



## Division of Special Education Update

### Welcome Back to School 2021-22

School facilities are open and ready to provide the safest possible learning environment and welcome back all students. The City of Angels Independent Study School/Virtual Academy is available as an online program for families with medical, social-emotional, or other concerns. For students with disabilities, participation in the Independent Study program is subject to IEP team determination through the IEP team meeting process.

<https://achieve.lausd.net/sped> ; [Welcome Back to School](#) / [Bienvenido de regreso la Escuela](#)

### Online Program Update

As mentioned in last month's DSE update, LAUSD continues to facilitate Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings to determine the appropriateness of offering our Independent Study Program (On Line Program) as Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). As City of Angeles continues to expand, over 15K students are now enrolled and the number of students with disabilities attending is approximately 10%.

We are including our FAQ resource distributed 8/19/21 as a resource/reminder. <https://achieve.lausd.net/sped> - [Frequently Asked Questions 8.19.21](#) / [Preguntas Frecuentes 8.19.21](#)

### Description of Online Program

The City of Angels Independent Study School/Virtual Academy is an online program that is available for families with medical, social-emotional, or other concerns. Through this program, students will work independently when not learning with a teacher synchronously. Students will not be taught by teachers from their own school but rather teachers assigned to the City of Angels. Elementary students will receive 3 hours of daily live virtual instruction with a teacher, while secondary students will receive three 70-minute periods per day (with at least 40 minutes of direct student-teacher time per period).

For students with disabilities, participation in this program is subject to IEP team determination through the IEP team meeting process. The school of attendance will schedule an IEP team meeting to determine the appropriateness of the independent study/virtual academy placement for the student. You may register your interest in this program via the Parent Portal, the family hotline (213) 443-1300 or by contacting the City of Angels School directly. For further information, visit the City of Angels website at [www.cityofangelsschool.org](http://www.cityofangelsschool.org)

### School and Family Support Services

#### Our Mission

The Division of Special Education's School and Family Support Services (SFSS) unit is committed to working collaboratively with our LAUSD families, students, colleagues and other partners in education to promote each student's success and well-being as he/she prepares for future endeavors by providing all partners with the ongoing delivery of the most accurate information, resources, assistance, and guidance regarding special education.

#### What We Do

If you have questions, concerns, and/or complaints related to special education or specifically about a child's IEP, we can assist. The Division of Special Education is committed to:



- Providing information to increase understanding and awareness of special education, so parents can better participate in the educational decision-making process for their child
- Promptly responding to inquiries, and helping to mediate and/or resolve concerns related to the Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Investigating complaints of alleged special education violations, and facilitating appropriate resolutions in a timely manner
- Listening to parent concerns and providing resources that support informed decision-making
- Offering information about parent engagement opportunities
- Facilitating collaboration between District staff and parents
- Providing answers to IEP related questions
- Assisting with transportation needs as stated on the IEP
- Providing the most current information related to special education

### **Contact Us**

School and Family Support Services

Telephone: (213) 241-6701

FAX: (877) 339-2684

Email: [spedsfss@lausd.net](mailto:spedsfss@lausd.net)

Website: <https://achieve.lausd.net/sped>

Monday - Friday 8:00 AM-5:00 PM

Interpreter Services Available

### **UCLA arts and Healing Programs-Session for Parents**

UCLArts & Healing is a community partner. It is an organizational member of the UCLA Integrative Medicine Collaborative and is supported by the Arts & Healing Initiative. Their mission is to transform lives through creative expression by integrating the innate benefits of the arts with mental health practices for self-discovery, connection, and empowerment. View the UCLArts & Healing programs, services and resources including the HOPE (Healing Online for People Everywhere) series programs, by visiting their webpage. <https://uclartsandhealing.org/>

### **Parent Portal**

As a friendly reminder, we highly encourage all parents to access the Parent Portal where various special education documents (i.e., IEP) and reports (i.e., service tracking) are available. To access the Parent Portal, visit:

<https://parentportalapp.lausd.net/parentaccess/>

### **Phone Numbers**

LAUSD General Hotline: 213-431-4300

Division of Special Education School and Family Support Services: 213-241-6701

LAUSD School Mental Health Hotline: 213-241-3840

Technology Access: 213-443-1300

### **Websites**

Division of Special Education: <https://achieve.lausd.net/sped>

General Resources During School Closure: <https://achieve.lausd.net/resources>

Office of Parent and Community Services (PCS): <https://achieve.lausd.net/pcs>



### **SELPA/CDE Information**

The California Department of Education (CDE) Special Education Division (SED) created a new web page that provides guidance and resources to local educational agencies in identifying factors to consider when conducting individualized determinations of need to address impacts to learning or services related to COVID–19 school disruptions, including examples of strategies to monitor pupil progress for the purpose of conducting these determinations and guidance on developing comprehensive Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) that are responsive to identified student needs. This information can be found on the CDE Conducting Individualized Determinations of Need web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/ac/sept2021leaguidance.asp>.

The information provided on the web page includes:

- Supporting Students with Disabilities as Schools Reopen
- Assembly Bill 86: Supplemental Instruction and Support
- Assembly Bill 130: Learning Recovery Support
- Determining Service and Support Needs
- Guiding Questions for the Individualized Education Program Team
- Social Emotional Support
- Progressive Monitoring
- Developing Comprehensive Individualized Education Programs
- Alternative Dispute Resolution

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact the Special Education Division by email at [SEDinfo@cde.ca.gov](mailto:SEDinfo@cde.ca.gov).

Conducting Individualized Determination of Needs (Abridged information from announcement posted September 3, 2021.

Guidance on identifying factors to consider when determining impacts to learning or services related to COVID–19 school disruptions, including examples of strategies to monitor pupil progress for the development of comprehensive IEPs

#### **Supporting Students with Disabilities as Schools Reopen**

The 2021 Budget Act (Senate Bill [SB] 129, Chapter 69, Statutes of 2021), requires the California Department of Education (CDE) to issue guidance, no later than September 1, 2021, to provide support to Local Educational Agencies (LEA) in identifying factors to consider when conducting individualized determinations of need to address impacts to learning or services related to COVID–19 school disruptions, including examples of strategies to monitor pupil progress for purposes of conducting these determinations and guidance on the development of comprehensive Individualized Education Programs (IEP) that are responsive to identified student needs. The purpose of this notice is to fulfill this requirement and provide families and LEAs with information on various topics related to supporting students with disabilities as LEAs return to in-person instruction. Further, this notice contains important information about available resources to promote learning acceleration, as well as important distinctions between various terms being used to describe services available to students with disabilities during this critical time.

#### **Background**

The COVID–19 pandemic resulted in unprecedented school closures across the state beginning in March 2020, which largely impacted the educational options offered by LEAs. In many cases, the unique barriers created by the COVID–19 pandemic resulted in educational services being delivered in alternative ways, such as distance learning or a hybrid model of in-person and virtual instruction.



Since March 2020, the California Department of Education (CDE) has issued several iterations of guidance pertaining to services for students with disabilities on the CDE's [Special Education Guidance for COVID-19 web page](#). As circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures evolved, the guidance addressed critical issues such as ensuring equitable access for students with disabilities and implementation of the IEP.

The CDE's guidance noted that, according to the United States Department of Education (USDOE) Office of Special Education Program's (OSEP) March 21, 2020 guidance, "These exceptional circumstances may affect how all educational and related services and supports are provided . . . the provision of [free and appropriate public education (FAPE)] may include, as appropriate, special education and related services provided through distance instruction provided virtually, online, or telephonically . . . schools may not be able to provide all services in the same manner that they are typically provided . . . federal disability law allows for flexibility in determining how to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. The determination of how FAPE is to be provided may need to be different in this time of unprecedented national emergency."

On or before October 1, 2021, SELPAs are required to work with member LEAs to develop and submit a plan to the CDE detailing how the SELPA and its member LEAs will implement the requirements associated with this funding, including detailed proposed expenditure information broken down by eligible activity; the number, disabilities, and demographics of pupils proposed to be served; evidence of matching funds as required by this section; and any other information required by the CDE.

In expending funds appropriated for this purpose, SELPAs and LEAs shall do all of the following:

- Ensure that learning recovery support provided with these funds is related to COVID-19 school disruptions during the period of March 13, 2020, to September 1, 2021, inclusive.
- Match funding received under this section on a one-to-one basis by other funds spent for these purposes.
- Not use this funding to supplant existing expenditures or obligations of the LEA.
- Not use funds received under this section for, or use these funds to match expenditures for, attorney's fees.

Further, SELPAs are required to submit a report to the CDE on or before September 30, 2023, that describes how funding received under this section was spent and that includes a summary of learning recovery services provided. The summary shall include the demographics of pupils served through the learning recovery and supports provided, including, but not limited to, the pupil's disability, family income, English learner classification, and the parent's primary language.

Learning recovery support is not defined in this context. Therefore, SELPAs and LEAs may apply that term broadly to justify expenditures that address learning gaps and accelerate progress for students with disabilities. This may include expenditures related to providing missed services, contracting with related services providers, facilitating collaborative IEP team meetings, and/or conducting outreach to parents and students.

### **Determining Service and Support Needs**

Determining service and support needs for students with disabilities should be an individualized process. IEP teams should review a variety of available student data to determine an appropriate plan for supporting the student with learning recovery and accelerating progress in meeting IEP goals.

Educational need can be measured by assessing whether or not the student continued making progress in the general education curriculum, or alternative course of study specified in their IEP, assessing progress toward meeting individualized IEP goals, and assessing for any regression that may have occurred during the period of COVID-19 school disruptions. IEP teams may wish to review student data prior to COVID-19 school disruptions to



establish a baseline and compare current skills and performance. Data to be considered includes, but is not limited to:

- review of the student’s progress on IEP goals, objectives or benchmarks;
- observation and data from teachers, therapists, parents, and others having direct contact with the student;
- screening, assessment or information maintained on the student, including pretest and posttest data; and
- curriculum-based assessment, including pretest and post-test data; and other relevant factors.

Data should be discussed and considered in the context of the educational options offered by the LEA and services provided to the student for the duration of COVID–19 school disruptions. This includes student participation in any activities and data from those offerings; including but not limited to:

- observations;
- samples of the student’s work;
- behavior logs;
- screenings and assessments; and
- parent interviews/observations.

Given the unique circumstances presented by COVID–19 school disruptions, parents were increasingly vital partners in educating students. As such, parental input is crucial and parent information and concerns must be considered in determining service and support needs for students as they return to the classroom.

As noted above, the law states that Supplementary Instruction and Support Services offered through AB 86 grant funds are in addition and complementary to services offered through the IEP. As for Learning Recovery Support offered through AB 130 grant funds, the law neither requires nor prohibits that these services be offered through the IEP. IEP teams should clearly document the plan for delivering those services and support deemed necessary for FAPE. The LEA can determine what services and supports are to be offered pursuant to the IEP and what services and supports are to be offered outside of the IEP process.

### **Guiding Questions for the Individualized Education Program Team**

When discussing available sources of data and determining ways to accelerate learning for students with disabilities, the IEP Team is encouraged to explore innovative ways to address any loss of skills or regression. This may be done by carefully considering a student’s individual circumstances, including the student’s strengths, impact of their disability on access to services and support, and social-emotional well-being, along with the learning recovery options being offered by the LEA. In determining service and support needs for students, IEP teams may wish to consider engaging in dialogue about the following: services provided during school facility closures, options offered to students, skills previously acquired lost, a review of the current and previous data, attendance at ESY, and any other information that may guide the IEP team in determining loss of skills or regression directly resulting from school facility closures caused by the COVID-19 national emergency.

These questions are meant to facilitate substantive, collaborative conversations between IEP team members in determining service and support needs for individual students given their unique experiences, circumstances, and strengths. In any case, accelerating learning should involve establishing measurable goals and monitoring systems for student access and engagement, as well as social-emotional and academic learning.

There is a growing body of research proving that social and emotional learning (SEL) is fundamental to academic success. SEL should be woven into the work of every teacher in every classroom. Leading with SEL is essential because children need social and emotional support as they, like the adults around them, navigate the unprecedented challenges of alternative learning options, unfamiliar educational environments or expectations,



and the transition back to in-person instruction. Further, SEL helps students access academic content through building essential self-management skills, resilience, and connections. For more information on SEL, please visit CDE's [web page for Social and Emotional Learning](#).

### **Alternative Dispute Resolution**

The importance of LEAs and parents working together during this unprecedented time in education to address the needs of students cannot be overstated. With students' best interests in mind, every effort should be made to resolve disagreements collaboratively and informally whenever possible. In support of these efforts, the 2021 Budget Act provided \$100,000,000 on a one-time basis for allocation to SELPAs to support member LEAs in conducting dispute prevention and voluntary alternative dispute resolution activities to prevent and resolve special education disputes resulting from COVID-19 school disruptions<sup>2</sup> in a collaborative and equitable manner. LEAs are to use this funding in collaboration with their SELPA to support the following:

- Early intervention to promote collaboration and positive relationships with families to prevent disputes through proactive communication, collaborative problem solving, and parent support activities.
- Conducting voluntary alternative dispute resolution activities to reach agreement and resolve issues that are not resolved through the IEP process.
- Work in partnership with Family Empowerment Centers or other family support organizations.
- Develop and implement plans to identify, and conduct outreach to, families who face language barriers and other challenges to participation in the special education process, and whose pupils have experienced significant disruption to their education as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As students return to school, LEAs and families should use this opportunity to build and strengthen renewed partnerships with the common goal of accelerating learning and achieving progress for students. Parents of students with disabilities should reach out to their LEA and SELPA with any questions or concerns about their student's education. Additionally, parents and families may contact [California's parent organizations](#) offering support and resources to families of students with disabilities using contact information provided on the CDE website.

For more information on additional dispute resolution options, please refer to the December 22, 2020 CDE memorandum on [COVID-19 and Special Education Dispute Resolution](#) on the CDE website.

### **Conclusion**

The CDE remains committed to supporting LEAs, families, students, educators, providers, and the entire education community in welcoming students with disabilities back to in-person instruction and ensuring their success. Should there be any questions related to the above information, please contact the Special Education Division at [SEDinfo@cde.ca.gov](mailto:SEDinfo@cde.ca.gov). LEAs are encouraged to directly contact the appropriate Focused Monitoring and Technical Assistance (FMTA) Consultant using the contact information provided on the California Department of Education [FMTA Consultant Assignments by Region web page](#).