

The Connecticut School Psychologist



INSIDE THIS SPECIAL ISSUE
RESPONDING TO COVID-19

- Guidance from CASP, NASP, CSDE
- Message from our Delegate
- Thoughts of wisdom and support from several of our colleagues
- Tips on supporting parents & students
- Letter from the Editor

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A PUBLICATION OF THE CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

An affiliate of NASP

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***The editor of The Connecticut School Psychologist* wants to hear from you! Anything from professional issues and news, articles, questions, kudos, feedback, reviews and graphic works which might be of interest to a significant portion of our members will be considered.**

All articles and reports of factual information may be edited to conform to space and format specifications and to improve clarity without permission from the authors. Expressions of opinion as in editorials and letters to the editor may be edited only with the writer's consent.

Unsigned articles or letters will not be printed.

E-mail your submissions to Eric Elias at:
casp.newsletter@gmail.com

along with your submission, you are welcome to include a short biographical statement.

The CSP timeline 2019-2020

The CSP is published quarterly, according to the following updated schedule (deadlines may vary):

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Summer Issue —Submissions due July 15, 2020.
Newsletter published Aug 2020

The CSP—Topics By issue

Fall Issue — Officer Profiles, Legislative Update, School Psychology Awareness Week

Winter Issue —CASP Updates, NASP Updates, Member-Submitted Content

Spring Issue— Student Column, Officer & Award Nominations, NASP Conference Information, Membership Renewal Reminder.

Summer Issue— Student Column, Officer Elections & Award Recipients, Survey Request for Member Feedback, Long Range Planning Meeting

Every Issue—Letter from the Editor, NASP Delegate Update, CASP News, Member-Submitted Content, Job Listing Resources, Executive Board Contact List

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ABOUT THE CONNECTICUT SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST

The Connecticut School Psychologist, the official publication of the Connecticut Association of School Psychologists (CASP), is published three times a year and distributed to members as part of their membership benefits. CASP is a non-profit, nonpartisan, educational and scientific membership association of professional school psychologists.

The contents, opinions and products of this publication, including advertising appearing in this newsletter do not necessarily indicate official sanction, promotion or endorsement on the part of CASP, NASP, or their elected or appointed officials. CASP is not responsible for claims made in advertisements. CASP reserves the right to reject or refuse submissions, based on legal, ethical, social, and professional considerations.

Submit items to *The Connecticut School Psychologist*

Please consider submitting your work to The Connecticut School Psychologist, official publication of CASP. Professional issues and news, articles, questions, kudos, feedback, reviews and graphic works which are of interest to a significant portion of our members should be sent to the editor. All articles and reports of factual information may be edited to conform to space and format specifications and to improve clarity without permission from the authors. Expressions of opinion as in editorials and letters to the editor may be edited only with the writer's consent. Unsigned articles or letters will not be printed.

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Letter from the Editor Special Issue Spring 2020

Dear CASP Members,

To say that this has been a strange and surreal few weeks would be an understatement. The global pandemic has brought the world to its knees in many ways. It also has brought us closer together while “distancing” us apart. Our skills as practitioners, individuals and family members have been stretched and pushed in new and stressful ways. We are all working so hard to support our students along with our own children’s learning, while still attempting to maintain our own health and safety. We, as school psychologists and educators across the state are working overtime to do all of this. While I hope that this newsletter provides some professional support, I also hope that you are able to find some personal comfort, support and restorative thoughts here as well.

Typically, our winter/spring newsletter brings thoughts about the NASP convention (either through joyous anticipation or celebratory reflection). As I sat down in late February to begin working on the Winter Newsletter, I was fresh from my return home from NASP Baltimore. As usual, I had a wonderful time with colleagues and friends. I felt inspired and full of renewed energy for the field. Both our School Psyched Podcast team and NASP Communications Committee presented and we “fan-selfied” with so many school psych rock stars that we admire. I was ready to archive these pictures, presentation summaries and many highlights from the Convention among the pages of this newsletter. Ten days after returning, I presented for Tom Brant’s counseling class at UConn, where Tom talked about the possibility of UConn closing within a week and not returning after spring break. By the end of that week, schools across the state were, in fact, closing and by the next week we were developing google social skills classrooms and ironing out the details surrounding tele-counseling practices. All of our skills as school psychologists (those Gumby-like qualities that we talk about at NASP) were tapped into; our flexibility, creativity, compassion, adaptability, and skills in connecting/supporting students, families and staff. Needless to say, in light of our pandemic, the usual winter Newsletter will be delayed a little in its release. In lieu, I would like this to be a special issue dedicated to guidance from CASP, our CSDE and NASP as well as resources for supporting our modified practices. Along with that, we have updates and a comprehensive article on supporting home learning shared by our amazing NASP Delegate Fran Aponte and wonderful tribute’s to our resilience, our goals and our connectedness from Rebecca Comizio (SPOTY 2019) and Dr. Evelyn Bilius Lolis (Fairfield University).

There are so many questions to consider while working away from our usual road map: How do we provide teletherapy? What are the issues surrounding confidentiality? How will our special education students be supported? Certainly, the practices of continuing assessment and breaking social distancing recommendations or wadding in the unexplored and unstandardized tele-assessment process bring up ethical issues that we must address. Should IEP meetings be conducted via tele-conference? CASP provides some guidance on these. State guidance suggests that we can delay timelines for now, but how long can that last? Also, issues surrounding inequities in our systems are unveiled and magnified now: basic food and health resources, access to internet and online devices and mental health supports. I am grateful that many districts are continuing to provide food services and are connecting with families to assist with internet and chrome book devices. As of this writing, Connecticut schools have provided over one million meals via 128 school districts. That is truly incredible. As we consider the impact and beneficence vs maleficence of policies and actions, please remember that basic needs and personal connections are more important than perfection in this process. Hopefully, within these PDF “pages” you will find resources for guidance regarding evaluation timelines, tele-practice, mental health and even personal support as we traverse this tightrope without a net. It’s our time to show that school psychologists don’t need walls to demonstrate that we are truly amazing practitioners.

#StrongerTogether #NoneofUsIsAsSkilledAsAllofUs #ConnectionVSPerfection

Most, sincerely,

Eric Elias, Editor CSP Your 2018 CT SPOTY (School Psychologist of the Year)

From Our NASP Delegate

Dear CASP Members,

Thank you for what you are doing for all of the students in Connecticut during this unprecedented time. The provision of school psychological services as we embark in distance learning may have you exploring for resources. NASP has and is continuing to provide school psychologists with many resources during this time. Currently, a series of webinars are being provided to the profession that do not require membership. I encourage you to go the NASP website and review all of the information that is available.

Stay safe,

Fran Aponte

NASP Delegate-CT



Connecticut Association of School Psychologists

Steven P. Mendlessohn, President * Sarah A. Gelish, President-Elect

Telehealth Assessment Position Statement

April 8, 2020

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Connecticut Association of School Psychologists (CASP) understands that now, more than ever, the social, emotional, and physical well-being of students, families, and educators to be most important. CASP recognizes the impact school closure has made on the well-being of students, education, and mandates. Also, CASP is aware of recent publications by Pearson Clinical, PAR Inc., and Riverside Insights regarding the provision of tele-assessment practices, or the virtual administration of assessments. **Given the guidance provided by the Connecticut State Department of Education and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services, CASP does not recommend telehealth assessment practices** and thus urges extreme caution in administering any assessment that is designed for 1:1, in-person, administration through the use of telehealth assessment practices. As this is an unprecedented and ever evolving time for all, *CASP questions the ethical, valid, and reliable nature of administering certain measures virtually*. Furthermore, should telehealth assessment practices be requested they should be used as an absolute last option when the following conditions can be met:

- Strict adherence to the Principles for Professional Ethics (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010).
- Strict adherence to the Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2017)
- Strict adherence to the Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association & National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014).
- Strict adherence to all test security procedures as identified by the manufacturer of the assessment tool. The practitioner assumes all responsibility for maintaining test security should tele-assessment be requested.
- Strict adherence to test copyright laws associated with individual assessment tools. When engaging in tele-assessment procedures, the practitioner must ensure that there is no recording of the tele-assessment sessions as this would constitute a violation of the copyright of the assessment tool. Additional copyright provisions apply such as reproductions of materials, electronic storage, materials being published, etc.. The practitioner assumes all responsibility for maintaining copyright laws should tele-assessment be requested.
- Strict adherence to assessment measurement fidelity protocols. Practitioners are required to examine the standardized protocol for each individual assessment tool. Although individual assessment companies have indicated they are allowing variances to the assessment standardization protocol based on “specific clinical situation and context”, CASP strongly encourages all School Psychologists to follow the standardization methods as identified in the administration manual.

If a school psychologist in Connecticut cannot adhere to the above conditions in addition to the recommendations from the Connecticut State Department of Education and OSERS, then telehealth assessment should not be a consideration by an evaluator. CASP understands that distance learning and telehealth assessment practices are evolving as additional information, research, and guidance is provided regarding this topic. As this additional information becomes available the guidance from CASP may also evolve.

References:

Partnering with You: Using Telehealth for Psychological Assessment. www.parinc.com/using-par-digital-assessments-during-the-covid-19-crisis

Riverside Insights Letter regarding COVID-19: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jhg_l8mrjSEjIws96eHqcF-BDLFG4P_c/view?usp=drivesdk

PEARSON Clinical Letter of no objections:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jtBP1DkzOdNWDHF3uCAVUcw-D551cFQs/view?usp=drivesdk>

Principles for Professional Ethics (National Association of School Psychologists, 2010)

(https://www.nasponline.org/Documents/Standards%20and%20Certification/Standards/1_%20Ethical%20Principles.pdf)

Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct (American Psychological Association, 2017)

(<https://www.apa.org/ethics/code/>)

Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing (American Educational Research Association & National Council on Measurement in Education, 2014).

(<https://www.apa.org/science/programs/testing/standards>)

Bureau of Special Education Memorandum: Continued Educational Opportunities and Special Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic (CSDE BSE, 2020) <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/SDE/Digest/2019-20/March-24-2020-LEA-Memorandum-BSE-COVID-19.pdf?la=en>

Updated 4.17.2020

On Continuity & Connection

Dr. Evelyn Bilias Lolis

There is no question that “social distancing” has catapulted to the top of our search engines and most things hash-tagged. Collectively, most of us are trying to grapple with the dos and don’ts of this recommendation so that we may do our part to flatten the curve and allow our healthcare providers a fighting chance to serve with any semblance of integrity and efficacy.

The truth is, however, that we need our relationships and that social connection is vital to the wellbeing of both children and adults. In fact, research in positive psychology strongly evidences that our ability to connect with others has significant benefits to our physical and mental health as well as our longevity (Martino, Pegg, & Frates, 2017). Isolation is a known foe, making far worse for your health than smoking, obesity, and high blood pressure. (Sepaala, 2014). And here we are, being asked to keep a safe distance from everything familiar, including our loved ones and institutions, as we wait patiently for this unknown to pass.

Instructional continuity has quickly emerged as the new name of the game. Educators across the nation diligently and nimbly overhauled learning plans so that schooling can be resumed remotely practically overnight. This feat, amidst the emerging pandemic and a very short runway for implementation, was nothing short of heroic. This was our triage equivalent--our contribution to the multitude of recovery efforts presently at hand in society.

Little did we know shortly after this launch that all would be met with this knock at the door: Hi. Remember me? I sit in your classrooms and in your buildings. I work quietly and tirelessly behind the scenes in production. I am with you every day. I am the gel that binds the learning process. I am the anchor that deepens the educational experience. I keep your heart in sync with your mind. I am *connectedness*.

And just like that, the awareness that learning is just as much about connection as it is about planning and accessibility is pulled from behind the curtain and made visible. It is made visible through every Zoom or Google hangout session; through every creative learning video offered; through every check-in, every meal served, and with every act of kindness, generosity, and thoughtfulness poured into this remote learning experience. It is felt in the pronounced awe and gratitude of every parent who is now privy to observe what has traditionally been a private exchange between an educator and child.

School psychologists have been champions for school connectedness probably well before it became a known and empirically studied construct. We understand that connection is the vehicle for meaningful learning, healthy development, and impactful relationships, and optimal quality of school life. We know that connection is the invisible superhero on the shoulder of every caring adult. Our plight has

always been to negotiate the educational experience of each child so that they may feel more meaningfully connected to the fabric of school life regardless of their background, ability, or any challenge that need to overcome. We work to foster that belongingness in all children, especially those in the most vulnerable student populations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has initiated a stark global pause and with it an opportunity for deep reflection of many sectors of society—healthcare, public policy, economics, and education, etc. It is at this time in history where we are being called to dig deep personally, professionally, and as a human collective to make sense of the very occurrences we have enjoyed on “autopilot” for such a long time. In my opinion, a conversation most deserving of mindful reflection is the prominence of school connectedness at the heart of school life.

What can sheltering in place teach us about school connectedness? What does it inform us about student perceptions of school belonging when our students are, for an unknown period of time, not permitted to learn within their school walls? What have we observed within our field and profession?

Here are my humble observations.

1. Learning is just as much about the heart connection as it is about science of instruction. Exhibit A: the recent crash course in distance learning and the insta-reliance on connectivity, both technological and relational.
2. Learning is swaddled in the contextual relationship between the teacher and learner. The learning milieu is merely a facilitator and cannot displace the relationship even if the setting itself is displaced.
3. Our educators miss their students. Sorely. This is evidenced through the flooding of creative attempts to connect, bring joy and comfort, engage and inspire students while meeting their needs from afar.
4. The perception that a caring adult or member of the school community genuinely values your wellbeing and learning is the elixir that soothes anxiety and makes the challenging, bearable and the distancing, connection.

So when we focus on instructional continuity as the new normal for the end of this school year, let us not neglect the relational continuity that makes all of this possible. Let's acknowledge it. Value it. And express a tangible gratitude for the gift that cannot be displaced or dislodged even when we feel like everything else is being uprooted—connectedness. The heart networks remain; stable and flowing. School connectedness may very well be the salve-ation that makes this remote learning experiment palatable in the short months to come.

References

- Martino, J., Pegg, J., & Frates, E. P, (2017). The connection prescription: Using the power of social interactions and the deep desire for connectedness to empower health and wellness. *American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine* 11(6):466-475. doi: 10.1177/1559827615608788.
- Seppala, E. (2014). *Connectedness and health: The science of social connection*. The Center for Compassion and Altruism Research. <http://ccare.stanford.edu/uncategorized/connectedness-health-the-science-of-social-connection-infographic/>

Building Resilience

Rebecca Comizo and Eric Elias

Building Resilience: Helping Children Learn to Weather Tough Times

Adversity is a natural part of life. At some point, we all face difficulties, such as family problems, serious illness, a personal crisis, or a painful loss. This unprecedented time of addressing the COVID-19 virus is certainly one significant example of adversity. While social distancing is not isolation, many students and their families may feel disconnected or be lacking in resources both emotional and financial. This is certainly a time where students and adults may be frightened or anxious. While things will improve eventually, developing our coping skills will assist us in building resilience and assist in dealing with adversities such as this. While most of us hope that their children never face extreme adversity, the pandemic will make this more likely for all students and families. Successfully navigating tough situations can actually foster growth and give children the skills to be more resilient in the future.

Most people have a natural tendency to adapt and bounce back from adversity. However, we can help children learn to face challenges successfully, whether it is the world pandemic where many families will face loss or even the stresses of displaced routines, academic difficulties or social problems with friends or family members. Following are 7 ways to promote resilience in children and help protect them from long-term ill effects of difficult experiences.

- 1. Think positive:** Modeling positive attitudes and positive emotions is very important. Children need to hear parents thinking out loud positively and being determined to persist until a goal is achieved. Using a “can do” problem-solving approach to problems teaches children a sense of power and promise. Thinking positive thoughts should not include the denial of negative or challenging emotions or thoughts, but instead an acceptance of those and willingness to also attend to what is good.
- 2. Express love and gratitude:** Emotions such as love and gratitude increase resiliency. Praise should always occur much more often than criticism. Children and adolescents who are cared for, loved, and supported learn to express positive emotions to others. Positive emotions buffer kids against depression and other negative reactions to adversity.
- 3. Express yourself:** Resilient people appropriately express all emotions, even negative ones. Parents who help kids become more aware of emotions, label emotions appropriately, and help children deal with upsetting events are giving them useful life skills.
- 4. Exercise, nutrition and sleep:** These three foundational components of well-being need extra care in difficult times. Good physical health prepares the body and mind to be more resilient. Healthy eating habits, regular exercise and adequate sleep protect kids against the stress of tough situations. Regular exercise also decreases negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and depression.
- 5. Foster Connections:** Social connections are crucial right now. Having and staying connected to friends and loved ones can increase resiliency.

6. Engagement and meaning making: Children thrive when they spend time engaged in meaningful work and play. Activities that meet our need for engagement flood the body with a sense of well-being. Having a sense of purpose for how time is spent during the day inculcates a sense of pride and enjoyment that helps adults and children alike feel more positive emotions. Help children connect everyday activities, such as the suggested ideas above, to what they believe is important and valuable. Connect feelings like curiosity, joy, interest and hard work to a child's sense of purpose.

7. Achievement and autonomy: Children and teens are motivated by their own successes.

Help

children find a sense of accomplishment and achievement in what they do while allowing them to take steps towards their goals independently.

Protecting our children against all of life's unexpected painful events is not possible. Giving them a sense of competency and the skills to face adverse circumstances can be a valuable skill. Resiliency can be built by understanding these important foundations. The more we practice these approaches; the better able our children will be to weather whatever life brings.

Assessment Guidance Suggestions (What are Your Thoughts?)

Eric Elias

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic (the declared national emergency) CASP and our state agencies (Connecticut Department of Education) have released guidance regarding continued assessment practices for special education. CASP and the State of Connecticut have followed the direction from the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE), who have issued several guidance documents. These documents include the recommendations from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) interpretations regarding the IDEA and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) interpretations regarding 504/ADA. Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) are encouraged to proceed with providing continued educational opportunities for all students to the greatest extent possible. CASP and the state of Connecticut have recognized that the physical and psychological well-being of students, families, educators and communities are the priority. Our agencies have determined that all face to face meetings are to be postponed with IEP timelines suspended. Districts are encouraged to reach mutually agreeable timeline decisions with parents and to not make significant changes to IEPS prior to returning to school. Significant educational decisions should not be made in the absence of crucial data. In light of this concern, issues of assessment arise (both for reevaluations and initials). Assessments are also encouraged to be postponed. There is a great deal of concern over any push to continue attempting to provide evaluations via tele services or in person. While psychologists involved in mental health or medical agency practice may find reasons to assess, school based psycho-education assessment during this pandemic should be held off. I was compiling this list just prior to the CASP position statement was released. I think they are consistent, but wanted to offer my thoughts. The following list provides concerns regarding school-based psychoeducational assessment:

- Direct observation and particular assessments cannot be administered through means other than face-to-face. At this time, it is not possible to observe students in their typical learning environment to determine area(s) of academic or behavior skill difficulty.
- IQ tests, formal achievement tests must be administered by the means in which they were standardized. Deviations from this process can invalidate an assessment, which ultimately impacts accurate decision making. Many of our tests have not been standardized on tele-administration.
- The presence of additional individuals in the room may break standardization.

- A student's and caregiver's heightened anxiety may impact their performance. Students are likely to obtain lower test scores when under stress or feeling anxious in relation to the pandemic. Assessment at this time might also place continued undue stress on a student, thus also impacting the outcome of the assessment.
- The overarching issue is one of construct irrelevant variance, which is the introduction of extraneous, uncontrolled variables that impacts assessment outcomes. Issues such as distractions in the home, presence of family members, availability of preferred activities or stress from this current pandemic may impact assessment outcomes significantly.

Responsible and ethical assessment practices should be considered in all assessment cases. The beneficence of the assessment and impact on decisions should be carefully considered, with the student's wellbeing at the forefront of consideration. What are your thoughts? Please feel free to email or share thoughts on our social media platforms.

Values-Based Acting
Rebecca Comizio

In collaborating with a colleague recently, we began discussing how difficult it is during the pandemic to manage and balance the needs of work, family, friends, community and self-care all at once during the pandemic. We were sharing and commiserating that our typical strategies of self-care are more important than ever, but that it's also harder than ever to engage in them to turn off our minds at the end of the day. The days go by more quickly and sometimes more slowly, and bedtime is filled with thoughts of all the things to accomplish tomorrow. As we reflected, we noticed for ourselves that we were managing the stress and anxiety by trying to be over-productive and holding ourselves to impossible standards of effort and achievement in all the major domains of life.

Maybe the trick was to accept those feelings of worry, sadness, not being in control of outcomes and to use self-compassion in order to notice, name and be with those feelings while recognizing that it is the process of engaging in efforts that reflect what we care about more than the product of being finished with the work in unrealistic time frames, that we can focus on. Just like is always true, there is no finish line in our work, there are only actions that we can take every day that help support our stakeholders and move us toward our goals. Without accepting that there are higher levels of stress and worry right now, our minds may churn quickly to avoid uncomfortable feelings by engaging in non-stop thinking, planning and working. Our minds may not want to turn off, in order to get the sleep that we know we need, and we may need to stop fighting with these thoughts. In order to address these strong uncomfortable emotions we may be functioning on autopilot and those automatic reactions may be attempts to avoid feelings and thoughts, or what is formally known as experiential avoidance: "Attempts to avoid thoughts, feelings, memories, physical sensations, and other internal experiences even when doing so creates harm in the long-run". Hayes, Strosahl, Wilson, 1999. Have you noticed that you are working too hard, or disengaging completely, logging on too many times or not being able to turn your mind off?

Values are the glue that organize our behaviors. In this crisis, our values as helpers, can either move us to act in ways that bring us closer to what we care about, or move us to engage in the experiential avoidance that will ultimately make us feel worse or burn out.

As school psychologists, we understand that the more someone avoids something that they are afraid of, the stronger that fear will become. Experiential avoidance is like an emotional amplifier that makes our fears and discomfort more powerful. When the thing we are afraid of is a series of emotions - feeling helpless, feeling worried, feeling that we must be at our normal levels of productivity and effective practice while schools are operating remotely, often the ways in which we try to decrease or avoid these feelings take us away from our values as professionals. Should you notice that the challenges of supporting your students and school community during the pandemic are starting to move you away from your value of and regular strategies for self-care, please treat yourself with self-compassion by this noticing and accepting your feelings. Your feelings describe what is wonderful about you--your values. Challenging feelings arise because you care and these things matter. What are your personal and professional values and how can you act in consistency with these? Accepting your feelings and embracing the process along the way, may assist in reducing anxiety along this stressful journey. Choose to feel your feelings, and follow the thoughts that reflect what you care about and value.

Communities of Practice Review

Eric Elias

If you haven't yet attended a Communities of Practice Meeting, please consider attending. These will be held monthly while we are in the midst of the pandemic and school closure. Please keep an eye out for invitations and details. Your editor attended the virtual meeting on 4/7/20. Here are summary notes.

Host Dr. Mike Ragan (CES Trumbull/Fairfield University)

34 CT school psychologists in attendance

- Purpose of CoP's:
 - Maintain open communication between practitioners and SDE
 - Give voice to practitioners re: professional development, evaluation and supervision
 - Given our current situation, also to provide guidance, opportunity for collaboration and collective support
- People introduced themselves, what district and role.
- Initial thoughts/sharing:
 - We're all navigating a new way of doing business while all under tremendous stress.
 - Connection vs Perfection
 - We should focus on doing what we can within reason
 - Most districts are not doing PPTs or testing
 - Most districts are seeing this as extended learning opportunity vs "school days."
- What are our challenges/concerns (open discussion)?
 - Academic skill regression
 - Behavior regression
 - Emotional regression
 - Supporting students with disabilities
 - Missing our students, staff and families
 - Concerns about families/staff losing loved ones and not being able to grieve
 - Mental health supports
 - Flood of new referrals when we return
 - Navigating assessments when we return
 - The educational landscape will have changed (what might we expect) and how will we prepare?
- What should we be doing?

- Consider our consultive mental health role rather than doing business as usual (ie PPTs and assessments)
 - We agree that IEP/assessments on hold is a good idea (concerns over assessments not being standardized for on-line administration process, not having any control of a private or quiet distraction-free environment, test security, children are under stress, etc)
 - IEP advice: don't do anything rash or reactive, if we make changes and return to school, parents/advocates may want things to continue and we would be in a "stay put" until resolved. This is temporary and emergency, so respond accordingly. There might be a tremendous liability if we begin making changes during this situation. Provide what we can and "ride it out"/wait until things get better or are more permanent.
 - Our roles should be to provide support in this time of crisis (students, parents, teachers, and staff)
- What are your districts doing?
 - Focusing on making sure students have what they need (chrome books, internet, meals, etc)
 - Are districts still continuing relationships with local agencies? Yes, CHC, 211, foodbanks
 - Implementing learning plans
 - One district's motto: "we're helpers not harassers" reduce emails and messaging (parents are overwhelmed)
 - One district's guidance said: "Just say, NO" to assessment right now.
 - Focus on being mental health supports
 - Assisting case managers
- What should special ed teachers be doing and how might we help?
 - Be a point of contact/support
 - Collaborate with classroom teachers to modify and support
 - Advocate in any way that you can
 - Support your related service as best you can
 - SEL supports
 - Phone/Google outreach
- Closing thoughts
 - We're Interested in continuing these meetings bi-weekly (links will go out to CASP and district directors) for the week of 4/21 at same time (10:00) meetings will run closer to an hour instead of 2 hrs.
 - Going forward how can districts prepare for post-vention addressing grief, loss, regression, referrals when we return? Can we brainstorm and share thoughts when we meet next. One district is starting a google doc for resources to be prepared when we return.

Tips for Caregivers and Parents on Schooling at Home:

What Role Do Executive Skills Play?

Submitted by Fran Aponte

Our kids are at home, with the expectation that they will continue to learn while schools are closed due to the coronavirus pandemic. If this causes chest pains, shortness of breath, or full-blown panic as you figure out how to navigate your kids' schooling while you're doing all the other things you have to do to keep your lives stitched together during this challenging time, you are not alone.

First, some words of reassurance:

- This is uncharted waters for everyone—teachers, parents, and kids, alike, and it will take time for us all to adjust to “the new normal.” There’s no prescribed framework or template to work from because we’ve never been here before. It’s a work-in-progress for all of us, and none of us will get it perfect in the first pass. So, cut yourself some slack, use some positive self-talk (“We *will* survive,” “Perfect is not the goal here”), and as you fall into bed at night, pat yourself on the back for getting through the day.
- Your job is to be a parent, not a teacher. If you provide a place for your children to work and some structure to help them spend some time productively, then you are doing your job.
- Even if you are able to give kids the place and structure they need to get work done, it will take a few days for kids to adjust to a new way of schooling. At the end of the day, if you can, take a few minutes to debrief with your kid. What worked well today? What didn’t work? What should we do differently tomorrow?
- Keep in mind that stress shortens fuses, increases irritability, and undermines our ability to access skills and strengths that under normal circumstances we may have in some abundance. On top of that, kids pick up on the stress level of the adults around them even when those adults are trying to hide that stress. If everyone in your house seems to be “out of sorts,” this is a normal response to an abnormal situation.
- Some things are more important than school. If you feel like things are coming apart at the seams, give yourself permission to let some things slide. If you have in your head an image of the “perfect parent” and you don’t fit that description (and NO ONE DOES), then set it aside. Doing what you can to keep your family intact is way more important than making sure your kids fit in their 120 minutes of daily lessons (or whatever your child’s school is recommending).

Secondly, some words of advice. Rather than reinvent the wheel, we found some pointers from a home-schooling mom written to provide some useful guidance. Here’s the link:

<https://www.parentingnh.com/thoughts-on-learning-at-home-from-a-homeschool-mom/>

Thirdly, if you’re not familiar with the term “executive skills,” now is a good time to understand what these skills are and how they impact learning and productivity. Here’s what they are: Executive skills

refer to the cognitive processes required to plan, organize, and execute activities. A concise description of what executive skills are: they are the skills that make goal-directed behavior possible. Here's another short description: they are the skills required to *execute tasks*. Or, as translated by an elementary school teacher to match the language of the second graders she taught, these are the skills you need *to get things done*.

Executive skills are frontal lobe functions that begin to emerge shortly after birth but take 25 years or longer to fully mature. It's helpful to think about them in two groups: Foundational Skills that develop earlier and more Advanced Skills, that develop later (and that often incorporate the earlier developing Foundational Skills).

Foundational Executive Skills	Advanced Executive Skills
• Response Inhibition or Impulse Control	• Organization
• Working memory	• Planning/prioritization
• Emotional Control	• Time management
• Flexibility	• Goal-directed persistence
• Sustained Attention	• Metacognition (problem-solving, self-monitoring, self-evaluation)
• Task Initiation	

Appendix 1 at the end of this handout provides definitions of each skill. But let's connect these skills to school. Teachers provide structure and support, which makes it easier for children with immature executive skills to function successfully in the classroom. They give kids a schedule and provide lessons and activities that give children the structure to help them learn to initiate tasks and sustain attention. They alternate between desk-work and activity-based learning, they give kids the chance to collaborate with peers and problem solve at a developmentally appropriate level. When young kids aren't ready to use skills independently (such as all the advanced skills listed above), teachers do the planning and prioritizing for kids, they monitor and help them manage time, and they give them organizational structures, such as building in time to help them clean out their desks or instructing them on how to keep notebooks or planners.

No parent provides the amount of structure that the typical teacher does—in part because no parent is trying to manage 20-30 kids at the same time! So when schooling suddenly starts taking place at home rather than at school, parents are understandably unprepared to provide the kind of support that children with just-developing executive skills need. The good news is that with a few small steps, parents can do a lot to help kids practice these skills—skills that will serve them well once they return to school and go back to the lives they used to know.

Building from the sage advice of the home-schooling mom in the blogpost referenced above, here's our advice to parents. These are strategies that will help make the days at home more manageable,

but more than that, they are strategies that will help children exercise and practice a set of skills that are not only critical to school success, but that help adults manage their jobs, their homes and their relationships.

Supporting Executive Skills in Children of All Ages

- Put in place daily routines. This should include at a minimum 1) what time kids are expected to get up in the morning; 2) what time the work of the day will begin; and 3) some expectation about how much time will be spent on schoolwork or how much work will be done over the course of the day. This will differ for kids of different ages. We know that the sleep patterns of teens shift and that school start times are often not well-suited to the teen's biology and circadian rhythms. So for teens, it may make sense to start the day later than for younger children, who tend to be more alert early in the morning.
- Schedule frequent work breaks. With elementary aged children, lessons or activities should take no more than 15-20 minutes, with a 10-minute break between activities. While this can be seen as a general recommendation for children and pre-teens, your child may need an adjustment—especially if your child has any kind of learning or attention problem, since for these kids, learning requires more effort and energy.

Building variety into the breaks helps. Some might involve movement. For instance, www.gonoodle.com provides short, fun videos featuring different kinds of exercises that are appealing to elementary aged children. Others might involve educational games. Writing fun activities on slips of paper and having children draw one at random introduces an element of surprise that children like. Many schools provide parents with an abundance of on-line resources they can draw on, not only for lessons but also for “down-time” activities. Appendix 2 provides links to a number of these resources.

Although middle and high school students often sit in classes that last anywhere from 45-90 minutes, parents should not expect them to engage that long in school work. Even at those grade levels, teachers typically don't spend more than 25 minutes on a single task before switching to something else. And the classroom offers more opportunity for collaboration and social engagement than home schooling does. If your child's middle or high school is not offering on-line classes in real time, then parents can ask kids of that age to create a realistic schedule for how they will spend their time.

- Create a daily schedule for kids to follow—or, with older students—ask them to create a

schedule (with guidelines or parameters). Parents and kids respond to varying levels of structure when it comes to schedules, so in Appendix 3, we've created a graduated series of schedules that offer varying degrees of specificity. Look at these and select the level that you're most comfortable with.

While having a schedule provides a skeleton that gives the day shape and substance, don't overdo it. Because teachers are managing large groups of children and have a set curriculum they need to cover, they sometimes have to interrupt good work. If you find your child is engaged in something meaningful, educational, productive, or creative, let her have the satisfaction of seeing through to completion something that's important to her. Just reconfigure the rest of the day or change tomorrow's schedule. If you find your child avoiding some tasks in favor of others, talk with her about "first work, then play"—or switching off between non-preferred and preferred tasks.

- Use the opportunity to find non-school ways to support executive skills. This might mean working on planning by having kids plan how they will spend their time once the school work for the day is behind them, or working on organization by having kids design and maintain their workspace. They can work on time management by learning to estimate how long it takes to complete tasks and perhaps keeping a log. www.toggl.com offers a free on-line timer where students can log the task or activity they're working on, start the timer when they begin the activity and turn it off when they're done. The website maintains the log, so they can track how much time they're spending on a variety of tasks.

Finally, you may want to identify your child's executive skill strengths and weaknesses and help them think about ways they can use their strengths more effectively or strategies they can use to build their weaker skills. Informal surveys for doing this can be found in books by Dawson & Guare (e.g., *Smart but Scattered*), but parents may be able to do this simply by reading through the definitions in Appendix 1 and deciding which ones represent strengths for their kids and which ones might be challenges (keeping in mind, of course, that none of these skills are fully operational until age 25 or later).

In Appendix 4, we've given you some suggestions for ways you can use the home-schooling experience to help kids practice executive skills. We recommend selecting one skill and 1-2 activities to focus on to start with. For children at the elementary level, we generally recommend that parents select one of the first six foundational skills to focus on. At the middle/high school levels, the advanced skills may be reasonable targets. However, if your child has significant executive skill challenges, especially if they are receiving special education services or are struggling with poor grades in school due to weak executive skills, we generally recommend focusing on the foundational skills even if the child is a teenager.

These suggestions were compiled by Peg Dawson with contributions from:

- *Rebecca Bagatz, Liz Casey, Cheryl Clark, Bethany Fleming, Peggy Howard-Solari, Erin Preston, Lori Jabar, Rachael Ramsey, Kate Salvati, Katie Scheffer, Mary Ellen Spain, Felicia Sperry—all members of the Study Group on Executive Skills sponsored by the New Hampshire Association of School Psychologists.*
- *Marisa Marraccini and Meagan Padro, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill*

Please use the hyperlink to find the appendices

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=16eL9joiWmicq14lc3njhxAOoppDr3bgu>

Links to Self-Monitoring Checklists

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Students-Daily-Behavior-Chart-372520>

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/blog-posts/genia-connell/behavior-contracts-and-checklists-work/>

<https://goalbookapp.com/toolkit/v/strategy/self-monitoring##preview-b3ebd9c4-7709-4f55-47cd-9449002077e0-1>

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Self-Monitoring-Checklists-for-Independent-Classwork-Homework-4209733>

<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Self-Assessments-and-Checklists-for-Good-Work-Habits-4501962>

Responding to COVID-19:

Brief Action Steps for School Crisis Response Teams

Schools should be prepared for local and community-wide infectious disease outbreaks. While it is difficult to predict when (or even if) COVID-19 will rise to the level of a pandemic, there are actions schools can take to be ready for such events. Schools need to work collaboratively with their local and state health departments, and be attentive to guidance offered by the [CDC](#), to determine how to ensure safe learning environments. For detailed guidance on how to develop emergency operations plans capable of addressing pandemic illnesses refer to “Preparing for a Pandemic Illness: Guidelines for School Administrators and Crisis Teams.” This document provides suggestions for the immediate school response to the threat presented by COVID-19.

SCHOOL EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLAN

Ideally, schools have a well-developed emergency operations plan (EOP, also often referred to as *crisis response plan*) to help them respond to multiple emergencies. In 2013 the U.S. Department of Education developed a guide to support schools in developing an EOP ([Guide for Developing High Quality School Emergency Operations Plans](#)). The EOP provides information that can support pandemic illness planning. Regardless of the status of your EOP, there are a number of specific actions that school crisis response teams can take right now in response to COVID-19. These include actions taken by what are often referred to as the Communication and Warning Annex; Public Health, Medical, and Mental Health Annex; Continuity of Operations (COOP) Annex; and Recovery Annex.

COMMUNICATION AND WARNING ACTIONS

The timely distribution of crisis facts is among the most important things a school can do when responding to a threatening situation. Thus, the following suggestions are offered:

- In consultation with school and community health officials, and consistent with guidance offered by the

CDC, draft communication messages for school community members that provide updated information about COVID19 and how to remain healthy. All of these communications should include current information about actions schools are taking to help ensure safety and provide guidance that empowers caregivers to help students cope with this health crisis.

- Schools should draft several communications and social media posts for (a) when the illness is confirmed in the community, (b) when a significant number of students are found ill, and (c) when schools need to close due to the illness.
- Identify multiple communication outlets (e.g., television, social media, email, letters home, voicemail) through which these messages might be shared.
- Share information for parents on how to talk to support their children regarding COVID-19 ([Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(coronavirus\): A Parent Resource](#) from NASP and NASN)

PUBLIC HEALTH ACTIONS

Promote daily preventive actions for all staff, students, and families. For example, schools should encourage students to engage in health-promoting behaviors that prevent illnesses:

- Wash hands multiple times a day for at least 20 seconds.
- Don't share food or drinks.
- Give elbow bumps instead of handshakes.
- Encourage students and school staff members to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly to help them develop strong immune systems capable of fighting illness.

Public health actions also include activities that help reduce the spread of infectious diseases. For example:

- Know the symptoms of COVID-19 and ensure that information is made available to the school community in developmentally appropriate ways.
- Provide training about flu transmission and control measures. Train students to cover their mouths with a tissue when they sneeze or cough and throw out the tissue immediately, or to sneeze or cough into the bends of their elbows.
- Educate employees, visitors, and primary caregivers not to come to the school if they have flu symptoms. Reinforce for families to keep sick children home.
- Establish or reinforce procedures for how families let the school know if their child is sick. These procedures should include letting the school know why the student has been kept home so as to be able to track symptoms. If children are diagnosed with COVID-19, parents must let the school know so they can communicate with, and get guidance from, local health authorities.
- School health professionals might consider interviewing flu-like illness cases for pandemic risk factors and following CDC guidelines for health professionals regarding next steps.
- Begin to conduct active surveillance to identify influenza cases (e.g., review temperature logs; triage "sick" calls, hospitalizations, staff absences, unexplained deaths). Also, attend to the school building itself. For example:
 - Consider changing the air conditioning system filters; during the day, where possible, increase ventilation.
 - Following each school day, the school should be thoroughly ventilated and cleaned. This can be done by opening all doors and windows or turning the air conditioning or heating systems up.
 - Ensure that school administrators can control access to the buildings. Each school should have a plan to close certain entrances and exits, and to monitor others. To prepare for disease outbreaks, identify a main entrance and an indoor area where students and staff can be screened prior to moving to classrooms or other areas of the school.

MEDICAL ACTIONS

If they have not already done so, school health professionals should:

- Assess adequacy of infection-control supplies and review distribution plan.
- Identify areas within the school facility that can be used for isolation and quarantine.
- Develop plans for stockpiling and distributing infection-control supplies.
- Initiate screening for flu-like illnesses at the front desk and nurses' offices.
- Isolate and send home staff or students with flu-like symptoms, utilizing supervised isolation areas in the school—access to this room should be strictly limited and monitored (i.e., parents picking up their ill children should be escorted to and from the isolation area), and a carefully monitored student checkout system should be activated.

MENTAL HEALTH ACTIONS

School personnel should provide caregivers with [information regarding how to address the stress](#) that might be generated by COVID-19. In addition to being told who to contact if they want help addressing their child's anxiety about this virus, they should be advised that striving to find ways to make the danger associated with COVID-19. More predictable and controllable reduces how threatening their children will view the situation. Specifically, youth should be provided with developmentally appropriate information that (a) helps them to accurately gauge the threat presented by this disease and (b) reduces their risk of getting sick. In addition, giving students concrete things they can do to keep themselves and others healthy will reduce stress. And finally, highlight the actions that adults are taking to ensure student safety. See the companion document "[Preparing for Infectious Disease Epidemics: Brief Tips for School Mental Health Professionals](#)."

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS ACTIONS

Administrators should begin to consider how they would maintain essential operations should COVID-19 affect their school. Previously issued guidance, provided by the U.S. Department of Education, titled [Preparing for the Flu: Department of Education Recommendations to Ensure the Continuity of Learning for Schools \(K-12\) During Extended Student Absence or School Dismissal](#), will support such considerations. Among the issues this emergency operations plan (EOP) should address are the continuity of learning activities (e.g., how to continue learning activities if there are school closures or extended absences), order of succession and delegation of authority (e.g., who makes decisions should school administrators get sick), how to maintain essential school operations (e.g., what are the essential activities that must not be interrupted, such as payroll, and how will they be maintained during school closures), and guidelines for school staff members (e.g., who needs to continue working even during school closures).

RECOVERY PLANNING

Finally, begin to consider actions that would be taken should COVID-19 actually be present within a school. The companion document “[Preparing for a Pandemic Illness: Guidelines for School Administrators and Crisis Response Teams](#)” provides such guidance.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Preparing for a Pandemic Illness: Guidelines for School Administrators and Crisis Teams:
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crises/preparing-for-a-pandemic-illness-guidelines-for-school-administrators-and-school-crisis-response-teams>
- Preparing for Infectious Disease Epidemics: Brief Tips for School Mental Health Professionals:
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crises/preparing-for-infectious-disease-epidemics-brief-tips-for-school-mental-health-professionals>
- Talking to Children About COVID-19 (coronavirus): A Parent Resource:
[https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crises/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-\(coronavirus\)-a-parent-resource](https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crises/talking-to-children-about-covid-19-(coronavirus)-a-parent-resource)

Interim Guidance for Administrators of U.S. Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19):

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>

- Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use at Home, at Play, and Out and About: <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/hand-sanitizer-factsheet.pdf>
- How to Disinfect Schools to Prevent the Spread of Flu: https://remsed.gov/Docs/How_to_Clean_and_Disinfect_Schools_to_help_Slow_the_Spread_of_the_Flu.pdf



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TO: Superintendents of Schools
Boards of Education
Directors of Special Education and Pupil Services

FROM: Bryan Klimkiewicz, Special Education Division

Director **DATE:** March 24, 2020

SUBJECT: Continued Educational Opportunities and Special Education During the COVID-19 Pandemic

This is a working document, which may be updated frequently due to the rapidly changing response to this pandemic emergency and ongoing Federal guidance updates.

Introduction

Consistent with the directives of Commissioner of Education Cardona and Governor Lamont, the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) recognizes that there is a current public health emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The focus of educational efforts should be on providing continued educational opportunities for all of our learners, given that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance suggests that the school closures¹ are likely to be for an extended period of time. Given this extended period of closure, it is appropriate for the BSE to provide guidance to educators regarding the implementation of continued educational opportunities and the impact on special education. The following guidance will address (1) the access and equity requirements for such opportunities; (2) communication with families regarding such opportunities; and (3) implementation of such opportunities in relation to certain federal special education procedural requirements. The BSE recommends that administrators and teachers engage in frequent communication with parents and guardians about the implementation of these interim measures to ensure that they are informed about the individualized approach to their child's education and to support collaboration with families.

All members of our school communities must continue to consider what is appropriate under the current circumstances and reasonable within their resources, to determine what constitutes providing continued educational opportunities, to the greatest extent possible, consistent with state and federal guidance. (See attached Appendix A, Guidance from the Office of Special Education and

¹ The Governor's Executive Order 7C provided for cancellation of class, not closure of schools, anticipating the staff will continue to engage with students and the school building itself is not closed, for example for food preparation and distribution. For the purposes of this document, BSE will use the term "school closure" to refer to both instances where a school building may be closed, and where the building remains in use for non-instructional purposes, but classes are cancelled.

Rehabilitative Services and Appendix B, Governor Lamont's Executive Order 7E.) In this case, what is appropriate and reasonable will include the individual child's circumstances, as well as the circumstances related to the pandemic emergency.

Educational Opportunities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not specifically address a situation in which school would be closed for an extended period of time due to exceptional circumstances, such as a pandemic emergency. School districts must provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students, and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students. Present exceptional circumstances may affect how special education and related services are provided.

School districts may not be able to provide all services in the same manner that they are typically provided. Federal disability law allows for flexibility in determining how to meet the individualized needs of students receiving special education services.

Given that Connecticut has mandated statewide school closures, it is essential that school districts focus on providing continued educational opportunities for all students. School districts must ensure that students receiving special education have access to these opportunities. For students with individualized education program (IEPs), school districts must ensure that each student is provided the special education and related services identified in the student's IEP developed pursuant to the IDEA, to the greatest extent possible.

Continued educational opportunities are not required to be determined or documented within the planning and placement team (PPT) process, however these opportunities should be individualized based upon the student's unique needs.

Communication

During this uncertain and difficult time, it is important to maintain positive relationships with families. Consistent communication with parents is vital in ensuring that school districts and parents collaborate as a team even though they are not in the same physical location.

When communicating with parents, the BSE recommends the following:

- Acknowledge in your communications to all parents that either you have a plan for providing equitable access and special education and related services or are developing such a plan.
- Develop a protocol to communicate proactively with parents and guardians regarding their child's IEP services during a closure taking into consideration the parents' preferred method of communication. This should be done on an individual basis and school districts should not rely on communications to the entire district to provide this information.
- As soon as possible, notify parents or guardians of students with disabilities of your individualized plan for that student to access continued educational opportunities. Include the input of parents or guardians and the student, as appropriate, when discussing the plan
Allowing parents to provide feedback provides parents, and ultimately, students, a voice in the process, rather than simply notifying them of the result. This communication should be ongoing throughout the implementation of the plan so that the educators delivering and/or overseeing the services can make adjustments to the plan when appropriate.

Planning and Placement Team Meetings

During school closure, the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) has indicated that if all students are receiving continued educational opportunities, and therefore the general education population has moved to virtual, online, or distance learning, school districts are not *required* to revise an IEP because all students are receiving an alternate mode of instructional delivery of the general education curriculum. This would obviate the need to conduct PPT meetings related to the instructional delivery method in those cases and would not constitute a change in placement. This also allows school staff to focus on the provision of supports and services, rather than engaging in numerous PPT meetings. If a parent or the school district wishes to discuss the student's continued educational opportunity, the parent and school district have flexibility to use other means of conferring with one another rather than convening a PPT for a meeting.

There may be unique instances, however, when a school district and a parent agree that a PPT meeting is necessary. In such cases, the parties may agree to conduct the meeting via an alternate means of meeting participation, such as video conference or conference call. In determining if a PPT is necessary please consider the following:

- The purpose of the PPT meeting (e.g., Given that there is no requirement to revise IEPs to include remote continued educational opportunities, is having a PPT meeting necessary?; Will holding the PPT meeting affect the continued educational opportunities being provided to the student?; etc.).
- The PPT membership requirements (e.g., Will each PPT member be available and able to meaningfully participate in the meeting?; etc.).
- Confidentiality and privacy concerns (e.g., If the meeting is being held telephonically or virtually, will each team member have access to a private space?; Is the virtual format that you are using secure?; etc.).

Please note, if there is a need to change the IEP during school closures, the parent of a child with a disability and the school district may agree not to convene a PPT meeting for the purpose of making those changes, via an IEP amendment (Form ED634) *Agreement to Change an Individualized Education Program Without Convening a Planning and Placement Team Meeting*.

Timeline Requirements

This is an unprecedented time where the primary focus is the safety of students, families, and educators and allowing staff the time to provide instruction and services to students. Focusing on those priorities may cause challenges with regard to timeline compliance.

IEP Annual Review/Reevaluation dates:

Given that schools are closed for an extended period of time, school districts may find it difficult to conduct Annual Reviews and Reevaluations. There are no statutory or regulatory provisions that allow extensions of time to conduct these PPT meetings. Be reminded however, a parent/adult student may agree in writing that a reevaluation (i.e., “triennial review”) is not necessary.

If an annual review or reevaluation date is not met, the school district should hold the PPT meeting once school resumes. Missed meeting dates due to school closings related to COVID-19 will not affect the district’s Annual Performance Report determination. The BSE will require the district to submit documentation (i.e., page 1 of the IEP developed at the meeting) to verify that the meeting was held, albeit late.

If the effective date of a student’s IEP lapses during the school closure, the student’s IEP will remain in effect until a new IEP is developed.

Initial Evaluations:

Any days that a school is closed would not be counted as a “school days”² for the 45 school day initial evaluation timeline. The timeline would pause during the closure.

Next Steps

As the next steps to protect public health and safety unfold, the BSE is committed to providing ongoing guidance to support school districts and families. School districts should prepare for the need to individually assess the impact of school closures for their students.

cc: Charlene Russell Tucker, Deputy Commissioner
 Desi Nesmith, Deputy Commissioner

² Although the BSE awaits additional guidance from the United States Department of Education, education in Connecticut at present looks different than it has in the past. At this time, a continued educational opportunity is a “learning day,” but does not constitute a “school day” in all districts within the meaning of applicable special education statutes and regulations. The BSE will update this position as the circumstances and/or federal guidance evolve.

Resources:

Connecticut State Department of Education Guidance (video review of previous document)

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCqTyoZuEUNtDXdw8nOgAgQQ>

CSDE

<https://portal.ct.gov/SDE/Special-Education/Bureau-of-Special-Education/Coronavirus>

NASP:

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/health-crisis-resources/responding-to-covid-19brief-action-steps-for-school-crisis-response-teams>

Department of Public Health: There is flexibility in licensure and certification renewal guidelines.

<https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Coronavirus/20200330-DPH-order-on-License-Renewals.pdf?la=en>

Telehealth Support from the APA

<https://www.apa.org/ed/ce/telehealth>

State of Connecticut Guidance on COVID-19

<https://portal.ct.gov/coronavirus>

Special Ed Connection

<https://www.specialedconnection.com/LrpSecStoryTool/login.jsp>



Please consider submitting your work to the official publication of CASP, The Connecticut School Psychologist (CSP). Professional issues and news, articles, questions, kudos, feedback, reviews and graphic works which are of interest to a significant portion of our members should be sent to the editor.

E-mail your submissions to the editor, Sarah Elsdon at casp.newsletter@gmail.com

Please include a short biographical statement about yourself.

CASP MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of this organization shall be to serve in a leadership role:

- To unite all qualified persons who are engaged in school psychological services for an exchange of ideas and professional growth experiences related to their work.
- To initiate and support action aimed at providing better educational and schoolpsychological services and facilities to children and youth.
- To provide within the group high ethical practices in accord with those set forth by NASP and other relevant professional organizations.
- To promote articulation among professional psychological associations and other related disciplines.
- To take an active role in promoting better home, school, and community understanding of school psychological services.



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- **Spring Conference with Michelle Laubin on Legal and Ethical Updates for School Employed Mental Health Providers has been Rescheduled to Thurs 04 Jun 2020 9:00-3:00 • Southern Connecticut State University**

- **JUNE, AWARDS DINNER, ABATES RESTAURANT, NEW HAVEN, CT**
Wed 03 Jun 2020 6:00 PM • Abates Restaurant, New Haven, CT

- Check Web site for updates on www.caspweb.wildapricot.org

*Pleas

<https://caspweb.wildapricot.org/> for updates, exact locations of CASP meetings, and more information.

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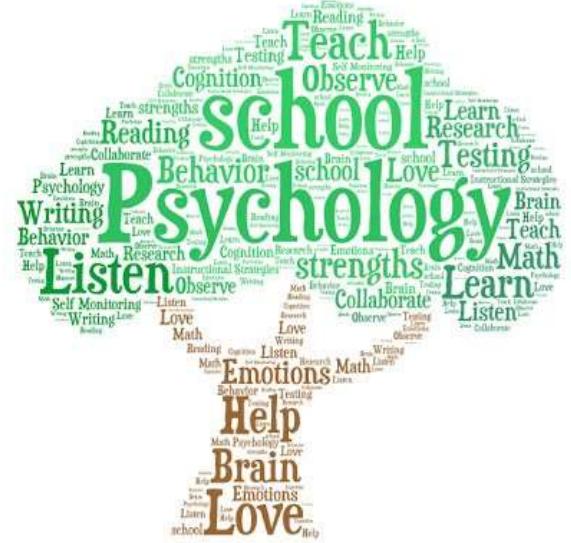
Ctreap.net

[Indeed.com](#)

Careerbuilder.com

SchoolPsychJobs.com

Connecticut Education Association





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