

# Best Practices in Distance Learning to Support Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities

► STRATEGY • CONSIDERATIONS

## ► Create a Daily Educator Schedule.

- Which meetings do you need to schedule with other staff (teams, paraprofessionals, administrators, etc.)?
- When and how often will you model academic skills for both parents/caretakers/guardians and students?
- When and how often can you hold open office hours to accommodate questions from parents/caretakers/guardians or students?
- How are you building in time for self-care and the care of your family?
- How will you make this schedule easily accessible to yourself, co-workers, and parents/caretakers/guardians?

*Tip: Consider using shared calendars such as [iCal](#) or [Google Calendar](#).*

## ► Stay Connected to Colleagues.

- When practicing distance learning, connection and sharing of resources, ideas, and materials are essential. Remember to collaborate with fellow special educators, and connect with general educators as well.
- Share lesson plan ideas, materials, and resources. Consider setting up a share file with your colleagues.
- Make sure to find time to share what is going well with distance learning (including positive parent/caretaker/guardian communication) and where you are feeling challenged.
- When planning lessons and activities, make sure content is aligned with the general education content, and ensure that students have the ability to stay connected with their general education peers.
- Reach out to other special educators across grade levels, schools, or even districts. Connecting with professionals is essential.

*Tip: Check out these Facebook groups for additional support: [Educator Temporary School Closure for Online Learning](#) and [Online Teaching Tips for the Plague-Averse](#)*

## ► Communicate and Model Activities for Parents/Caretakers/Guardians.

- Share resources, lesson plans, and activities with parents/caretakers/guardians.
- Use specific directives; avoid jargon and educationally heavy language; and model how to complete the activity through pictures, video, or sharing your screen during a video conference.
- Assist the family with setting up a daily routine for the student. Consider providing an example of a visual schedule template, checklist, or choice board for work completion.
- When sharing an activity, explain the skill being targeted and/or purpose of the activity (the 'why'). Keep resources and activities focused on the Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives.
- Types of parent/caretaker/guardian communication: phone calls, newsletters (weekly or biweekly; create a schedule through at least May 1st), recorded videos, video chats, or hosting virtual office hours.

*Tip: It is essential to share the concept of presuming competence in students with significant intellectual disabilities with the parent/caretaker/guardians. Watch and share the webinar, [The Case for Presuming Competence](#), or review the [INSOURCE website](#) to view our collaborative webinar, "Presuming Competence in Students with Significant Disabilities." Consider sharing the following article to provide background information: [What They Don't Know Will Hurt Them: Going Beyond Instructional Level for Students with Disabilities](#).*

## ▶ Set Clear Expectations for Students and Parents/Caretakers/Guardians.

- What do you expect to be completed, and when will the assignment or activity be due? Create a schedule, checklist and/or visuals that reflect these expectations.
- Share and model the communication schedule with students and parents/caretakers/guardians. Make sure to determine their preferred mode of communication – e.g., phone calls, video conferences, email, etc.
- Allow for student choice. Utilize a choice board or checklist to allow students to select their learning activities.
- Make sure to break activities into smaller steps to encourage task completion.

*Tip: Be clear, but not rigid. Give yourself and others flexibility. This is new for students, teachers and parents, and everyone is learning as we go.*

## ▶ Use Multiple Modes of Learning to Activate Student Learning Styles.

- Embed the components of Universal Design for Learning into your lesson plans. Be sure to provide multiple forms of engagement, representation, and action and expression.

*Tip: Use the [PATINS UDL Lesson Plan Creator](#) to create universally designed lesson plans.*

- Students need variety for learning engagement. Incorporate websites, videos, power points, worksheets, or interactive activities (think scavenger hunt). Find fun and engaging activities that are aligned with student IEP goals. These are stressful times – let's get creative and have some fun!
- Be intentional about using simple and direct language. Utilize [Core Vocabulary](#) as much as possible.

*Tip: Explore the [Project SUCCESS Shared Curriculum & Resource List](#).*

## ▶ Provide Specific Feedback

- When students complete tasks, provide prompt and specific feedback.

*Tip: Parents/caretakers/guardians who have an iPhone or iPad have a scanner to scan and send completed work to the teacher for feedback; or teachers can send newsletters, notes, or lesson plans to parents/caretakers/guardians.*

*To do this:*

- *In the Notes app on the iPhone or iPad, open a new note.*
- *Press the camera button, and the option to scan a document will display.*
- *Select the "Scan the Document" button, and take a photo of completed student work.*
- *Once a document is scanned, it can be emailed directly to the parents/caretakers/guardians or teacher. A scanned document requires less e-mail storage than a photo, so it's easier to send.*
- *Review [e-Signature Guidelines](#) before e-mailing a scanned document.*

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