

FCSN/SPAN Webinar with Russell Johnston 5.6.20

Audience is diverse, includes parents, lawyers, advocates, educators

Agenda: Russell Johnston followed by q/a with Elizabeth Bostick and Tim Sindelair (lawyers)

Nina also on the call

Russell: Doing weekly meetings, lots of representation from various advocacy groups, a story of shifts. Now we see where we are, can see how much has changed.

We try to include for sped leaders each week images of what remote learning looks like

First couple of images shared in earlier presentations, were encouraging folks to use natural settings as learning environments. Children are not in grocery stores anymore. Times have changed.

Last week showed images of students from Lawrence public using tech at home, etc. know that's not the case everywhere in the state, have constructed models of learning

Have encouraged districts to start with what you can do and add, balance tech time/learning experiences

Overarching priorities- a lot of details in sped, reminder this is a health crisis, we have to be focused on safety and well being of students, families, staff, focusing on equity and thinking about most vulnerable students. Out there every week giving advice. So many unknowns, have had to switch to a new way of teaching without any preparation, working on keeping connections to families strong

At DESE we have tried to continue to update guidance on remote learning

- 1- First made a briefer statement toward the end of March about how remote learning could work, students should be engaged in learning for about half a day, maintain knowledge and skills already taught. Immediately created a tension. In sped we have to keep moving ahead on IEP goals. Want to be clear that recent new document called strengthening remote learning experience.
- 2- Ongoing and evolving situation, now that we see remote will continue to end of year, there are core content standards we want students to focus on through end of year. Prerequisite standards. Moved on from maintaining skills. Was glad when this came out, helps to balance sped focus on IEP goals and advance the curriculum.

What can remote service delivery look like? How can we provide sped services from a distance when we can't actually be with students?

2 models.

1. Supports and Resources: packets, strategies, assignments, strategies coupled with parent communication
2. Instruction and Services: whole class, small group, individualized

Hope these can explain how FAPE can be provided now even though it looks different

Building on advice from US Dept of Ed want all stakeholders to understand there are 2 types of service delivery that are a way of providing FAPE but look different.

1. Supports and resources- from gen ed plus accommodations, but also directly sent from sped educator or service provider (eg. OT suggestions for home activities)
2. Work is not enough, has to be coupled with regular and ongoing check ins with families- understand priorities coming home and how to match to student needs, understand this is hard for families. Needs to be problem solving, communication, working on behavior problems. Can be done through phone but also through district approved social media. Any media are acceptable as long as its being done. A scheduled time for these communications is recommended. Should schedule office hours where families can choose a time that works for them. Keep coming back to these ideas with our sped educators. Hoping combination of resources coming home plus communication is one option for getting learning done.
3. Whole class/small group/individualized formats- through phone, tech. We believe it's possible to do aspects of this now because most families have phones. We shouldn't get hung up thinking every kid needs a device. Encouraging districts to keep rolling out services. If there are services that can be rolled out now, do it. Commissioner Riley working on an initiative to get more device access to students across the state. In the meantime, work on this type of service.

We know this can't be done without more resources and know how. Weekly resources on website- sped planning and policy SEP website, updating on a regular basis. An excel file where we are continually adding resources to support students with disabilities related to disability and age level. Trying to narrow down to the resources we think districts need. Focusing on getting something done today that we didn't understand yesterday. Weekly highlighting a section for sped educators each week. For example, last week Amanda Green from DESE explained how to support transition for students at home for students who would have been doing job placements, community, recreational leisure- how to do that when we are so home bound. Use our excel file and breathe life into it, break it down and take it in chunks so people can keep adding on to what they are doing with students and get more creative over time.

We have the substantive part (instruction itself) and procedural components (like timelines) to support the rights that students have. Both are important and vital. First focused on getting supports and services out.

Timelines- initial and re-evals, annual reviews, there are a lot of timelines built in to sped. 3 levels of requirements- federal IDEA, state, and local regulations. If there is not a change in one level there is prob not a change in the others. Recently Sec. Devos could have asked for flexibility and waivers, but she chose not to. Said through innovation and grit can continue to meet the needs. So we understand the timelines are in effect. Met with sped leaders last week. This is a new report to congress. Gave us some clarity. We have to treat the timelines as if they are in effect and make efforts to meet them. Districts can and should attempt to find agreement with families regarding timelines. For example if eval was due next week and eval can't be done remotely, make agreement with families to extend the deadline. IEP meetings can be held through alt means. Re-evals can be used. Maybe we can use existing data. Maybe can use assessments that don't require in person to complete. Think about what do we need to complete a re-eval. There are many that can't be completed remotely- require manipulatives or a paper activity that can't be done remotely. If can't be completed, we need to make

sure they can get done when school re-opens. DESE working on creating more guidance on efforts to meet timelines- working on early next week working with span, federation stakeholder groups about how we go about this work right now. How do we do evals? How do we support students from early intervention through school based services? And share that info as situation has unfolded. Important to remember that at the end of the day, focusing on a student centered not a district wide approach. For this individual child, can this timeline be met? Instead of a district wide approach saying we just can't do evaluations right now. There might need to be some changing of messaging. Student centered approach. Make sure parents are as clear as possible and document along the way.

Virtual IEP meetings: spring is a busy time for IEP meetings. DESE is encouraging IEP meetings to be held virtually- video conference, telephone. Fear of staff members using their own phones or use a third party platform. Google phone call or google hang out. Don't want tech to be the barrier. When developing IEP based on virtual meeting think about what services the student would need when school is in session, not now during remote learning. Make sure full provision of services is described and explain what you're doing differently now in the N1. Communicate with parents, document good faith efforts. Particular emphasis on interpretation.

DESE effort to expand interpretation (language services) to 5 key districts to see how it goes and what we can learn so then we can expand to more districts in short order. We know that the state has to work to provide more access to interpretation/translation.

Recommending and encouraging that virtual IEP meetings can and should be done. Try one. Get feedback from a colleague a supervisor, and move on to more.

Parent Communication: different forms. Questions sent ahead of time. Questions on progress reports. Shared with dist leaders initially. Whenever the term ended in March, issue progress reports. Now to end of the year is likely another term. Rec to issue another set of progress reports. We know it's hard for teachers to know what students are doing. Last week reviewed progress monitoring and data collection. Put all of our slides up afterward to you can see what we have recommended. Important to remember the substantive and procedural aspects have to both be in place at this time. Required that schools and districts send them out. Still necessary. IEP goals are still in effect. Should be collecting data, writing progress reports, and sending them home (and translate).

Needs to be something that looks like and could be called a remote learning plan. Advisory that said they fully expected services to be running and FAPE provided- watershed moment to get services up and running. Need to be sure you document what is being done. Documentation and notification. How do we explain and describe that difference. DESE developed a suggested template so parents could know. This is just notification, doesn't require parent sign off or change IEP. Can use own form. Focus just has to be on notification on what services look like now. May take time to do this. Some right away, were already doing it, others came later. Requirement for districts, collabs, approved sped schools, etc.

April 9 letter- went out on April 17 because of translation- highlights from the letter (on website) went out to families from districts. FAPE has to be provided, IEP doesn't have to change to provide remote services. Letter, toolbox, state agencies and advocacy orgs gave feedback. Resources that could be helpful to families, tools for caregivers. If there are other suggestions to add to the toolbox want to hear them.

Future issues not fully resolved- not going to be able to say a ton about them. Got my COVID cut! 😊 Gov is calling the shots about any kind of in person gathering. Summer is up to the Gov. Appreciates how he is putting health and well being first. Anticipating that info will be coming soon about all types of summer services camps, daycares, summer school. We don't know right now. Advice to develop contingencies. Plan for remote just in case. Re-entry will look different. Will likely continue with some version of remote. Reentry not going to look how it did prior to crisis. Some combo of remote and in person? Have to wait and see from the Gov.

Compensatory Services: there are a lot of questions. Mantra providing as many services as we can right now. We know there will be individualized cases when schools resume. Might be info coming from US Dept of Ed.

Put out an FAQ on our website that describes considerations for compensatory services in general (March FAQ) take a look there, hopefully able to provide more guidance as time goes on.

Turn over to Elizabeth and Kim for questions:

Thank you Russel for comprehensive overview. Rec'd many questions.

Parents have a real concern over inequity of service delivery across the state. Some districts have completely refused to provide any virtual services, some only if parents ask for it. If they have multiple children or children with IEPs what language can they use, esp. if they've tried the approach the dist has used and it's just not working.

R: Under typical circumstances look at data over time for state intervention. This is such uncharted waters for us. Districts have local control over how they provide ed services. Expecting districts to be listening and following our advice. There is an "and" for resources/supports AND instruction/services. Want districts to be going for more inst/services over time. Hopeful that as families hear how we have described those models can use for advocacy. Anything that is truly denying access to ed strongly encourage parents to reach out to prob resolution about denial of FAPE. If specific question concern ask for support from prob resolution system. 407 LEA's. DESE does not have a way of peering in on each one but if we have a complaint we can investigate.

Tim: Questions about major transition points E/I and Transition age. Some parents getting letters saying even if child is turning 3 no services till fall.

R: As recently as last week advised that talking with DPH (early intervention services) there are about 5,000 students turning 3 betw March-Aug. Typically 40% of those are eligible (2,000 students!) Try to determine eligibility wherever we can. Accept E/I and add info make determination to accept the eval, conduct some observations, get services going. Suggested strategy might be E/I provider to do a baton hand off to early childhood staff- co-treatment with early childhood provider. Some areas of concern might not be as clear eligibility, might need to wait.

Tim: Other side- aging out. Concern about missed opportunities and hand off to adult services.

R: A case by case matter. Collaborating a lot with the adult serving agencies about what they are able to offer. Last week talked about what activities can be done right now. Nina has been working with DDS on case by case approach for students, what can we do now and what can be in place for later. Can't move to new setting/new physical location now but planning for it.

Elizabeth Bostic: Technology. Forms? Hearing assistive tech? Switches? How can parents get access? Itinerant teachers, sign language, etc.

Russell: Dispelled the notion that you can't return to the school building to get supplies. District leaders were taking the order quite literally to keep people safe, weren't allowing people into the buildings, but made sure people knew Gov order had a provision for remote services. Work that might need to be done to provide services remotely, getting into building to get equipment/materials to retrieve items ok. Personal item retrieval just came up on a call with superintendents- don't have clarity on personal items- but can go in to get materials to support remote learning. Has to be done in a socially distant way. Some districts giving a window for teacher to go in and get what they need and get them to families. Reach out to PRS to ask for help if still can't get access to equipment. Itinerant teachers- we have encouraged for those services to be provided. Nina researched extent to which diff related services can be provided remotely (licensure perspective) trying to get that info out to make it clear that most/all of those services can be provided remotely.

Tim: Follow up on technology- inequities on access to tech. Some have not been able to provide any access to families. Does dept have initiatives to support this?

R: Surveyed districts- broadband? Devices to deploy? Etc. Now working with philanthropy and other state agencies to push out access whether through actual devices or broadband. Underway.

E: Communication has been an area of challenge for parents. Many families have not received any communication from districts around individual needs of their student, or have not been able to access providers re. their student. Strategies?

R: Encouraging dists to work with sped advisory council re. how to provide notification to families. Would rec. contacting sped director or members of team at whatever level appropriate. If not getting answers, encourage going to sepac to find out. Some dists reached out re. template- as long as including components, you can roll out your plan, work with your sepac chair to influence and guide what you're doing. Not only should sped director know what's happening, but also hope that sepac chair would also know and could help.

T: Getting many questions about compliance- what if dist not providing services, can't provide remotely, waive requirements to have team meeting, won't have team meeting, etc. parent outside evals, change in circumstances, major changes- PRS, etc. What should parents be doing? For example dist waiver re. virtual meeting. Waives any procedural defects. Seeing them pop up in a number of districts.

R: Having not seen them myself, hard to comment. Surprised. Want the virtual meeting to take the place of the regular meeting. It's already allowable, this is not new. Even back in the 90's and early 2000's had many IEP meetings by phone, it's the same process. Scratching my head about what would need to be different or any waiver necessary. Trying to say to all involved in sped we know how to do this. We do meetings by phone. Work to not overcomplicate things.

E: Inequities relative to disabilities: ex. Dyslexia parents getting packets instead of OG/Wilson/LMB- how do we work with parents to make sure kids are getting access.

R: Challenges to dists to replicate something that was normally done in school, know services will be different, SPED resource guide trying to explain no one has ever tried to do these programs without the students right in front of them. Yesterday forwarded on to my team some ideas for supporting students who are Dyslexic. Frankly don't have an easy answer. Want districts to keep pushing and striving.

E: Follow up. For complex Bx/social emotional needs. Supports?

R: That's why we feel so strongly about our resource guide. No easy answer there. That's why parent communication is so important. Help professionals bring that knowledge base to families. Pleased with ABA community, remote services and consultation, doing a lot to ed themselves and the community. Medical needs, parent communication help to overcome hurdles as they come. Take by list of priorities and overcome more hurdles as they present themselves. Look at resource guide.

T: Several questions around 504 plans.

R: When we think about those resources and supports coming home, they should be coming with accommodations. Hoping and advising districts that acc. Should be embedded. Reach out to parents about adaptations as needed. In parent letter, included info about reaching out to teachers, 504 coordinator with questions.

E: Transitions. Some parents wondering about turning 22. Any possibility for 22 able to access services beyond their bday?

R: Case by case approach. What is the impact, what can we make available, work with state agencies. Question about providing some services for a limited number of students after 22 is an existing provision and can be made on a case by case basis.

T: Deaf and HH

R: One of the pieces of info we shared was how to access interpreters for zoom chats, ASL services, language access.

LaurenViviani: mass commission for deaf and hard of hearing, have a list of specialists. If kids are using ASL need support, the childrens specialist can be contacted. List of resources from BU, CDC, YouTube videos in ASL that explain COVID-19 and social distancing rec.s in ASL. On family toolbox resource guide.

E: School districts are not actually honoring contracts for itinerant providers (interpreters, etc) student can't hear the teacher, schools being slow to engage services to support those students

R: Commissioner put out an "On the Desktop" early on that said he expects districts to maintain service contracts not only for those types of services but also for day and res sped schools. We know services like that can be provided, and we want to make sure students have staff and programs to return to. Commissioner is unequivocal on this that we keep these services in place at this time, don't attempt to reduce costs particularly where services can still be provided. Ref. to on the desktop message.

Nina: For those of you who wan to send waivers, should be sent to DOE.mass.edu

Tim: looking for info on MCAS, and MCAS waivers. Status?

R: Waived for this year, spring admin. Including students in the midst of finishing and submitting alts. Can't be submitted. Looking ahead to next year. Most important for our hs students who need MCAS to

get diploma. Board did not take action on that at most recent meeting but anticipate they will take action on that in a coming meeting. Roll over in to next year?? Need to pass MCAS is first a foremost a thought for hs students. Grades 3-8 just cancelled. Wont try to have an earlier test next year.

Competency determination- have to meet local requirements plus passing score on MCAS. Some 12th graders who would have tried a make up in the spring, are not able to do so, Board voted that we will do a transcript review to see if the student took and passed a relevant class. (If needed an English test, took and passed a relevant English class) will allow student to get a comp determination.

E: Leveraging SEPAC as a resource. What do you do if you don't have a SEPAC in your community?

R: Wonder about this, do what you can individually with your sped director, good time to make sure a SEPAC gets formed (sounds a little flip, but...) find out what other SEPACs are doing, Leslie at Federation what do we see being successful elsewhere? What can we learn that can be useful

E: For students who might be wards of the state, congregate care, group homes if tech not available or if packet sent and they don't have someone to help them

R: Oversee ed in institutional settings as well, working with them to see how we can help them, varies from institution to inst. In one hosp pushing video based instruction into the res. With DMH we have a point person who is interfacing with each program individually to work out problems re. how to get services, who is overseeing. DYS has worked hard to id which staff are responsible. Concerns for outbreak in those settings. Careful about how they are letting in to those settings. Working on id increased concern to health and safety needs as priority?

From Beth Tremblay Hall to Everyone: 10:45 AM

Jennie - the powerpoint he provided to us ahead of time is linked to the handouts. We will request this updated powerpoint and publish after the presentation at that link.

From Paula Duggins to Everyone: 10:46 AM

https://masc.org/images/news/2020/DESE_Remote-Learning_Guidance.pdf

From Pam Nourse to Everyone: 10:48 AM

All participants are muted.

From Pam Nourse to Everyone: 10:55 AM

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

New DESE home site www.doe.mass.edu

From SPaN Mass to Everyone: 10:57 AM

Carissa, you can visit the SESP website at www.fcsn.org/rtsc/

From Pam Nourse to Everyone: 11:00 AM

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

New DESE home site www.doe.mass.edu

From Bridget Koetsch to Everyone: 11:05 AM

I think that virtual meetings going forward even after closure will help to increase parent participation particularly for working parents in rural areas who travel to work and attending an in person meeting would mean taking entire day off of work

From Pam Nourse to Everyone: 11:05 AM

Please use the Q&A feature of zoom to submit questions

From Maureen Brown to Everyone: 11:11 AM

Can we get guidance on ESY? What is the criteria that we are looking given that schools are going to be closed?

From Beth Tremblay Hall to Everyone: 11:17 AM

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

From O. Sophia Johansson to Everyone: 11:22 AM

huh, do EI providers know this? DPH is not processing waivers for EI services to continue

From Salima Slimane to Everyone: 11:27 AM

The disparities existing between different districts in providing services is very concerning. Are there any attempts from DESE to get all districts together to share practices and best tips to learn from each other to address the issue of equity. The burden of proof should not be on parents.

E: All of you sending in questions, we are collecting them and providing copies to Russell as team is working together on remote learning. Guidance vs what's actually happening. Our team working on supporting families as we are growing in this process.

Zoom Chat:

From Lisa Lapinski to Everyone: 11:31 AM

Please submit questions to the Q &A - thank you!!!

We are trying to get to as many as possible - but are starting with those submitted before today, so if we don't get to yours, my apologies

From imene saidi to Everyone: 11:32 AM

When are individualized instructions, small groups, ancillary services (OT, speech) going to start? DESE guidance isn't enforceable. We are almost two months in, with students already behind on learning and the gap keeps widening. Communication is ongoing but actual services aren't being given.

From SPaN Mass to Everyone: 11:33 AM

You can contact Leslie Leslie at the Federation for information on your district's SEPAC. Leslie can be reached at lleslie@fcsn.org

From John Krieger to Everyone: 11:34 AM

I've seen waivers that parents are asked to sign waiving any procedural rights during a virtual IEP meeting - I advised to ignore and we still had the meeting.

From Andrea Wizer to Everyone: 11:38 AM

I've seen that districts are working on confidentiality issues, wanting to ensure the use of DocuSign. Is this necessary?

From Salima Slimane to Everyone: 11:43 AM

SEPAC's are trying as much as they can to reach out to their districts to make sure services are provided for all students. However, I was wondering why can't DESE be involved to help?

From Salima Slimane to Everyone: 11:52 AM

Thank you for organizing this event

From Lisa Lapinski to Everyone: 11:53 AM

Prior webinars are available on the Federation website and the SPaN website at our COVID-19 page.

From Dawne Benoit to Everyone: 11:54 AM

I hope everyone has a great day!

From Irelsa Oliveras to Everyone: 11:54 AM

Thank you for the info on DYS

From Beth Tremblay Hall to Everyone: 11:54 AM

to locate the recording of the previous presentations and when this one is available visit:

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

From Caren Bobroff to Everyone: 11:55 AM

Can you provide the link to send virtual meeting waivers to?

From Amanda Green to Everyone: 11:56 AM

specialeducation@doe.mass.edu

From Lisa Lapinski to Everyone: 11:56 AM

Thanks for attending today!