

How To Navigate Fall School Re-Opening

August 25, 2020

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Educational Advocate

Autism Connections and Family Empowerment



Identifying and Acknowledging

Why are we here?

What are my options?

What is best for MY student?

Are there consequences to my choices?

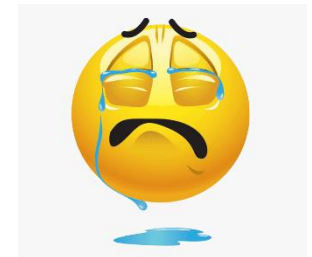
What is the state doing to help?

How do I develop a plan?

What supports will be offered to support my child's plan?

How much of this falls on my shoulders to implement?

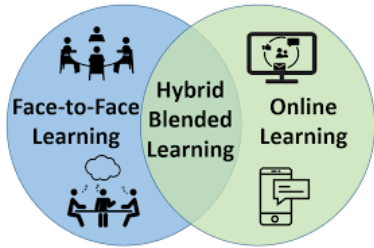
What if this doesn't work?





Who Decides and How?

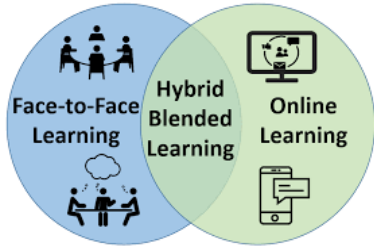
- Initial Fall guidance came out on June 25, 2020.
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/guidance.pdf>
- A comprehensive Special Education guidance came out on July 9, 2020.
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html> (under resources)
- Additional guidance came out on August 21, 2020 regarding teachers/providers being asked to deliver remote services from inside the classroom.
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/on-desktop.html>
- Compensatory Service guidance
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html> (under state)



Who Decides and How?



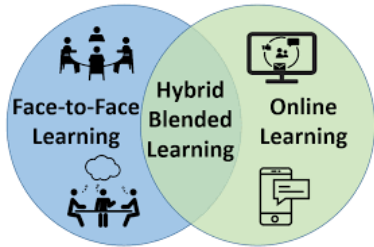
- Most school districts sent out surveys to families over the summer to gather feedback addressing family concerns and preferences based on three models: in-person learning, remote learning, or hybrid of the two.
- Most school committees then held meetings to vote.
- Each school district in Massachusetts was required to create draft reopening plans for three scenarios: an **entirely in-school experience**, an **entirely remote approach**, and a **hybrid** of the two. Plans were due to the state by Aug. 14th.
- The Massachusetts' state guidelines for re-opening in the Fall are based on communities' individual coronavirus risk level.



Who Decides and How?



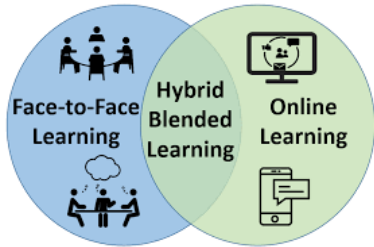
- As of August 18th, about 70 percent of school systems statewide plan to bring students back to the classroom **at least part time** this fall.
- To conduct remote only services, the district must fall under the moderate or high-risk threshold (this excludes those additional that have “extenuating” circumstances such as ventilation issues, space, etc.).
- As of August 18th, about 70 percent of school systems statewide plan to bring students back to the classroom **at least part time** this fall.
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Who Decides and How?



- August 21st, additional guidelines from DESE calls for teachers to be delivering remotely from inside the classroom....”allowing the student to maintain a familiarity with a classroom environment that will help the transition back to in-person teaching” :...while offering consistency to students and teachers more access to more instructional materials.

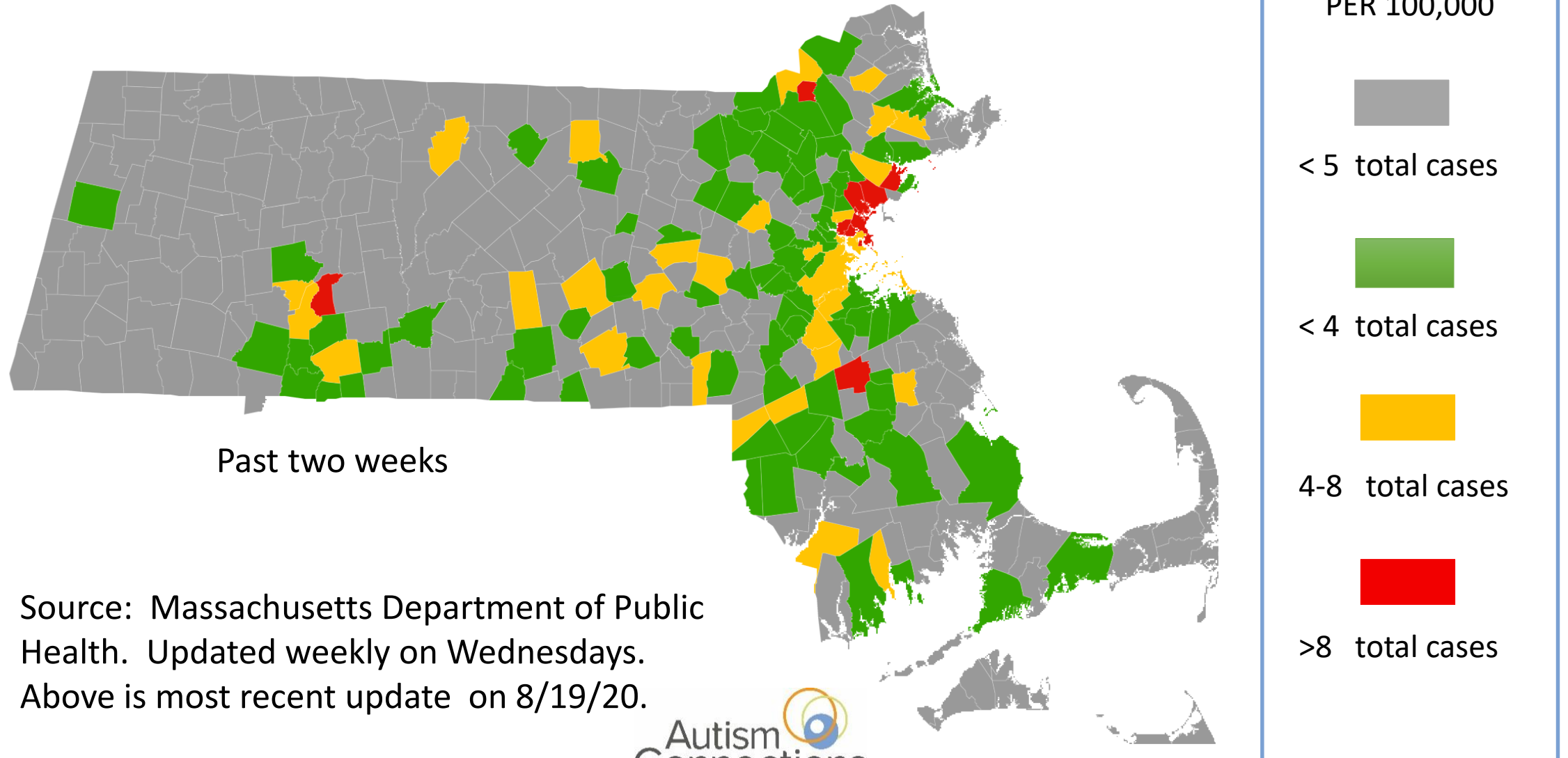


- Additional state guidance from 8/21/20, Despite the decision made by each school district, all families have the right to **opt-out of in-person learning. Be sure to do this in writing with a detailed list of reasons why and expectations for remote learning (synchronous and asynchronous).**

- Truancy?



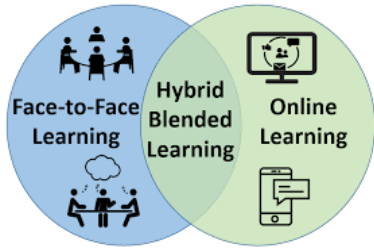
Who Decides and How?



Guidance



“There is a clear consensus from both education and medical groups: we must keep in mind not only the risks associated with COVID-19 for in-person school programs, but also the known challenges and consequences of keeping students out of school. While remote learning has improved over the course of the school closures, there is no substitute for in-person instruction when it comes to the quality of students’ academic learning. In-person school plays an equally important role in our ability to support students’ social-emotional needs, including their mental and physical health, and in mitigating the impacts of trauma.”



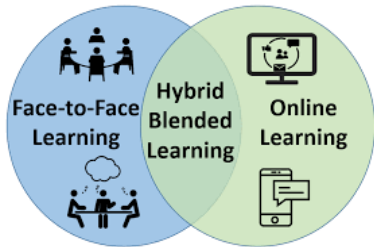
Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/guidance.pdf>



Prioritization Within State Guidance

Safe return to in-person learning for as many students as possible to maximize learning and address students' holistic needs.

- Students with disabilities and/or significant and complex needs.
- High need IEP
- Pre-school students
- English Language Learners (ELL)
- Homeless
- Foster and Congregate Care
- AAC



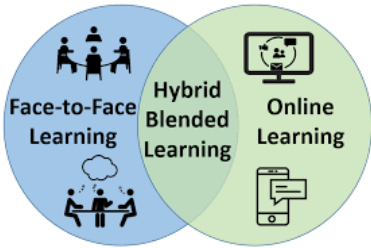


Guidance

Health and safety requirements:

- Mask and face covering for second grade and above required*
 - Masks should be provided by the student/family, but schools should make available face masks for students who need them.
 - Must be worn on bus
 - Mask breaks
 - Transparent Shields
 - Ensure 6-foot distancing if mask is not able to be worn.
- Screening upon entry/Temp. check not required
- Hand washing
- Cleaning frequently touched areas

*Exceptions made for those for whom it is not possible due to medical conditions, disability impact, or other health or safety factors. 1st grade and younger.

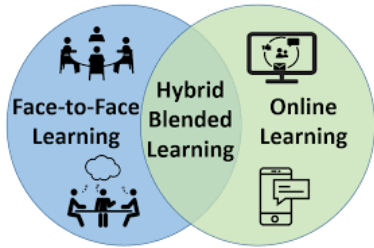




Guidance

Health and safety requirements:

- Physical distancing
 - 3-6 feet between students
 - Desks all facing same direction
 - Cohorts*
 - Additional safety precautions for school nurse and/or any staff supporting students with disabilities in close proximity.
- Keep child home if any symptoms are present
- Access to Mobile Testing - mobile rapid response unit will provide free testing of asymptomatic students/staff (caveats)



*There are no required maximums on cohort or group sizes, so long as schools adhere to the physical distancing requirements above.

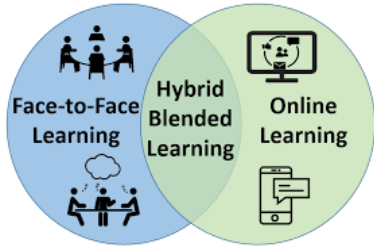
Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/guidance.pdf>



Guidance

Health and safety requirements:

- Flu shot required by Dec. 31 for six months old in child-care centers, pre-school, kindergarten, K-12 schools.... unless they have a religious or medical exemption, are home-schooled.
- DESE/DPH updated guidance:
 - Link available in Commissioner's weekly update to details.

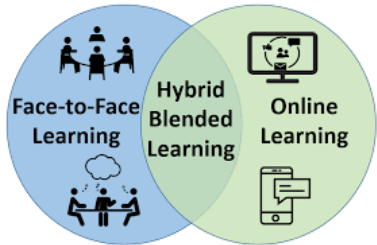


Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/guidance.pdf>



Guidance

- Schools needed to include planning for training sessions for staff, students, and families. Training should include:
 - Health and safety topics (use of safety supplies/PPE, visual symptom screening, and health/hygiene).
 - Special education should ensure additional training time for educators who will provide direct physical support to students with disabilities.
 - Educational topics (such as strengthening remote learning).
 - Note: Governor Baker decreased the school year for 2020-2021 by 10 days to allow for staff training to be done prior to school opening.

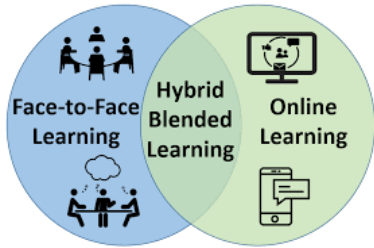




Guidance

Additional considerations:

- Utilizing external working spaces (libraries, community centers)
- Staffing alternatives to consider for reducing class sizes
- Reducing the mixing of student groups
 - Assigned seating
 - Grade level class
 - Families/siblings together
- Limiting travel within a school

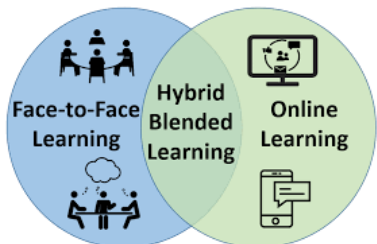


Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/return-to-school/guidance.pdf>



Fall Special Education Guidance

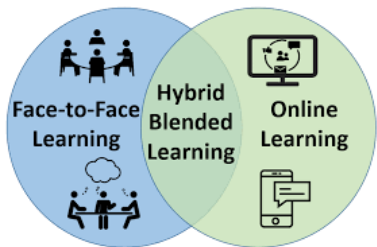
- “...if schools or districts are operating in a hybrid or remote model, educators and administrators must ***make every effort to continue to provide up to full-time in-person instruction to such students.*** If in-person instruction cannot be provided and students with disabilities must receive instruction remotely in full, or in part, through a ***hybrid model***, they ***must receive special education instruction and related services necessary to provide FAPE through an Instruction and Services model of delivery (e.g., structured lessons, teletherapy, video-based lessons, etc.) instead of relying solely on a Resources and Supports model (e.g., packets and assignments).*** For students with more significant and complex disabilities, providing ***one-on-one in-person instruction in the home or in a community-based setting should also be considered and made available as feasible***, if it is not possible to provide instruction in an in-school setting”.





Fall Special Education Guidance

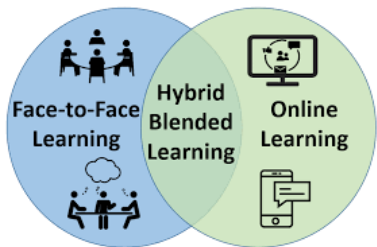
- Considerations for Specific Populations of Students:
 - Students with disabilities, particularly preschool-age students and those with significant and complex needs, should be prioritized for receiving in-person instruction during the 2020-2021 school year.
 - Students with complex medical needs
- Promoting Inclusive Services and the Least Restrictive Environment:
 - Will need to consider related service providers that may need to enter classroom regarding social distancing metrics.
 - Teletherapy may be needed for related services for students provided in the classroom and/or at home.





Fall Special Education Guidance

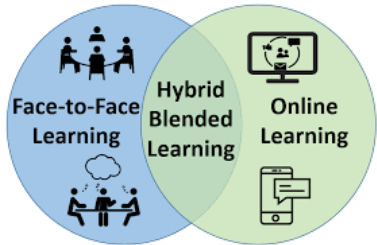
- Staffing, Specialized Safety Supplies/PPE and Training
- Delivery of IEP services (additional provisions may be needed)
- Transition services
- Evaluations and Team meetings (timelines are still applicable)
- Monitoring student progress data collection (in-person or remotely)
- Communication with families





Delivery of IEP Services

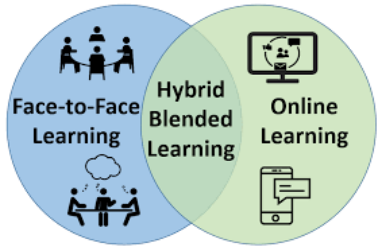
- In-person:
 - Alternative school spaces or alternative locations setting should be considered (i.e. libraries, community settings, outside, etc.).
 - This may impact LRE when special circumstance apply
 - Consider cohorts
 - Peer models to promote social interaction
 - Qualified professionals must be utilized when considering staffing alternatives.
 - Related services may be able to be provided remotely within the school setting.





Delivery of IEP Services

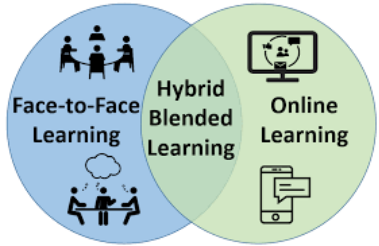
- In-person:
 - Train paraprofessionals as facilitators for push-in services.
 - Consider transitioning plan for students back to in-person (i.e. social stories, video tours, etc.).
 - For students with high risk medical needs, parent/caregiver should consult with child's primary care physician.
 - Ask physician for a note to document risk level.



Delivery of IEP Services



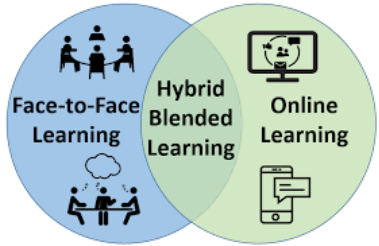
- Remotely/Hybrid:
 - Instruction and services
 - Must have comprehensive plan in place (in writing)
 - IEP grid services with focus on goals
 - Regular and consistent schedule of classes
 - Some independent work time as appropriate
 - Synchronous vs. Asynchronous
 - Structured lessons, teletherapy, video-based lessons, etc.
 - Train paraprofessionals as facilitators (i.e. technology, trouble shooting, etc.)
 - Opportunity to interact with classmates



Delivery of IEP Services



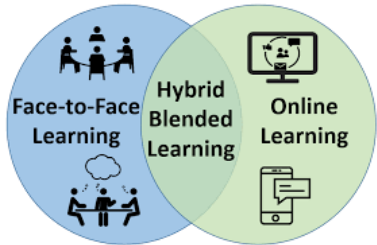
- Remotely/Hybrid:
 - Resources and support only to be used on a temporary basis (2wks)
 - ***One-on-one in-person instruction in the home or in a community-based setting should also be considered and made available as feasible, if it is not possible to provide instruction in an in-school setting.***
 - System for tracking attendance and participation for those in remote learning
 - Parent training
 - System for tracking attendance and participation for those in remote learning
 - Parent/Caregiver communication and engagement





Delivery of IEP Services

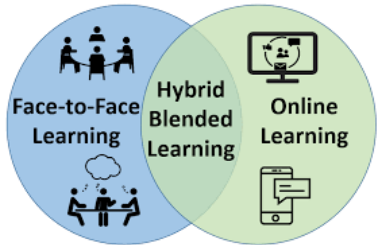
- Remote/Hybrid:
 - Unique modifications will require collaboration, careful planning and scheduling.
 - Monitoring student progress data collection (in-person or remotely).
 - Evaluations and Team meetings (timelines are still applicable)/
 - Developing Positive Behavior Supports
 - Proactive direct instruction for school- and class-wide routines, social skills instruction, individualized social stories, and other preventative measures will be necessary.





Delivery of IEP Services

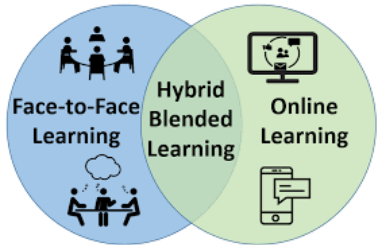
- Remote/Hybrid:
 - Developing Positive Behavior Supports (continued)
 - Provide proactive support to prevent unwanted behaviors.
 - Disciplinary action as last resort - restorative practices and other diversionary strategies should be utilized.
 - Additional de-escalation training and/or training on trauma-sensitive practices for staff including school resource officers may be needed.
 - TeleABA - <https://www.massadvocates.org/events?tag=COVID-19>





Transition

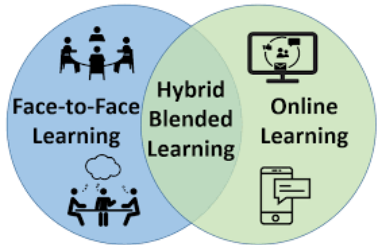
- Early Childhood Special Education and Preschool Children:
 - Extension of EI services is available for children who turned 3 between March 15, 2020 and August 31st to continue until special education eligibility determination can be completed and the child has transitioned to special education, or by October 15, 2020.
 - LRE for pre-school children includes public pre-schools, childcare centers, community centers and home.
 - Prioritize in-person services due to the importance of the socialization development and motor and communication skills which are vital at this age.





Transition

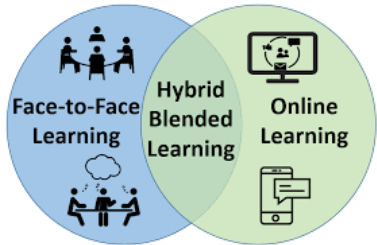
- Early Childhood Special Education and Preschool Children:
 - Public preschool staff and childcare staff should collaborate to ensure that special education services are being provided.
 - Build an explicit plan outlining the transition process from extended EI services.
 - Remain in one classroom for the majority of the day.
 - Consideration for pull-out services to be pushed into the classroom.





Transition

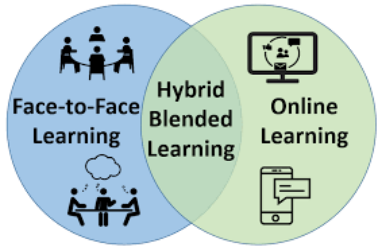
- Early Childhood Special Education and Preschool Children, in-person
 - Recommendations to consider things like movable walls (i.e. partitions) to define separate areas, ideally clear partitions so that children can see and interact with each other, while maintaining physical distance.
 - Visual supports and strategies for direct instruction for children to maintain physical distance and comply with other health and safety.
 - Social/emotional instruction and positive behavior supports, visit: <https://www.pyramidmodel.org/>.



Transition



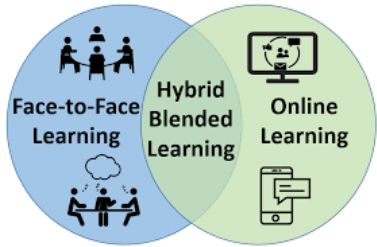
- Early Childhood Special Education and Preschool Children, remote/hybrid:
 - Pre-recorded enrichment activities aimed at providing practice and/or generalization opportunities can be provided outside of live learning time.
 - Keep learning opportunities interactive and similar to the routine children are familiar with (i.e. circle songs, etc.) and pair new learning with familiar activities.
 - In-person services offered within the student's home, particularly for preschool age students with complex and significant disabilities, can also be considered.





Turning 22

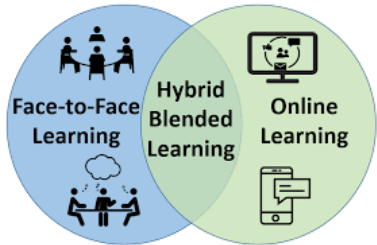
“Although in-person participation in community-based programs and inclusive concurrent enrollment programs at institutions of higher education (i.e. MACEI) may be limited at this time, schools and districts should make best efforts to develop plans collaboratively with community-based providers, colleges, parents/guardians, and students in order for students to access as much transition programming as possible. Current health and safety requirements must remain a priority.....when access in community-based settings...highly recommend to access in-person as soon as possible.”





Turning 22

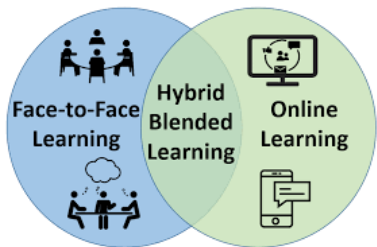
- Formal and Informal Assessments can be administered remotely.
- Independent Living Skills
- Community Engagement
- Employment
- Post Secondary Learning
- Self Determination
- Self Advocacy





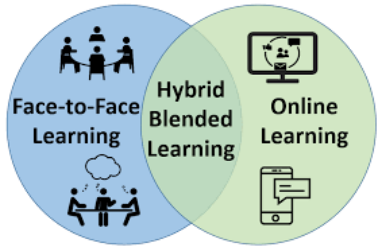
Evaluations and Team Meetings

- Schools should expect a backlog of assessments and meetings, combined with having to maintain timelines for annual reviews, re-evals, new evals.
 - Must continue to follow federal and state statutes and regulations.
 - May not require a parent to waive procedural rights when agreeing to an extension of timelines or a virtual meeting.
 - If parent agrees to an extension, the school should record discussions with the parent, outlining reason(s) and anticipated date evaluation may occur.
 - Interpreters required when needed.
 - Annual IEP meetings should still occur but school/parent may ask for an extension (in writing). <http://www.doe.mass.edu/sped/advisories/2020-2covid-ta.html>



Progress Data Collection

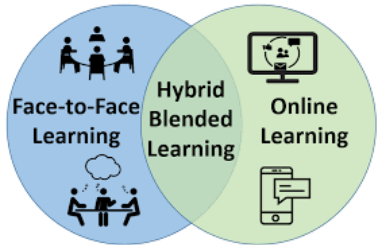
- Timelines for progress reports remain the same (report cards).
- Parent input will be extremely important if remote/hybrid.
- Identify the types of data that can be collected from the student, family, and home environment (i.e. tracking sheets, interviews, videos, assessments).
- One of DESE's recommendations:
<https://visualizeyourlearning.com/2020/04/14/4-types-of-data-to-collect-during-distance-learning/>



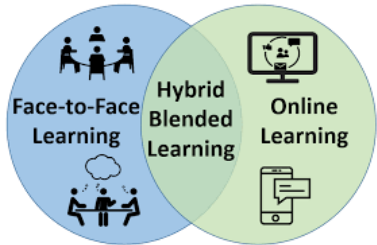


Transportation

- Districts must provide transportation if families are unable (including out-of-district).
- Parents who provide IEP required transportation can be reimbursed.
- Districts will need to add buses/vans OR decrease the number of kids being transported.
- Scheduling times may be earlier or later than school's past start/end times.



Parent/Caregiver and Communication Engagement



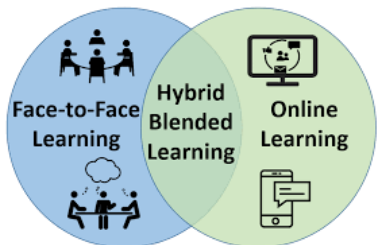
- Ongoing communication in a manner that works for the family” (in parents’ primary language).
- Frequency and type of communication will vary depending on the child’s individual needs, language and technology access barriers.
- ***Documentation is critical***
 - Required by the school
 - Parents should do as much as feasibly possible for records and potential compensatory services.
- IEP team members must consider information from parents regarding their children’s experiences.
- Consider new disability-related areas of need (i.e. anxiety).
- Use all available data to anticipate the student’s present areas of need and levels of need during re-entry.



Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html>



Parent/Caregiver and Communication Engagement



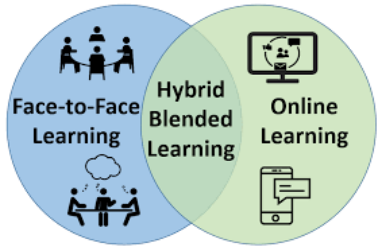
- Notify parents how decisions will be made relative to health and safety issues as they come up.
- Teachers or IEP liaisons should contact the parents of their students *as soon as possible* to discuss how a given student's IEP services will be delivered .
- If special education services are provided differently than as they are described in a student's IEP, parents must be notified in writing with details (how, when, where, etc.).
 - Parental consent is not required to implement modified in-person, hybrid or remote special education services
- Link to DESE's sample communication plan:
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/familyplan.docx>





Compensatory Services

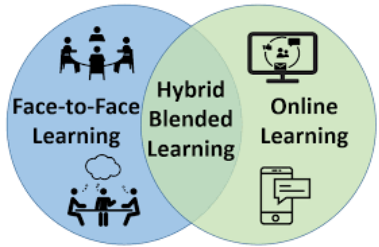
- Complicated with individualized consideration needed to determine by Team.
- **General Education Recovery Support:** will be available to students (with or without special education needs) who need it to reorient themselves to learning (educational and social/emotional).
- **COVID-19 Compensatory Services:** Considered for student on IEPs to remedy skill or knowledge *loss and/or lack of effective progress* due to delayed, interrupted, suspended, or inaccessible IEP services because of the emergency suspension of in-person education related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **New IEP Services:** to address new areas of disability (can amend the current IEP).



Compensatory Services



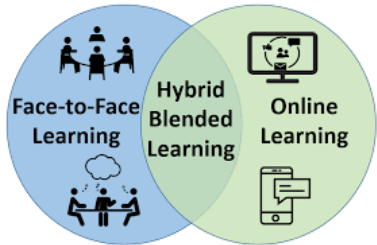
- Same prioritization applies (complex needs, inability to access) and determinations should be made by December 15th.
- Consideration made by:
 - A period of initial observation; a period of re-acclimation to learning; a review of data on recovery of learning loss and progress.
 - Parent input is considered....”*ongoing parental engagement along with their discretion and professional judgment*”.
- Not necessarily a 1:1 correspondence to missed IEP services but based on determination of a student’s need.
- Recovery supports *may not* take the place of current IEP services.





Compensatory Services

- CCS can be determined by full Team; partial Team, or more informal process.
 - must be in writing (N1)
- Students whose initial eligibility discussion was delayed may be eligible.
- Students who turned 22 during pandemic are potentially eligible.
 - goal is to facilitate a successful transition to adult life, including a transition to adult agency services.
 - does not extend the student's special education eligibility beyond the student's 22nd birthday.
- Other topics:
 - Move from one district to another
 - Out of district placement



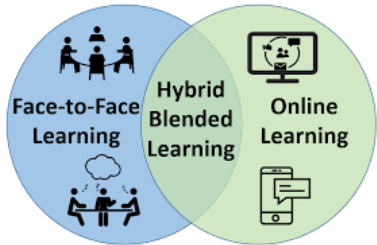


Resources

Link: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html>

(Under “state” section)

- Complete Special Education Guidance (7/10/20)
- Technical Assistance Advisory (5/22/20) –
 - Addresses timelines (5/22/20)
 - Compensatory services (8/17/20)
 - Special Education Learning Plan
- Resources for Educators/Providers Supporting Students with Disabilities (4/6/20 and 5/22/20)
- Family Resource Toolbox (4/17/20)
- Congregate Care Program Guidance (4/14/20)
- Zoom meetings for Special Education Directors



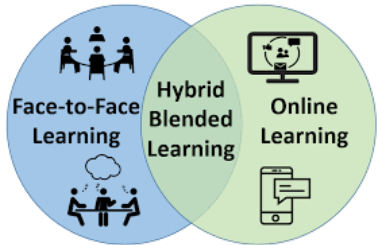


Resources

Link: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html>

(On the Desktop)

- Guidance on Required Safety Supplies for Re-Opening Schools (6/5/20 and 6/10/20)
- Protocols for Responding to COVID-10 scenario (school, bus, community) (Revised 8/2/20)
- Fall Reopening Transportation Guidance (7/22/20)
- Career/Vocational Technical Education Reopening Guidelines (7/29/20)
- Adult and Community Learning Services Fall Reopening Guidance (8/3/20)
- Fall Reopening Frequently Asked Questions (Updated 8/3/20)
- Protocols for Responding to COVID-19 Scenarios (8/20/20)
- Access to Mobile Testing (8/20/20)



Source: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/sped.html>



Resources

Additional Resources:

Massachusetts Homeschool Associations

https://www.time4learning.com/homeschooling/massachusetts/state-associations.html?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIpK6CmLCq6wIVCo_ICh3NOgyCEAYASAAEgLi_D_BwE

100+ tools for distance learning

<https://www.albert.io/blog/tools-for-distance-learning/>

Visuals/Videos for dealing with COVID-19

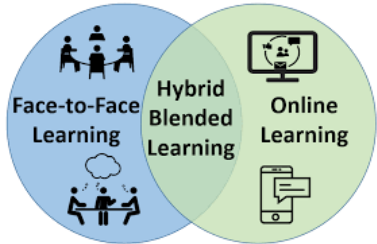
<https://www.smore.com/udqm2-covid-19-preparedness>

Trauma and the pandemic: Help students re-engage – MAC, Susan F. Cole, Esq.

https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d1cd93071be2d0001425ed6/t/5ec7efb4591ec70001120e33/1590161336211/mac+chat+6_42_Final.pdf

General ideas for using AAC

www.practicalaac.org





Resources

Additional Resources:

Supports for Students With Significant Cognitive Disabilities – Arkansas DESE

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d1cd93071be2d0001425ed6/t/5ebead1ac4b8b2207a76cbfe/1589554459714/Supports+for+COVID+Students+with+Significant+Cognitive+Disabilities.pdf>

Supporting Social Success & Communication During COVID-19 - Pamela Ely, M.S. CCC-SLP

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d1cd93071be2d0001425ed6/t/5e908abd4918a413fdf68970/1586531006291/MAC+Addendum+to+Social+%26+Language+Support+During+COVID-19.pdf>

Social Skills Resources for On-line Learning

<https://www.iidc.indiana.edu/doc/resources/social-skills-resources-for-online-learning.pdf>

General Behavioral Resources from MAC

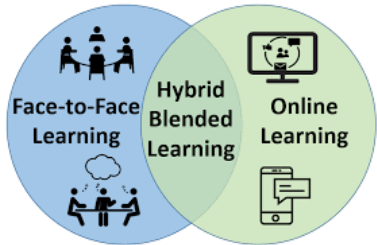
<https://www.massadvocates.org/covid-behavior>

Building Blocks for Equitable Remote Learning

<https://equitableremotelearning.org/what-we-offer/workshops/>

Internet Safety

<https://www.netsmartzkids.org/videos/>





Resources

Additional Supports:

Department of Developmental Services (DDS)

<https://www.mass.gov/dds-covid-19-resources-and-support>

Mass Advocates for Children (MAC)

<https://www.massadvocates.org/covid-clearinghouse>

Federation for Children with Special Needs

<https://fcsn.org/info-and-updates-during-covid-19>

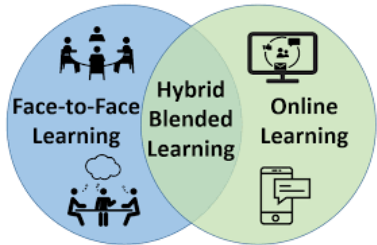
Special Needs Advocacy Network (SPaN)

<https://spanmass.org/covid-19.html>

Program Resolution Services:

File a complaint - <http://www.doe.ma.edu/prs/intake/default.html>

Request mediation - <http://www.mass.gov/mediation-at-the-bsea>




Questions and Contact Info

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- We have two Facebook pages:  *Autism Connections and Autism Connections Berkshire*

Autism Connections is a  Pathlight program

