State Success in Educating Students with Disabilities During COVID -19

Highlighting Collaboration in Kentucky and Nebraska
Today’s Speakers:

- Gretta Hylton, Associate Commissioner, Office of Special Education and Early Learning, Kentucky Department of Education
- Lucy Heskins, Attorney, Kentucky Protection and Advocacy
- Matt Blomstedt, Commissioner of Education, Nebraska Department of Education
- Michael Elskan, Attorney, Disability Rights Nebraska
- Ron Hager, Managing Attorney, National Disability Rights Network
Education During COVID-19

- All 50 states have mandated school closures into April or beyond
- 124,000 schools are affected
- 55.1 million students are affected
- 7.1 million public school students are students with disabilities
Kentucky’s Non-Traditional Instruction

CHALLENGES:

- Time to fully prepare
- Uncertainty
- Equity (e.g., internet access, assistive technology)
- Progress monitoring
- Sustainability
- Fatigue
Kentucky’s Non-Traditional Instruction

STRATEGIES:

- Regular communication with districts, families and partners
- Reassurance that we are all in this together
- Continued guidance and resources
- Strong collaboration internally and externally
- Additional supports for students (e.g., hot spots, delivery of instructional materials)
- Weekly spotlight on innovative practices occurring within special education and preschool
Kentucky’s Non-Traditional Instruction

Special Education Service Regions

- Federal IDEA-B Section 611 State Set-Aside Funds are used by OSEEL to establish the nine (9) Regional Special Education Cooperatives that are designed to fulfill the mission of the OSEEL.

Kentucky Early Childhood Resource Center

- Federal IDEA-B Section 619 State Set-Aside Funds are used by OSEEL to establish the five (5) Early Childhood Regional Training Centers that are designed to provide support for preschool students (ages 3-5) with disabilities.
Kentucky Protection and Advocacy

STRATEGIES: Academic and Non-Academic Supports:

- Kentucky Department of Education Resources
- Educational Cooperatives
- Family Resource and Youth Service Centers (FRYSCs)
Kentucky Protection and Advocacy

COLLABORATION: Parent Supports:

- P&A & Agency Collaboration
- KY-SPIN (Parent Information Training Center)
- Private Advocates
Kentucky Protection and Advocacy

CHALLENGES:

- Student Progress
- Student Regression
- Compensatory Education
Nebraska’s Continuity of Learning

CHALLENGES:

- Sudden uncertainty about closure decisions, approach, & response
- Federal and State Guidance inconsistency - timeliness
- School Responses varied based on Legal Advice
  - Closure/Spring Breaks
- Equity/Inequity
Nebraska’s Continuity of Learning

STRATEGIES:

- Expectation to provide services from NDE and Equity Lens
- Continuity of Learning Plans – Remote and Digital / Recognize barriers
- Ongoing Guidance to Communicate with Parents and Students
- Recognition that each challenge is unique and that communication remains key
- Consistent equity values in the crisis
Nebraska’s Continuity of Learning

LOOK TO THE FUTURE:

- Complete year
- Summer Learning
- Fall
- Compensatory Educational Opportunities
Disability Rights Nebraska

CHALLENGES:

- Totally new circumstance for all stakeholders
- Parents may feel alone/unsure
- Post COVID -19 planning (compensatory and prospective)
Disability Rights Nebraska

STRATEGIES:

- Work with parents to help understand options
- Work with parents to help with school communication
- Work with parents to navigate concerns with school (if needed)
Disability Rights Nebraska

COLLABORATION:

- Parent Training Institute (PTI)
- Assistive Technology Partnership
- Disability Specific Organizations (e.g. Autism Center)
- Parent Resource Groups
Questions?

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Kentucky Resources

- OSEEL’s Non-Regulatory Guidance Regarding the Implementation NTI for Students with IEPs During Novel Coronavirus Pandemic
- KDE’s Letter to Parents and Families
- Tools for Remotely Teaching Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities
- COVID-19 Resources for Special Education and Early Learning
- Frequently Asked Questions Related to COVID-19
Nebraska Resources

- Nebraska Dedicated Resource Site: https://www.education.ne.gov/publichealth/resources/

- Special Education Q&A: https://cdn.education.ne.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/QA-Nebraska-Office-of-Special-Education.docx
