



If Your Child Has an ILP, IEP, or 504, Here's What You Need to Know During the COVID-19 School Closures

By Educator Barnes – March 31, 2020

I'm an educator, but I'm also a parent of a child with a 504. There has been a lot of confusion lately from both teachers and parents about how services for students with IEPs, ILPs, and 504s will continue while schools are closed. An ILP (individual learning plan) outlines services for English language learners. An IEP (individual education plan) outlines services for special education students. A 504 plan, which has some overlap with an IEP, provides services to students with a physical disability or mental health diagnosis that could interfere with their

education without students being part of special education. For example, a child could have a 504 because he or she uses a wheelchair or suffers from anxiety or depression. On the days that your child's school is in session implementing e-learning and not using waivers days granted by the governor, your child's school must provide general services and specialized services for all students.

The IDOE has provided guidance to all school leaders addressing these concerns. For example, since many schools are reducing learning to three days a week, this causes some questions about specialized plans since they were written for a five day week. In response, IDOE provided the following guidance:

IDOE is aware that many LEAs (Local Education Agencies) are using a combination of waiver days (counting those days as complete closures) and eLearning days (counting those days as instructional days) each week. For example, some schools are doing eLearning Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and using waiver days on Tuesdays and Thursdays. If the day or hours of instruction for all students are reduced, then the LEA should consider whether the amount of special education and related services should be adjusted in response to the revised length of the school day.

Although school leaders know educators must continue services, even if they are reduced, for English learners and students with disabilities during this time; unfortunately, not all school leaders are doing a good job of working with and communicating plans to parents. Some schools' special education department and English language learners department have contacted parents to explain how services will be provided. Other schools have not made these efforts. If you are reading this and you have no clue what your child's teacher will do to continue providing these services, you need to contact the school. This is a difficult transition, but these students have accommodations and modifications for a reason. Now, more than ever, these students need support from school staff.

Unfortunately, I had to be that parent who had to contact the school. A common accommodation provided in ILPs, IEPs, and 504s is time and a half. This means a student would receive time and a half to complete assignments and tests. If everyone else had two days to submit work, these students would have three days to turn it in, or if everyone had 60 minutes to complete a test, these students would have 90 minutes. This is an accommodation in my son's 504.

Currently, my children are on spring break. The work they were given before spring break was optional. The purpose was to provide something for students to do until spring break and to give students and parents the opportunity to use the platforms they will use when schoolwork becomes mandatory after spring break. My son's teacher created modules that locked after a certain time period. Due to my work schedule and my husband's schedule, we weren't able to help him work through some of the modules before they locked. I used this as an opportunity to remind his teacher about his 504 and the fact that after the break, he still is entitled to receive this accommodation.

She responded back explaining that she was struggling with using the platform effectively. In comparison to my other son's teacher (my sons are twins in the same grade), I would agree she is struggling. I empathize with her; however, she blatantly decided to ignore my son's 504 while school was in session, and my husband and I had to get the principal involved. She chose to not allow my son to have another accommodation in his 504 as a punishment for misbehavior. Even though we understood the work before the break was optional, we wanted to make sure his teacher understood that we are expecting his 504 to be followed after spring break especially since she chose not to follow it while school was in session.

Some services are not as easy to implement, but parents should know how all services will be addressed. At my school, members of our special education department are scheduling time via Zoom to meet with students and provide scaffolds to their work. They are keeping a log of the support they are providing.

The COVID-19 school closures have been tough on both parents and teachers; however, we still must work together to ensure we can do the best for students at this time. The bottom line is school staff must communicate with parents, and if this is not happening, then parents must advocate for their children to ensure they are receiving the best education at this time.