special education and related services provided during the spring 2020 school building closures on the student's overall progress and engagement, including progress toward their IEP goals, in preparation for upcoming fall IEP meetings.

ESY is required if the student needs it in order to maintain IEP skills from year to year. The need for ESY is typically determined based on data that show regression or lack of recoupment of progress on IEP goals within a reasonable amount of time after a break from school. However, the determination could also be made based on the consideration of other factors, including the nature and severity of the student's disability, rate of progress, and emerging skills, with evidence to support the need. The need for ESY should be examined on a case-by-case basis.

Will my child receive his/her services during the COVID-19 Pandemic regardless of the option I choose?

If a school district closes its schools and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, as happened in March 2020, then a school would not be required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time.

If students receive general education instruction and student support services, districts must provide students with disabilities with the special education and related services and specially designed instruction supporting a free appropriate public education (FAPE). As a result of COVID-19, Guidance dated March 21, 2020 from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and Office for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) indicated “there may be exceptional circumstances that could affect how a particular service is provided.” There remains an expectation that individualized education program (IEP) services will be delivered to the maximum extent possible during the pandemic, while adjusting delivery methods to comply with state and local health/safety restrictions.

As stated in the March 21, 2020 guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, the provision of FAPE may include, as appropriate, special education and related services provided through specially designed instruction that is provided in-person, virtually, online, telephonically, and/or in a combination. Many disability-related accommodations and modifications may be effectively provided to some students either in-person or online, such as extensions of time for assignments, videos with captioning or embedded sign language interpreting, accessible reading materials, and speech/language services through video conferencing.

All IEP teams will convene within the first two months of school to review assessment data and make adjustments, if needed, to the individualized program of each student. The IEP team will also add additional language to the PRESENT LEVELS section of the IEP. This language will focus on a plan for the possibility of another complete closure of schools by the Governor of Pennsylvania.

How can districts provide services to students with significant behavioral difficulties whose IEPs require a 1:1 paraeducator and/or a high level of behavioral support for the safety of themselves and others in fall 2020?

There is no one way to provide services. Districts must determine, in collaboration with families, ways to provide services to their students and individualize these services based on individual student needs. Guidance provided for spring 2020 included that schools and systems should leverage the behavioral expertise of their personnel to support interventions that meet the needs of their students and the new learning environment and prioritize the immediate needs of their most impacted students. Behavioral supports at home likely look very different than behavioral supports in schools, and parents/caregivers may need support on how to implement interventions and supports. Examples of behavioral supports that could be implemented in the

home include remote instruction, parent/caregiver behavioral coaching, or coaching and support around interventions such as: “first, then choice boards,” activity schedules, functional communication strategies, implementation of reinforcement contingencies, etc.

If a child with a disability at high risk of severe medical complications is excluded from school during an outbreak of COVID-19 and the child’s school remains open, is the exclusion considered a change in education placement subject to protections of 34 CFR SS 300.115 and 300.116 and 34 CFR SS 104.35 and 104.36.

If the exclusion is a temporary emergency measure (generally 10 consecutive school days or less), the provision of services such as online or virtual instruction, instructional telephone calls, and other curriculum-based instructional activities, to the extent available, is not considered a change in placement. During this time period, a child’s parent or other IEP team member may request an IEP meeting to discuss the potential need for services if the exclusion is likely to be of long duration (generally more than 10 consecutive school days). For long-term exclusions, an LEA must consider placement decisions under the IDEA’s procedural protections of 34 CFR §§ 300.115 – 300.116, regarding the continuum of alternative placements and the determination of placements.

Under 34 CFR § 300.116, a change in placement decision must be made by a group of persons, including the parents and other persons knowledgeable about the child and the placement options. If the placement group determines that the child meets established high-risk criteria and, due to safety and health concerns, the child’s needs could be met through homebound instruction, then under 34 CFR §300.503(a)(1), the public agency must issue a prior written notice proposing the change in placement. A parent who disagrees with this prior written notice retains all of the due process rights included in 34 CFR §§ 300.500-300.520.

For children with disabilities protected by Section 504 who are dismissed from school during an outbreak of COVID-19 because they are at high risk for health complications, compliance with the procedures described above and completion of any necessary evaluations of the child satisfy the evaluation, placement and procedural requirements of 34 CFR §§ 104.35 and 104.36. The decision to dismiss a child based on his or her high risk for medical complications must be based on the individual needs of the child and not on perceptions of the child’s needs based merely on stereotypes or generalizations regarding his or her disability.

Additional Questions?

It is difficult to anticipate every question a parent may have and we will not try to do that here. Should you have any questions not answered by this notice, please reach out to your student’s special education teacher. You may also reach out to our Director of Special Education using one of the following methods:

- **Email:** tim.dadich@acvsd.org
- **Office Phone:** 724.659.5820 Ext-1114