It’s a New Way: Addressing Special Populations During and After COVID-19

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**Special Populations**

- English Language Learners
- Students Experiencing Homelessness
- Foster Care Students
- Students of Military Personnel
- Pregnant and Post-partum Students
- Students Served in Gifted and Talented Programs

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**Coronavirus' online school is hard enough. What if you're still learning to speak English?**

For English learners, school closures mean navigating online programs, finding a way to practice spoken English, and often juggling a much-needed job.

-Erica Richards, USA TODAY

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In Texas, the Northside Independent School District in San Antonio has more than 107,000 students, including about 10,000 English learners.

Since the coronavirus school shutdowns, more than 100 students have joined the district. All are new arrivals from other countries who have never met their teachers in person and have never been in an American classroom. Their first introduction to school in the U.S. has been learning from home.

All of Northside’s communications are in both Spanish and English. Because so many students are immigrants, Northside also translates information into Arabic, Tamil, Vietnamese, Pashto and Telugu.

**Bilingual education:** More U.S. schools are teaching students in two languages

When the district asked families to fill out an electronic form to receive a computer or a Wi-Fi hotspot, it went a step further with its newcomers who don’t speak English well. Staff members called each family, with an interpreter on the line, to gauge their needs.

They’ve been able to reach about 85% of their English learners, said Victor Raga, who oversees those programs at Northside. Others have moved or changed phone numbers or staff otherwise can’t find them.
Services for English Learners During School Closures

• English learners must still have access to bilingual or ESL programs when the District is providing remote instruction
• English learners are entitled to equal access to the same educational opportunities as their native English speaking peers
• English learners should still be provided language services commensurate with their English language proficiency level – individualization of services

English Learner Identification

• Typically, districts must complete the EL identification process within four weeks of initial enrollment
• Still try to meet this timeline IF POSSIBLE. If assessment was completed before school closures:
  • Video-conference or telephone LPAC meetings are an option
  • Parent consent to participate in the bilingual or ESL program can be obtained electronically through email or electronic signature, or documented via phone call
• If assessment was not completed before school closures, delay identification until in-person instruction resumes
English Learner Identification

- If four-week identification timeline is not met, document in the student’s records why not.
- If schools are still closed to in-person instruction in the fall, expect additional guidance from TEA, probably extending timelines further to complete identification process.

Summer Programs

- Any in-person summer school must be OPTIONAL for all students
- TEA suggests that districts may prioritize providing in-person summer services for special populations, including English learners
- No waiver yet for required bilingual/ESL summer school for students in K and 1st grade – if not waived, must include a virtual/distance learning option
TELPAS Assessment

• TELPAS is **optional** this year
• If your District chose to continue with TELPAS administration, the testing window was extended to May 29, 2020:
  • Need to have completed reading, listening, and speaking portions in standardized testing conditions
  • Writing samples can be collected as part of remote or distance learning
• Raters can rate writing samples from home with electronic tools
• K & 1 holistic domains can be rated remotely

TELPAS Assessment

• Prioritize completing TELPAS for students who:
  • Have a high potential for reclassification, or
  • Have an IEP, 504 Plan, or other exceptional needs
**TELPAS Assessment**

- Nonscorable materials from reading paper test must be returned to Pearson by **June 5**

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**TELPAS – Opted Not to Administer**

- If your district wants to receive score information for any students who did complete, you can still submit
- Nothing that you submit will be counted against the District
  - For statewide accountability, all districts and campuses will be “Not Rated: Declared State of Disaster”
- Writing samples that haven’t been rated can be discarded
- Graduating seniors – IGC can make graduation eligibility decision without assessment
LPAC Guidance During School Closures

- Phone or video conference meetings
- Electronic signatures (follow your district policy)
- LPAC Parent Representative is optional but encouraged
- Prioritize end-of-year reviews for students who have potential for reclassification
- Extended timeline for reclassification decisions – 30 calendar days into the 2020-2021 school year (if possible)

LPAC Reclassification Decisions

- Potential for reclassification?
  - Use TELPAS if you have it
  - If TELPAS wasn’t completed, administer LAS Links
  - Testing window currently extended to 30 calendar days into the 2020-2021 school year
  - TELPAS and LAS Links sections cannot be combined together to meet reclassification criteria
  - If you completed TELPAS on one campus or one grade level, but not another, you can submit scores for the ones who are completed
LPAC Reclassification Decisions

- STAAR Reading, STAAR English EOC, and norm-referenced standardized achievement test requirements are waived reclassifications in the 2019-2020 school year
- This includes reclassifications for this school year that are postponed to the first 30 days of 2020-2021
LPAC Reclassification Decisions

Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

- Reclassification criteria can still be assessed without the student present
LPAC End-of-Year Activities

• Send parent notifications:
  • Students reclassifying and exiting programs
  • Students reclassifying and continuing services
  • Students moving from monitoring year 1 to year 2
  • Students completing monitoring year 2
  • Send TELPAS reports, if available

Working with Parents of ELs

• COMMUNICATE!
  • Provide translation services, if needed, for phone and videoconference meetings
  • Ensure prompt translation of documents, if needed
  • Address technology issues
## Special Populations

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## McKinney-Vento Act: Rights and Protections

- Right to immediate enrollment in school even if lacking paperwork normally required for enrollment.
- Right to attend school in his/her school of origin, if in the child or youth’s best interest, or if the school in the attendance area where the family or youth is currently residing.
- Right to receive transportation to his/her school of origin, if this is requested by the parent or unaccompanied youth.
- Right to services comparable to those received by household schoolmates, including transportation and supplemental educational services.
- Right to attend school along with children not experiencing homelessness. Segregation based on a student’s status as homeless is strictly prohibited.
- The posting of homeless students’ rights in all schools and other places around the community.
**Identifying Students Experiencing “Homelessness”**

- Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
- Includes children and youth who:
  - Share housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
  - Are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
  - Are living in emergency or transitional shelters, or are abandoned in hospitals;
  - Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (e.g., park benches, etc.);
  - Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
  - Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in the previously described circumstances.

**McKinney-Vento Act: Still Active During COVID-19**

- McKinney-Vento protections are still active during COVID-19 school closures
- ISDs are required to designate a local homeless education liaison who have specific responsibilities for children and youth experiencing homelessness
- Liaisons should be consulted and deeply involved in COVID-19 response planning and execution
- Liaisons and other school staff who communicate with families and students should proactively, sensitively, and discretely ask about housing status in order to identify any and every students who has not already been identified as experiencing homelessness
- School staff should notify their homeless liaisons if a student has moved outside of their attendance zone (and notify students/families that they can remain in their school of origin)
- Liaisons should proactively maintain contact with these students and their families to ensure they are connected to school instruction and other school- and/or community-based supports, as needed and appropriate
  - Have methods in place to maintain communication (email, prepaid cellphones, etc.)
  - Students identified as experiencing homelessness should receive info and services as it relates to COVID-19
Ensure Access to Virtual or Distance Learning During School Closure

- Ensure equitable at home curriculum and instructional continuity
- Students experiencing homelessness may lack access to technology, including internet, a computer, and/or an appropriate mobile device
  - TEA has compiled a list of cable and internet providers who will provide free broadband and internet services while schools are closed due to COVID-19
- Establish and implement a sensitive and discreet protocol for asking students and families about their possible lack of supplies and other barriers to online learning
- Remove those barriers by providing access to mobile hotspots, laptops/tablets, or any other materials necessary to fully participate in online learning
- Give flexible coursework deadlines
- Organize coursework packets and supplies

Tips for Meeting the Immediate Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness

- Most schools are offering meals and some form of distance or virtual learning during the COVID-19 closures
  - That means students experiencing homelessness need to be enrolled immediately, so they can participate in any and all activities the school is offering at this time—school meals, virtual classes, social work services outreach, etc.
- Be as flexible as possible regarding feeding students to better ensure food/meal access to all who need it.
  - Think about strategies that will allow families without reliable transportation to have access to the same supports and services (transportation assistance, home delivery, etc.)
- Support the physical and mental health needs of students and families experiencing homelessness.
  - Share online resources related to self-care and physical/mental health to students and families
Connecting with Students Experiencing Homelessness

- Proactively reach out to all families identified as McKinney-Vento eligible
- Ensure that your homeless education webpage is up to date
- Use social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and non-traditional methods of communication (ISD hotline, Google Voice, meal and technology distributions, etc.) to connect and share information, services, and resources
- Create an ‘out-of-the-office’ message or email signature that includes a list of community resources
- Be aware of increased housing instability during this time and check-in with students and parents
- Be mindful that this is a challenging and potentially re-traumatizing time
- Pay specific attention to students and families who are living in temporary housing outside of the school district
- Create a survey or needs assessment
- Create and distribute parent and student-friendly resource guides
- Send materials (posters, flyers, and brochures) with information about McKinney-Vento (new TEHCY M-V posters available)

Collaborate with Community Partners

- Collaborate with community partners to support communication, identification, and outreach efforts
- Examples:
  - Develop a public service announcement and provide it in your local newspaper, radio stations, or TV station
  - Work with your fire department, law enforcement, local housing authority, local health officials, and WIC and SNAP officers to provide posters and other resources the district has to support students during COVID-19, and to support the identification of students experiencing homelessness
  - Work with food pantries, apartment complexes, motels/hotels, shelters, local faith-based organizations, and other charitable organizations to provide info and resources pertaining to meals, hygiene and other supplies for students and families
McKinney-Vento Students – COVID-19 Resources

- National Center for Homeless Education
  - [https://nche.ed.gov/#youth](https://nche.ed.gov/#youth)
- TEA’s Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth (TEHCY)
- TEA’s COVID-19 FAQ on Students Experiencing Homelessness (4.14.20):
- USDOE’s Guidance on Identifying and Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness
  - [https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/supporting-homeless-students/index.html](https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/supporting-homeless-students/index.html)

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Supporting Foster Care Students During Covid-19

- Students may not have a strong support system to rely upon in times of crisis
- More vulnerable to the changes that come with school closings, lack of daily contact with friends and mentors, and other forms of social distancing
- Foster Care Liaisons and other support staff should:
  - Check in with foster students on a regular basis to ensure educational support and continuity
  - Ensure equitable access to adequate learning resources
  - Provide tips, resources, and strategies for caregivers on promoting positive at home learning environment
  - Provide resources that link students with social and emotional supports
  - Collaborate with DFPS Education Specialists
  - Foster students are categorically eligible for the free school meals program

Coordinate Services with DFPS During COVID-19

- Maintain open communication with the CPS educational specialist in your region. A directory can be found [here](#).
- Foster Care Liaisons should continue to work with DFPS Education Specialists to support students in foster care during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Develop joint strategy for addressing student needs and supporting caregivers
- Provide the CPS educational specialist info about the enrollment and withdrawal processes and educational continuity plans
- Include DFPS Educational Specialist in virtual meetings (ARCs, 504 meetings, grade placement committee meetings, etc.)
- Provide child welfare parties contact information for school personnel
- Coordinate collaborative training opportunities
Foster Care Students – Enrollment (TEC § 25.001)

- Ensure there is a process in place for enrolling and withdrawing students while schools are closed – and that the process is prominently posted on the District’s website
- Under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), youth in foster care are entitled to immediate enrollment into a new school if it has been determined to be in their best interest to change schools
- If it is necessary for a foster student to change schools during COVID-19 response efforts, LEAs should begin continuity of education as early as possible during the enrollment process

Foster Care Students – Educational Support

- Ensure that foster families and youth are aware of all school resources offered during the COVID-19 response effort, through targeted outreach
- Ensure that youth in foster care have the same access to instruction and other educational supports provided to all other students
  - The USDOE’s OCR considers a student’s lack of access to technology as a factor when evaluating discrimination complaints under federal civil rights laws
- Communicate any challenges supporting the educational needs of youth in foster care with the child’s caregiver or placing child welfare agency
Foster Care Students in Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs)

Follow up..

to ensure students are receiving education and have access to appropriate materials, services, and supports

Include..
caseworkers and DFPS Education Specialists when communicating with RTC

Ensure..
RTCs have appropriate resources and related strategies to support students who may be experiencing anxiety and other challenging behaviors as a result of the pandemic

Foster Care Students – COVID-19 Resources

• TEA’s COVID-19 FAQ on Students in Foster Care (04.02.20)
  • https://tea.texas.gov/sites/default/files/covid/covid-19_foster_care_guidance_updated_april_2.pdf
• Texas Department of Family and Protective Services
  • https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/About_DFPS/Coronavirus/default.asp
• Texas Alliance of Child and Family Services
  • https://tacfs.org/covid-19.php
• Texas Workforce Commission
  • https://www.twc.texas.gov/partners/foster-care-programs
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G/T Student Identification Process

- Referral
- Identification
- Selection
- Services
**Identification of G/T Students**

- Requirement to administer new assessments for G/T identification is waived while LEAs are closed due to Coronavirus
- LEAs should take the following steps to minimize disrupted access to G/T services for students who have not completed the identification process
  - Document progress in identification process
  - Identify assessments administered to students and maintain the results to facilitate future identification
  - Determine which students can move to the selection process and which need further assessment
  - Develop a plan now for students that will need further assessment in late Summer or Fall of 2020

**G/T Selection Process**

- Determine when and how to finalize the selection process for students whose assessments have been administered
- Resume assessment in the summer or fall of 2020
Moving Forward with the Post-Assessment Selection Process

- Districts should develop a plan to conduct virtual G/T selection meetings
- Documentation used and exchanged for this purpose must maintain student confidentiality and ensure security of the data from tampering or accidental deletion
  - Excel documents: lock the cells, columns, or spreadsheets containing confidential or important information
  - Word documents: convert documents to fillable PDFs with electronic signatures
  - Do not maintain records on personal computers, tablets, electronic devices

Continue G/T Services During School Closure

- Texas Performance Standards Project
- Project Learning Opportunity
- Differentiated instruction through collaboration with core subject area providers
- Document services provided
### Communication to Students’ Families About G/T Services

- Communicate the waiver of new assessments if you have not already done so
- Designate a time to complete the identification process in the summer or fall
- Communicate the appeal process during school closures
- For those receiving services, provide information pertaining to continuation of services through approved instructional plans
- Think about planning and communication for summer and fall

### No Waiver of G/T Professional Development Requirements

- Teachers must receive 30 hours of training in gifted education to be eligible to teach G/T students
- Teachers must receive six hours of training yearly to maintain eligibility
- Administrators and counselors who have authority for G/T program decisions must receive six hours of professional development related to G/T students and program options
- Seek out online training sessions
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### Pregnancy Related Services and COVID-19

- Pregnancy Related Services (PRS) are support services that a pregnant student receives during the pregnancy prenatal and postpartum periods.
  - Includes Compensatory Education Home Instruction (CEHI)
- Services are normally delivered to a student when:
  - the student is pregnant and attending classes on a district campus;
  - the pregnancy prenatal period prevents the student from attending classes on a district campus; and
  - the pregnancy postpartum period prevents the student from attending classes on a district campus.
### Transitioning from Regular to Virtual Support Services

- In-person wellness checks
- Health services from school nurse or certified athletic trainer
- Transportation for the student or student’s children
- Instruction
- Child care for student’s children
- Case management and service coordination

- Virtual wellness checks
- Social emotional, and mental health guidance and referrals to social services virtually
- Virtual Instruction
- Virtual service coordination and assistance with obtaining government and community services

### Continuity of Services and Supports

- Make reasonable efforts to provide CEHI to students
- LEAs must file a missed school day waiver when their campuses are closed, regardless of the status of the closure.
- Document what services you provided during the COVID-19 pandemic
- Stay connected with students to provide information on services that will or will not be provided
CEHI Instruction

- Use of State Compensatory Education funds
- Students giving birth during school closures
- Documenting end of CEHI during school closures

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Military Connected Students

• Ban on all official travel through June 30, 2020
• Military personnel that have begun a permanent change of station may complete their move.
• LEAs should begin serving new students immediately
  • Educational continuity plan

Challenges for Military Connected Students

• LEA should stay connected with military connected students and their families
• Consider students’ family dynamics, basic needs, and resources available to students
• Partner with youth centers to ensure access to services
National Guard or Reserve Connected Students

- National Guard Deployment in Support of COVID-19 Response
  - Over 2,500 Guardsmen serving in various capacities
- LEAs should maintain consistent, intentional communication with National Guard and Reserve connected students
  - Consider family dynamics, resources, and basic needs

THANK YOU!

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