Special Education Advocacy:  
Supporting the unique needs of your student during distance learning

December 1, 2020

Achieve with us.
The Arc of Allegan County

Our Mission & History

- “Advocate for persons with developmental disabilities so they may live, learn, work, and play with dignity, respect, and meaningful involvement in their communities.”

- Chapter of the largest national, community-based organization advocating for and serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

- Founded 64 years ago by 25 parents in Allegan County who were determined to ensure full and independent lives for their children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and to build a network of support for families.
The Arc of Allegan County
Programs & Services

- Provide advocacy services for both children and adults with I/DD
- Information & Referral Services
- Social & Recreational activities for adults
- Training/Education to individuals with disabilities and their families.
Special Education Advocacy

- The Arc partners with schools and families countywide to support students with disabilities to obtain meaningful education outcomes and increase parent confidence in their own ability to advocate for their child’s needs in the future.

- Our Educational Advocates

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Our Objective for Today’s Training

Review the basics of a Contingency Learning Plan and how it is used when an IEP can not be implemented as written during distance learning.

Share specific ideas to promote a student’s success during distance learning at home and address the unique learning, social/emotional needs of a student with an IEP during distance learning when a CLP is in place.
Defining Key Terms in Special Education

- **FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)**
- **Contingency Learning Plan (CLP)**
  - A separate document based on the child’s needs, which may look different in a virtual setting vs. school setting. This is used by districts to show a current offer of FAPE when the full IEP is not able to be implemented. The IEP is still active.
- **The “Brick and Mortar” Setting**
  - When students are learning in the classroom environment everyday. This is when the IEP is implemented in its entirety as written.
Contingency Learning Plans

- CLP should be created in collaboration with parent/guardian and entire IEP Team.
- The IEP Team should be addressing how their services will be delivered in the distance learning environment.
- Some services/ supports are not able to be offered in a distance learning situation. (ie. social interaction goals, paraprofessional supports)
  - Teams need to be creative in addressing these unique situations to ensure the needs of the student are met despite the distance learning environment.
- CLPs will look different than in person instruction.
CLPs (continued):

- Accommodations and services may look different, but should be discussed as a team.
- The CLP is the current offer of FAPE and may need to be revised as distance learning evolves throughout the school year. As the learning modes adjust to the pandemic, the needs of the student may change as well. If things are going well as is, there might not need to be any revisions.
“You are the parent, not the teacher.”

It is important to think about:

■ Balance

■ Schedules

■ Communication/ Partnership
Advocacy: Keys to Success!

- It is critical to know and understand your child’s IEP.
- Begin having the conversation with your child about his/her IEP.
- By middle school, your child should have a general understanding of what an IEP is and how it functions to support his/her success in school.
- In high school, students should be learning how to advocate for themselves in knowing and understanding the accommodations in their IEPs, and the scope of services/goals created by their team to address areas of need. This would include understanding the purpose of the CLP and how it is different than his/her IEP during distance learning.
Promoting a Supportive Learning Environment During Distance Learning

- Expectations and Routines
- The Home Learning Environment
- Patience, Flexibility and Creativity
- Communication
- Addressing two key areas: Socialization and Behavior
Know the Virtual/Distance Learning Program

● Communicate changes with your child.
  ○ “School has made the difficult decision to change their program right now. This is what it means for you...”
  ○ “I have been thinking this over and I think that we should manage our day by...”
  ○ “Do you have other ideas?”

● It is important to understand your child’s learning platform or virtual program, or at least be able to navigate through the virtual classroom and learning programs. If packets are provided, make sure you understand how to pace your child through the work.

● Make sure you have the resources you need
  ○ Communicate with the school about your household’s needs.

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Establish Clear Expectations

● Set boundaries: If you are working in your home, how involved can you be in supporting/redirecting your child? When can your child approach you when she needs help?

● Support your child in developing independence
  ○ Schedule (visual, Calendar, agenda), clearly outlined school time and break time
  ○ To do list for completing tasks, work checklist
  ○ First/Then
  ○ Contracts with rewards/reinforcement

● Provide choices. This promotes a sense of control and ownership.

● Positive Communication
Basic Visual Schedule/ To-Do List

Daily Schedule Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Done</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wake Up</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brush Teeth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Dressed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Things to Do: | All Done
---|---
---|---
---|---
---|---
---|---
---|---
---|---
---|---

Daily Schedule Blank Template
# Schedule for an older student

## Sample K-12 Family Schedule - An Online School Day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Activity</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Times per Day</th>
<th>Activity Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Time</strong></td>
<td>30-50 minutes</td>
<td>4-6</td>
<td>★ Read and review learning materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Take notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Complete learning activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Attend online learning sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brain Breaks</strong></td>
<td>15-30 minutes</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>★ Take a walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Get a snack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Stretch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Do yoga or mindful meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Play outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meals</strong></td>
<td>30-60 minutes</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>★ Eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Interact with family members during meal time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chores</strong></td>
<td>15-30 minutes</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>★ Make bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Tidy up room and workspace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Help prepare meals, set table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Put away toys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Socialization</strong></td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>2-3</td>
<td>★ FaceTime or meet online with friends or family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Meet with clubs virtually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Social media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>★ Play board games, cards, backyard games</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
First/Then and Visual Schedules

First/Then:
- Work
- Computer

First/Then:
- Put away backpack
- Circletime
- Math

First/Then:
- Snack
- Bathroom
- Reading
## Choice Board Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inside</th>
<th>Outside</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read books</td>
<td>Play ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play games</td>
<td>Yard work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draw or color</td>
<td>Take a walk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer games</td>
<td>Go on a nature hike</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Choices for Daily Schedule
- Wake Up
- Get Dressed
- Breakfast
- Brush Teeth
- Brain Smart Start
- Indoor Playtime
- Craft Time
- Outdoor Playtime

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Patience, Flexibility and Creativity

- Distance learning schedules may not be dictated by school for the entire day. Have a plan for “down time” or breaks.
  - It’s such a fantastic time to read for pleasure!
  - Outdoor time/physical activity/movement (GoNoodle)
  - Creative play/art time
  - Cooking activities
  - Music--listen to music, make music
  - Games--board games
    - Strategy, turn taking, ability to not always win
Patience, Flexibility and Creativity

● When challenges are encountered, take note of your observations. What patterns are you noticing?

● It often takes repetition and multiple ways of presenting content for it to “click,” oftentimes, even more so for children with particular disabilities.
The Home Learning Environment

● Comfortable place to sit and work with minimal distractions
● Organization system (folder for work, dry erase board or journal for writing down assignments and notes)
● Any assistive technology or learning devices in child’s IEP
● Schedule (visual, checklist, planner)
● Consider providing water bottle, fidget, light snacks
● Have the work space fit with the type of learner your child is--do you need to stand, bounce/wiggle, etc.
Communication Protocols

- Know when they are available, keep communication concise. Be mindful of what is on educator’s plates right now.
- Look for patterns for when academic challenges or behavioral concerns arise. Take note and communicate with your team members.
- Timeline parameters--discuss with the team the amount of time it takes your child to complete a task. Adjust as needed by sharing your observations with your child’s teacher/team.
Technical Assistance

- Ensure access to appropriate technology for learning and assistive tech device/etc are available
- Know who to contact if you require technical assistance
- Device features:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text to speech</td>
<td>Recording features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timer</td>
<td>How to utilize chat features/raising a hand to ask a question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dictation feature</td>
<td>Note taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calendar and organizers</td>
<td>Closed captioning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Remote Learning Resources: Alt+Shift
Difficult to Address: Socialization

- 4 Components of Connection: Eye Contact, Presence, Touch, Playfulness *(Conscious Discipline)*

- **Caring Connections**: “Authentic connection provides a buffer that softens the negative effects of stressful situations.”

- Opportunities to build connection and to be social
  - Virtual meet ups with teacher/peers, pod peers, social stories to help students understand what’s going on, sending a letter/pen pal, send artwork to people that you miss
  - Lunch group, after school meet-ups (interactive games, Face Time, other social apps that can be monitored), masked playtime outside
COVID-19 Social Story Links

- “I Can Wear a Mask”
- “Why Can’t I go to School?”
- “We Can Be Problem Solvers at Home”
- “Coronavirus is a Big Word”
Difficult to Address: Behavior

● “ABC” (Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence)
   ○ Antecedent- the events, action, or circumstances that occur before a behavior.
   ○ Behavior- The behavior.
   ○ Consequences- The action or response that follows the behavior.

● Try to identify the trigger (frustration, boredom, technical issue, etc.)
● Positive response to both desired (positive reinforcement) and undesired behavior (problem solving/skill building)
● Try to be as proactive as possible--review structure and routine of learning at home
## Sample Data Collection Sheet

### Antecedent, Behavior, Consequence

#### BEHAVIOR INCIDENT CARD

**Student:**

**Date:** ________ **Time:** ________ **Duration:** ________

**Teacher:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Antecedent What happened before?</th>
<th>Behavior Inappropriate behavior:</th>
<th>Consequence What happened after?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Asked to do something</td>
<td>- Arguing</td>
<td>- Allowed ‘break’ time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Attention given to others</td>
<td>- Destruction of property</td>
<td>- Called for assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Change in routine</td>
<td>- Fidgeting</td>
<td>- Gave attention/choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Demand/request</td>
<td>- Gags self</td>
<td>- Gave communication device/display</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Difficult task/not understood</td>
<td>- Going lying on floor</td>
<td>- Listened for students message/adapted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Environment (loud/disruptive, hot/cold - sensory issues)</td>
<td>- Noncompliance</td>
<td>- Loss of incentives/privileges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Expected to wait – no materi-al/activities</td>
<td>- Off task</td>
<td>- Nothing/ignored</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Negative social interaction</td>
<td>- Passes gas</td>
<td>- Physical restraint (trained)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other student provoked</td>
<td>- Physical acted out (in what way)</td>
<td>- Physical redirection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Overheard conversation w/ name in it</td>
<td>- Provoking/Teasing others</td>
<td>- Physical restraint (trained)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Persevered on topic</td>
<td>- Repeated body movements/ phrases</td>
<td>- Pointed out expected social behavior/rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Someone used angry voice or said “no”</td>
<td>- Rude remarks</td>
<td>- Reframe request</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stopped from doing activity</td>
<td>- Ran or walked away</td>
<td>- Removed from room/area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Transition time</td>
<td>- Screaming/tantrum</td>
<td>- Reprimand/warning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unaware of others in room</td>
<td>- Self-injurious behavior</td>
<td>- Sent to office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Unforeseen causes (hungry, tired, bus, medication, etc)</td>
<td>- Threatening</td>
<td>- Separation within room/area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Other: specify</td>
<td>- Took off clothes</td>
<td>- Time out (duration: ________)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tries to stall/got/distract</td>
<td>- Verbal redirection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Other: specify</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is the Function of the Behavior?

The 4 Functions of Behavior

- **Sensory**
  Sensory input and experiences can feel good or relieving. They can reinforce and maintain behaviors.

- **Escape**
  Escaping demanding tasks, difficult situations, pain, and other unpleasant situations can serve as a function of behaviors.

- **Attention**
  Attention, even in the form of yelling or reprimanding, can often serve as reinforcement for behaviors.

- **Tangibles**
  Tangibles can be desired items or activities to which an individual wants access. Food, toys, electronics, and other things are all tangibles.
Difficult to Address: Behavior

- Calming routines
- Check in with yourself/environment
- Communicate with teacher/team: what are you noticing? Opportunities to skill build and share resources/strategies with parent. This is part of parent education opportunities in your child’s IEP.
# Calming Strategies Ideas

## FACET COVID

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus on what you can control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Say to yourself “I can control what I am doing here and now.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acknowledge your thoughts and feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Silently and kindly acknowledge any thoughts and feelings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Come back into your body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slowly stretch your arms or neck, shrug your shoulders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take slow, deep breaths</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engage in what you are doing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Notice 5 things you can see, 3 things you can hear, 1 thing you can smell, and what you are doing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Repeat the above 2 to 3 times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commit to action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What can you do this week to help yourself? Or others?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write it down in your schedule.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Open up</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledge that your feelings are normal and that it is okay to feel what you are feeling</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do you want to treat yourself? Others? Values include love, humor, kindness, honesty...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify resources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify 'Who' and 'Where' to get help, assistance, and support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disinfect and distance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wash your hands and practice social distancing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Calming Routine

1. Take 4 deep breaths

   ![Deep Breaths]

   1 2 3 4

2. Clench fists 4 times

   ![Clenched Fists]

   4

3. Count to 10

   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Adapted from Russ Harris, “The Happiness Trap” and Ten Learning ACT)
Importance of Routine and Rituals

- Maintain a before/after school routine to help designate home/learning time (get up and have breakfast, shower and get dressed)
- After school: may have homework
- Closeout learning programs and turn off technology
- Importance of Family Time--there are times you just need to BE together as a family. Disconnect and spend time together.
  - Cell Phone Parking Lot
Reminders

- Breaks in the school calendar are opportunities to reconnect with your child’s teacher and team. Also opportunities to “reset” your schedule, expectations/routine for distance learning. Also an opportunity to connect as a family.
- Choose one thing to focus on.
- Evaluate your previous week and set new goals. Reach out to team to address certain areas of concern and learn new ideas on how to address areas of need.
Resources

- Special Education Advocates
- The Arc of Allegan Co.’s [COVID-19 Resource Page](#)
- Michigan Alliance for Families: [COVID-19 Resources](#)
- AAESA’s [Remote Learning Guidance and Resources](#)
- Office of Special Education Info Line: OSE information Line 888-320-8384 (9am-4pm; M-F); or email [mde-ose@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-ose@michigan.gov)
- [Community Mental Health Services](#)
- [PACER Center](#)
- [Conscious Discipline](#)
- Technical Assistance Resources for Parents
  - [Alt+Shift](#)
Contact Information

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