



La Porte Independent School District

La Porte ISD Special Education and Section 504 2020-21 School Year Guidance

Requirements

La Porte ISD will ensure that students with disabilities have access to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). We will ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, each student with a disability can be provided the special education and related services identified in the student's individualized education program (IEP).

- La Porte ISD acknowledges that many students with medically-associated disabilities served through Section 504 or Special Education are among the most vulnerable to the spread of COVID-19.
- La Porte ISD acknowledges, despite its best efforts, remote instruction does not replace in-class direct instruction, and many students with disabilities struggled to meet academic, developmental and social learning targets (i.e., IEP Goals) during the delivery of remote instruction in the 2020 spring semester.
- 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/guardian's ability to determine the best time for their child to return to a traditional school setting.

“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.”



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General Guidance

- Students with disabilities will follow the same guidelines and protocols with special consideration given to meet their individual needs.
- La Porte ISD is committed to meeting the unique needs of students with disabilities by ensuring that ARD/IEP or 504 Committees convene as needed to discuss needs, review progress, and make individualized recommendations for our students.
- A Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) will be provided to students in Section 504 or Special Education regardless of the learning environment selected by the parent/guardian. Special education instructional and related services will be provided in accordance with the ARD/IEP either virtually or face-to-face
- 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 for the Fall semester.
- Students who are entitled to instructional and related services through an ARD (Admission, Review and Dismissal)/IEP, 504 Plan, etc. and who choose to participate in La Porte ISD's virtual learning program will be required to convene an appropriate meeting (ARD meeting or amendment) to revise their supports and services to ensure the District meets their individual needs.
- In an effort to minimize potential exposure to our most vulnerable students, La Porte ISD will:
 - Focus on social distancing, handwashing, and wearing masks.
 - Require masks (as developmentally appropriate) when social distancing is not possible.
 - Post visual supports throughout building to remind and support understanding of expectations.
 - Keep each student's belongings separated using student designated containers or areas.



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- Minimize sharing of high-touch materials (e.g., assign each student their own device/materials for the day when possible).
- Sanitize all used materials daily.
- Utilize protective barriers as appropriate.
- Utilize grouping and scheduling strategies to reduce exposure

Considerations - Face to Face vs. Virtual

Parent/guardians of students in Special and Section 504 considering in-class direct instruction should consider the positive and negative implications of in-class direct instruction for students with disabilities.

- Positive Implications for Face to Face
 - Increased individualization
 - Full implementation of Individual Education Programs (IEP)
 - Full implementation of IEP related services (i.e., Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Counseling, etc.)
 - Full implementation of speech and language services
 - Full implementation of dyslexia intervention
 - Greater access to accommodation and instructional supports
 - Social interaction
 - Frequent ability for clarification and re-teaching
- Negative Implications for Face to Face
 - Mitigated, but not a zero risk to COVID-19 spread
 - Minimum instructional time lost due to staggered arrival and dismissal schedules for students riding Special Transportation, consistent with instructional time impact of all students arriving and dismissing at varied times in the morning and afternoon.
- Positive Implications for Virtual Learning
 - Reduced risk of COVID-19 exposure
 - Easily embedded accommodations and modification supports such as text to speech and speech to text in assignments.
 - Easily accessible digital resources.



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- Tele-therapy options for speech, counseling, occupational therapy and in some cases, physical therapy.
- Negative Implications for Virtual Learning
 - Limited access to individual and real-time intervention, clarification, language support and review
 - Limited ability to fully implement a student's IEP, difficulty in fully implementing behavioral or social skills instruction.
 - Difficulty in measuring IEP goal progress
 - Social interaction limitations

Special Education Considerations: Face-to-Face

- 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.
- La Porte ISD will review all health plans and IEPs prior to reentry into brick and mortar settings and revise them through an ARD with appropriate safety protocols as needed.
- In-class direct instruction is consistent with traditional operations of a campus and the district's calendar. In-class direct instruction will begin on September 8, 2020 and continue based on the La Porte ISD's instructional calendar.
- All active Individual Education Programs (IEP) or Section 504 Plans will be used to start school.
- New ARD and 504 committee meetings and IEPs are not required to resume in-class direct instruction in the fall semester.
- For any student in Special Education in which a parent/guardian selects the in-class direct instruction option, but later decides to choose remote instruction, an ARD committee must promptly address the change in instruction location through an ARD amendment with a remote learning plan.



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- Students will wear face coverings over the nose and mouth, except while engaging in an activity where the mask cannot be worn (e.g., eating). Students' individual needs will be addressed on a case-by-case basis.

Instruction and Related Services - Face-to-Face

- La Porte ISD will ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, each student with a disability will be provided the special education and related services identified in the student's IEP, and when those services are not possible, an ARD or 504 meeting or amendment to address “like” services will occur.
- Group sizes will comply with state and local regulations. Designated spaces should be used for small group instruction.
- When feasible and appropriate, it is preferable for students to receive instruction outside rather than inside to reduce potential spread of contagions.
- Special education teachers will follow the general education guidance and complete lesson plans for each resource class.
- Special and general education teachers will collaborate to ensure lessons are designed to meet the needs of all students.
- Related Service providers will develop schedules that maximize time in a single classroom and minimize the number of rooms visited per day.
- Speech-language pathologists and teachers of the deaf or hard of hearing will wear clear face masks/shields as needed.
- Teachers and related service providers will collect data and monitor progress, and request an ARD/IEP committee meeting to address any concerns with progress on IEP goals/objectives or in the general education curriculum.

Special Education Considerations: Virtual



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- Virtual instruction for students with disabilities is consistent with the virtual environment for all students. Changes from the 2020 spring semester of virtual instruction include more rigorous attendance requirements, asynchronous and synchronous instruction (per LPISD guidelines) and a return to standard grading expectations (unless otherwise noted by the IEP). The pacing of curriculum within a remote environment will also increase during the 2020-2021 school year.
- In “program” classes, such as FOCUS, SAIL, and BSP, consideration will be given to students’ individual needs when developing a schedule for synchronous and asynchronous participation.
- Some IEPs cannot fully be implemented in a remote environment. La Porte ISD, however, will assure a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) is provided for any student in Special Education or Section 504 receiving instruction in a remote environment.
- IEP goals and objectives should not change from an IEP designed for in-class instruction, if a parent/guardian selects for 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/guardian’s choice for their child to receive instruction in a remote environment.
- For any student in Special Education or Section 504 in which a parent/guardian selects the remote instruction option, but later decides to choose the in-class direct instruction model, must wait until a natural transition (i.e., end of the grading period) to transition to the in-class direct option model. **ARD and Section 504 committees will consider exceptions based on individual circumstances.**

Instruction and Related Services: Virtual

- Special education teachers will follow the general education guidance and complete lesson plans for each resource class.



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- Special and general education teachers will collaborate to ensure lessons are designed to meet the needs of all students.
- For students who choose the virtual learning, teachers will:
 - Develop individualized lessons;
 - Provide direct instruction through scheduled synchronous sessions;
 - If a student is unable to participate during synchronous sessions and accesses lessons at another time, the ARD committee should convene to document how IEP will be implemented.
 - Provide links to virtual platforms for lesson participation;
 - Upload weekly lesson materials to the district-designated virtual platforms
 - Students may be provided with packet work or hands-on activities to supplement virtual instruction, as appropriate.
 - Document student participation and attendance on the student's log;
 - Collect data and monitor progress, and request an ARD/IEP committee meeting to address any concerns with progress on IEP goals/objectives or in the general education curriculum.

Documentation of Services in the IEP

- The student's schedule of special education and related services should be accurately documented in the ARD/IEP to reflect what supports and services the student requires for FAPE whether attending school face-to-face or virtually.
- Students with disabilities must have available an instructional day commensurate with that of students without disabilities.
- A contingency plan for services should be documented within the deliberations of every ARD/IEP outlining how services will be implemented during remote learning.
- Data should be collected weekly, at minimum, on IEP goals/objectives.



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Lack of Progress Guidance

- Whether face-to-face or virtual, special education teachers should review the progress of each student on their caseload weekly (i.e., grade books, data collection, etc.) and determine what, if any, additional supports may be needed for each student to continue to progress in the general education curriculum and on their IEP goals/objectives.
- Special education teachers should consider alternate strategies/supports to ensure continued progress (i.e., more synchronous instruction; more small group support, etc.).
- Special education teachers should, after other interventions have been unsuccessful, request to convene an ARD/IEP committee meetings to address lack of progress.
- When face-to-face instruction resumes fully, annual ARD committees should address student-specific needs resulting from closure. On a case-by-case basis, this might include discussions of COVID-related compensatory services or a need for extended school year (ESY) services. ARD/IEP committees should:
 - Answer any questions and address any parent concerns regarding COVID-related compensatory services;
 - Determine what services, if any, are needed;
 - Document the discussion and decision in the deliberations, including:
 - Start and end dates,
 - Frequency,
 - Duration,
 - Area of service, and
 - Goals services will address.
 - Provide prior written notice to parents following any offer of COVID-related compensatory services; and
 - Indicate whether or not the parents agree with the recommendation of COVID-related compensatory or ESY services.



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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/or from school to reduce large groups, Special Education transportation is still available based on the student's disability-related needs to access Special Education transportation.

Guidelines for Community-Based Instruction

- Outings will be limited to small groups students and will follow social distancing and hygiene guidelines for transporting students.
- Students will be pre-taught COVID-19 safety and hygiene routines prior to going out into the community (i.e., covering your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when out in public; avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth; disinfecting shopping carts; using touchless payment options and minimizing cash handling; immediately washing/sanitizing hands, etc.).
- Close contact with others will be limited and distance of at least 6 feet maintained when possible.
 - Staff will use verbal reminders and visual supports with students to maintain 6 feet distance from workers and customers.
- The CDC recommends wearing cloth face coverings in public settings where other social distancing measures are difficult to maintain, especially in areas of significant community-based transmission.

Times of Closure

Upon notice that a campus is closed:

- Contact/service logs will be maintained by special education staff;



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- Material distribution procedures should be followed by service providers;
- Virtual learning guidelines and IEP contingency plans should be followed;
- ARDs will proceed virtually throughout closure, adhering to legal timelines;
- and
- If an evaluation timeline cannot be met due to closure, the impact of the delay on services must be addressed when the ARD committee convenes to review evaluation results and develop the IEP.