

# Document! Document! Document!

(For this document, male pronouns have been generally used.)

## *Alert for Families of Students on IEPs*

Now more than ever, whether your child is attending school in-person or remote learning or has a distance learning plan, parents need to keep good documentation of their child's services, contacts, frequency, duration, and topics/outcomes with general education teachers, special education teachers, or related services providers (OT, Speech, PT, Nurses, paras, etc.), school work received from which teacher, accommodations/modifications applied, contact with class and teacher online or learning online without that contact.

This guidance from the US Department of Education states:

“As school districts nationwide take necessary steps to protect the health and safety of their students, many are moving to virtual or online education (distance instruction). Some educators, however, have been reluctant to provide any distance instruction because they believe that federal disability law presents insurmountable barriers to remote education. This is simply not true. We remind schools they should not opt to close or decline to provide distance instruction, at the expense of students, to address matters pertaining to services for students with disabilities. Rather, school systems must make local decisions that take into consideration the health, safety, and well-being of all their students and staff. **To be clear: ensuring compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), † Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act should not prevent any school from offering educational programs through distance instruction.**”

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I often talk about the importance of documentation supporting any concerns you may have when preparing for your child's next IEP or any additional meeting or issue you may need to tackle. It has rarely been so significant a time to document as during COVID world. The American public school system is not well-equipped or well-practiced for shut-downs like we experienced the last quarter of the school year or may experience again, should there be outbreaks of coronavirus in classrooms, schools, or districts nor for in-person to be delivered in cohort classes, socially distancing, wearing masks, and frequently taking a break to wash our hands. During these vexing occasions that may come up, [whether in-person or when remote learning for your child is in place](#), if you chat with a teacher, whether special education or general education, following up with an email that addresses the date and method of connection (phone call, text, or email) and details of the discussion including any outcomes that may have been agreed to, is very important for your records. This is particularly so, if you need to support a future matter related to your contact with the teacher. Sending an email about your understanding of the discussion is just good practice and it can become a record that you may refer to in the future to refresh your memory.

## Consequently,

Consider documenting these instances, with a [follow-up email](#):

- Dates you were contacted by the special education teacher, frequency, and the discussion, and duration.
- Dates your child is contacted by the special education teacher, frequency, and the discussion, and duration
- Dates you were contacted by the general education teacher, frequency, and the discussion, and duration
- Dates your child was contacted by the general education teacher, frequency, and the discussion, duration
- Dates and any discussion with speech therapist, occupational therapist, etc. and duration of the contact and frequency
- If your child was entitled under his IEP to services, were they provided? If not, did you ask when those services would be offered?
- What, if any, changes were there in your child's program, were they discussed with you or were you told it would be a certain way, did you have an opportunity to agree or disagree with the change, if any?

*Remember to send the email to whichever provider. Copy the email and use it in your journal (below) to support any concerns you may have.*

Beyond these matters to email about, you should think about journaling information about the following:

- Dates services were received or missed
- Were assignments provided from special education, what accommodations were applied?
- Were assignments provided from general education, what accommodations were applied?
- Did special education provide instruction?
- Did general education provide instruction?
- Were general education work and assessments appropriately accommodated?
- How much instruction time did you provide to support your child?
- How much time did you have to devote to supporting your child?

Because there has been a lengthy absence from in-person learning and contact with specialists and general educators, [when returning to in-person learning](#), formally request that the special education team evaluate your child's current functioning to determine what, if any, skills were lost or regressed. "Formally" means in writing and copy some trusted person outside your immediate family, as witness. A relative outside the home, a neighbor, an advocate...Once evaluation is complete, determine your next steps considering the assessment results. You probably have an idea of what you can accept under the condition of COVID and what is unacceptable. You have an idea of how much support your child would ordinarily need to be successful and how much can reasonably be omitted without too much setback. Depending on those considerations and assessment results, you can begin to consider what, if any, additional supports he may require and asking the school what plans to restore him to his previous level and forward movement will be put in place.

Some loss of skills is to be expected, because of COVID. A significant loss may be *cause* to consider compensatory education. Compensatory services *could* be offered to help the child make up lost skills.