

Programmatic Considerations for Special Education in ALE/Online Programs

Background

The purpose of the Programmatic Considerations for Special Education in ALE/Online Programs is to establish a comprehensive framework that ensures equitable access to high-quality education for students with disabilities within the context of Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) and online learning environments. This document outlines essential strategies, best practices, and supports which are necessary for planning, implementing, and sustaining effective special education services in these settings.

ALE and online programs have increasingly become viable options for students seeking flexible learning opportunities due to various reasons such as health concerns, individualized pacing, or unique learning needs. For students with disabilities, these programs offer the potential for personalized learning experiences that cater to their specific requirements outlined in Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). However, the successful implementation of special education in ALE/Online programs requires careful consideration of several key components, including but not limited to:

Look Fors:	Reflections
<p>1. Individualized Education Program (IEP) Support:</p> <p>Robust Support Framework: Emphasizes a comprehensive approach to developing, implementing, and monitoring IEPs. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Collaborative team approach involving educators, related service providers, parents or guardians, and administrators to ensure the IEP is tailored to the student's unique needs.<input type="checkbox"/> Timely reviews and updates of IEPs to reflect student progress and adjust goals and strategies as needed.	Reflections:



Look Fors:	Reflections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Data-driven decision-making to track and analyze student outcomes effectively. <input type="checkbox"/> Communication Platforms: Utilizing a variety of tools and resources to facilitate IEP meetings, communication, and progress tracking. <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Teams: For virtual meetings, collaboration among team members, and document sharing. <input type="checkbox"/> Talking Points: Effective communication tool for engaging with parents and guardians, particularly beneficial for non-English speaking families. <input type="checkbox"/> SIS Messaging: Integrated system for sharing updates, scheduling meetings, and maintaining records. <input type="checkbox"/> Email: Communication channel for sharing important updates and documents. <input type="checkbox"/> Onsite Meetings: Face-to-face meetings where feasible, ensuring personal interaction and detailed discussion of student progress and needs. 	
<p>2. Qualified Staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers and staff should be certified in special education and experienced in online instruction. <input type="checkbox"/> Availability of related service providers (e.g., speech therapists, occupational therapists) who are qualified to work in an online setting and willing to support in a hybrid environment as needed. 	Reflections:
<p>3. Curriculum and Instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The curriculum should be highly adaptable and personalized to cater to a wide range of learning needs and styles while meeting the state standards. <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional materials must be designed to be inclusive and accessible, considering diverse disabilities such as visual, auditory, and cognitive impairments. 	Reflections:

Look Fors:	Reflections
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> (District name) Online customizes XXXX courses to include accommodations, modifications, and asynchronous SDI in partnership with gen ed teachers and other support staff. Elementary does the same on other virtual platforms (Savvas, Schoology, iReady). 	
<p>4. Technology and Accessibility:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the platform is user-friendly and accessible to students with disabilities (e.g., screen readers, captioning, alternative input devices). Ensure the learning platform is intuitive, user-friendly, and designed to be accessible to students with diverse disabilities, including those who rely on assistive technologies such as screen readers, captioning, and alternative input devices. <input type="checkbox"/> The program should provide necessary assistive technologies and support. <input type="checkbox"/> Routinely assess and update technology infrastructure and accessibility features to meet evolving needs and incorporate feedback from students, parents, and educators. <input type="checkbox"/> Foster a culture of inclusivity by promoting awareness and training among staff, students and families on utilizing assistive technologies effectively within the learning environment. 	Reflections:
<p>5. Engagement and Interaction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Opportunities for synchronous (live), asynchronous (self-paced), and in-person learning should be available. Ensure a diverse range of learning modalities are available, including opportunities for synchronous (live), asynchronous (self-paced), and in-person learning where feasible, to accommodate varied student preferences and needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Look for features that encourage interaction between students, teachers, and peers, such as discussion boards, video conferencing, and collaborative projects. <input type="checkbox"/> Implement features that foster meaningful interaction among students, teachers, and peers, enhancing engagement and collaboration throughout the learning process. <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize interactive platforms such as discussion boards, video conferencing tools, and 	Reflections:

Look Fors:	Reflections
<p>collaborative project spaces to facilitate peer-to-peer interaction, group discussions, and collaborative learning experiences.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Encourage active participation and peer collaboration through structured activities and projects that promote teamwork, problem-solving, and communication skills development. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for social interaction and community-building activities within the online environment, supported by related service providers and IEP case managers to ensure educational and social development goals are met. 	
Policy/Procedure	Reflections
<p>6. Behavioral and Emotional Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Include resources for behavioral intervention plans (BIPs) and social-emotional learning (SEL). Provide comprehensive resources and strategies for developing and implementing Behavioral Intervention Plans (BIPs) and supporting Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) within the program framework. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure availability of counselors and mental health professionals to support students' emotional well-being. <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate evidence-based practices and interventions that promote positive behavior management and social-emotional development for all students. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the availability of trained counselors and mental health professionals who specialize in supporting students' emotional well-being and social adjustment in an online learning environment. <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate closely with families and caregivers to implement BIPs and SEL strategies consistently across home and school settings, fostering a holistic approach to student support. 	<p>Reflections:</p>

<p>7. Parent and Family Involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration with parents and caregivers. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide resources and training for families to support their child's learning at home. For example, XXXX district program has a <i>Learning Coach Academy</i> for all adults supporting students at home, particularly related to accessing SDI. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer workshops, webinars, and informational sessions designed to empower families with strategies and tools to support their child's academic and social-emotional development effectively. 	<p>Reflections:</p>
<p>8. Assessment and Progress Monitoring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide tools for ongoing assessment and progress monitoring that are tailored to special education. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify clear reporting mechanisms to track academic, social, and emotional progress. Implement a variety of assessment tools and strategies specifically tailored to meet the diverse learning needs of students receiving special education. <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize formative and summative assessment methods that accommodate different learning styles and disabilities, ensuring accurate and comprehensive evaluation of student progress. <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate ongoing progress monitoring protocols that provide timely feedback to educators, parents, and students themselves, facilitating informed instructional decisions and goal setting. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish clear and transparent reporting mechanisms that track academic, social, and emotional progress. This includes regular progress reports, data-driven discussions during Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, and accessible digital platforms for parents and caregivers to review student achievements and areas for growth. 	<p>Reflections:</p>

Policy/Procedure	Reflections
<p>9. Legal and Compliance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure the program complies with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and other relevant laws. <input type="checkbox"/> Procedures should be in place for addressing complaints and due process rights. <input type="checkbox"/> Complete audits and reviews to ensure ongoing compliance and identify areas for improvement. 	<p>Reflections:</p>
<p>10. Professional Development and Training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide ongoing training and support for staff on compliance and best practices related to IEP development, and implementation ensuring educators are equipped with the necessary skills to support students effectively in the online learning environment. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer workshops and webinars on emerging technologies and instructional strategies tailored for online special education. 	<p>Reflections:</p>
<p>11. Flexibility and Adaptability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop ability to adjust and modify processes, systems and teaching methods to accommodate changing circumstances, new technologies and student needs. 	<p>Reflections:</p>

Keys for success	Reflections
<p>1. Leadership and Vision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Administration, Spec Ed leads, district leadership, have a unified vision of the model. 	Reflections:
<p>2. Comprehensive Planning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Establish goals, resources, timelines, and responsibilities are <input type="checkbox"/> Create a supportive environment for students. <input type="checkbox"/> Assess alignment with district, state, and federal regulations. 	Reflections:
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Effective Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ongoing collaborative meetings with teachers, leadership team, and district Spec Ed administration. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop strong learning coach partnerships, expectations, and collaboration. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for communication and learning community involvement. 	Reflections:
<p>3. Continuous Monitoring and Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Develop high-functioning special education/ general education PLC <input type="checkbox"/> Provide opportunities for special and general education leadership collaboration for weekly/ biweekly data reviews. 	Reflections:
<p>4. Engaging and Interactive Curriculum:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Customize and supplement content in program curriculum across grade levels. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a digital learning platform that utilizes features like gamification, multimedia elements and interactive activities to engage students in the learning process. 	Reflections:

<p>5. Collaboration and Teamwork:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Weekly Spec Ed check-ins with Spec Ed school leadership.<input type="checkbox"/> Bi-weekly Spec Ed check-ins with district and school admin leadership.	<p>Reflections:</p>
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Challenges	Reflections
<p>1. Technology:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Troubleshoot tech to ensure student access to services. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide training for both staff and students on using new educational technologies and platforms effectively. 	Reflections:
<p>2. Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Identify systems important to promote accountability for accessing services. <input type="checkbox"/> Learner experiences design is critical for triggering student motivation to engage. Must have relationships and culturally relevant content. <input type="checkbox"/> Develop strategies to maintain student engagement in a virtual environment, include interactive lessons and regular check-ins. 	Reflections:
<p>3. Parental/Guardian Involvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Learning coaches at home are key to ensuring access and facilitating instruction. Inconsistencies can create gaps in services that need to be made up or revisited. 	Reflections:
<p>4. Social Interaction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide a menu of virtual and in-person opportunities to connect socially <input type="checkbox"/> Partner with related services and IEP case managers for delivering SDI in an educational/social context. 	Reflections:
<p>5. Coordination and Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Alignment of schedules across several service providers can be challenging. 	Reflections:

Supports for Families	Reflections
<p>1. Learning Coach Academy (district)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Training for families in all aspects of the online program. 	Reflections:
<p>2. XXXX Coach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> All students in the program have a XXXX Coach who is an advisor, advocate, liaison, and mentor. <input type="checkbox"/> XXXX coaches work directly with IEP case managers for added support and communication. 	Reflections:
<p>3. Tech Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Online program has a dedicated tech liaison. 	Reflections:
<p>4. Flexible Scheduling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The online program is an anytime, anywhere model that allows families to work within their schedules to access services for their students. 	Reflections:
<p>5. Resource Guides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Found on website. 	Reflections:
<p>6. Regular Communication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly progress monitoring by identified coaches and content teachers. <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly deep dive into student progress and interventions. <input type="checkbox"/> Explore Talking Points as a key communication tool for all families and most supportive of non-English speaking homes. 	Reflections:

Supports for IEP Teams	Reflections
<p>1. PLC Structure and Process:</p> <p>Weekly</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Weekly meetings to discuss student progress, share strategies, and collaborate on best practices. <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize data-driven decision-making to tailor support and interventions for individual students. 	<p>Reflections:</p>
<p>2. Administrative Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Foster communication to ensure alignment and address emerging issues promptly. <input type="checkbox"/> Identify and provide resources to equip staff with necessary tools and materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Strive to maintain connection on team needs to foster collaboration and responsiveness. <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate professional development opportunities to enhance team skills and knowledge. 	<p>Reflections:</p>
<p>3. Data Management Systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Implement a centralized system for tracking student progress and IEP goals. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure secure and confidential handling of student data. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide training for staff on using data management tools effectively. <input type="checkbox"/> Calendar reviews and data analysis to inform instructional strategies and interventions. 	<p>Reflections:</p>

<p>4. Flexible Scheduling:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ALE allows for flexibility of meetings and connections with staff, students, and parents. 	<p>Reflections:</p>
<p>Supports for Administrators</p>	<p>Reflections</p>
<p>1. District Partnership and Connection:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Establish bi-weekly meetings with district Special Education directors to meet and review all student needs, data, and program evolution to ensure compliance while also partnering on a macro level for student movement and complex family needs. 	<p>Reflections:</p>
<p>2. Board/Superintendent Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> General ALE/Online support. 	<p>Reflections:</p>
<p>3. Director Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> General ALE/Online support and partnership to continue evolving our model. 	<p>Reflections:</p>