SCHOOLS CLOSED TO PREVENT SPREAD OF COVID-19

All Illinois schools closed due to the pandemic and at the time of closure, each local school district decided if or how they would continue to educate their students. Because of initial information issued by the U.S. Department of Education about insuring accessibility for all students when providing remote learning, many schools interpreted that guidance to mean that they should not provide any instruction unless it was accessible to every student in their district. On March 21, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights and Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, issued a Supplemental Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities. That guidance informs schools that they should provide learning opportunities to all students. To read the Supplemental fact sheet go to this link: https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/frontpage/faq/rr/policyguidance/Supple%20Fact%20Sheet%203.21.20%20FINAL.pdf

REMOTE LEARNING BEGINS

On Friday, March 27, State Superintendent of Education, Dr. Carmen I. Ayala, declared that Remote Learning Days must begin for Illinois schools statewide on March 31 and continue until in-person instruction can resume. During Remote Learning Days, schools may implement either an E-Learning Plan or a Remote Learning Day Plan that provides students with instruction and access to educators through whatever means possible. Schools may use up to five Remote Learning Planning Days at any time after March 30 to work on Remote Learning Day Plans in partnership with their collective bargaining units.

Remote Learning Days, Remote Learning Planning Days, and Act of God Days count as actual student attendance days. All of these days count toward the minimum length of the school year and absolutely do not need to be made up. You can read the full announcement at this link: https://www.isbe.net/Lists/News/NewsDisplay.aspx?ID=1319.

REMOTE LEARNING FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) convened a Remote Learning Advisory Group of teachers, students, paraprofessionals,
related service personnel, principals, and district and regional superintendents to make recommendations to support educators, students, and families during Remote Learning Days. The recommendations provide overarching best practices for instructions, grading, communication, social-emotional needs, content selection and delivery, family engagement, and other important concerns, as well as specific guidance for different grade bands, English Learners, and student with disabilities. In the report of recommendations, the Advisory Group defines remote learning as “learning that happens outside of the traditional classroom because the student and teacher are separated by distance and/or time. Remote learning can be real-time or flexibility-times, and it may or may not involve technology. It cannot be assumed that every family or every student has access to the necessary devices and appropriate internet connection at their home.”

Some of the essential instructional recommendations from the Advisory Group include:

- Meticulously documenting the best efforts possible being made under the current emergency conditions with regard to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans
- Selecting content for remote learning that is aligned to standards, relevant and appropriate for each student
- Practicing consistent communication with students, families, and staff to understand how the health emergency is impacting them

Some of the essential grading recommendations include:

- The emphasis for schoolwork assigned, reviewed, and completed during the remote learning period is on learning, not on compliance
- Grading should focus on the continuation of learning and prioritize the connectedness and care for students and staff. All students should have the opportunity to redo, make up, or try again to complete, show progress, or attempt to complete work assigned prior to the remote learning period. A focus on keeping children emotionally and physically safe, fed, and engaged in learning should be our first priority during this unprecedented time.

The Remote Learning Recommendations also offers specific guidance regarding students with disabilities. Among them are the following points:

- IEPs remain in place and should direct students’ remote learning. Be mindful that a student’s program may require commencing a team meeting.
- It is essential that training, development, and support continue for staff who serve students with IEPs. The advisory group suggests that districts create and share inventories of what technology is available to students/families with special needs and identify what technology platforms will best serve the various needs of the special education students.
- The focus of instruction should be individualized and based on the students’ IEPs, their goals, the modifications, and accommodations within the IEP. To ensure this differentiation occurs, there should be communication between special and general education teachers, case coordinators, teacher assistants, and clinicians to support students in accessibility and in meeting their IEP benchmarks and goals. All decisions regarding special education must comply with guidance from the U.S. Department of Education. (You can find that guidance on page 4 of this newsletter.)

The Remote Learning Recommendations contains much more information and you can read the full document at this link:


Continued on Page 3
WHAT SHOULD PARENTS DO?

Keep in mind that all of this is new to everyone – parents, students, school district administrators, teachers, therapists and communities. It may take some trial and error to figure out what will work for each student with an IEP. Be prepared to communicate with your school and all the people who work with your child. Let them know what you are struggling with while your children are home and out of school; tell them what is working well; become familiar with what is in your child’s IEP and use it as a guide to notice their progress. You can keep a notebook where you write down things that your child accomplishes, whether it was a goal on the IEP or not. If the work that is being sent home for your child isn’t something they can do on their own or with minimal help, let the teacher know that it’s not appropriate. Remember that children are very tuned in to what their parents and caregivers are feeling, so if you’re feeling anxious, they will too. Remote learning will not equal a full school day so plan for breaks and fun activities. Not all learning takes place sitting still at a table or desk, so look for teachable moments in your daily routines. Don’t beat yourself up if you’re not the Martha Stewart of homeschooling. Some of you may be trying to work from home during this crisis, others may be coping with the loss of their job and income, and many will be trying to help multiple children with their remote learning. All of those situations can be overwhelming so be sure to ask for help when you need it. You will do the best that you can with the resources that you have. If your child receives emotional or behavioral supports in their IEP this might be a particularly difficult time for them but you can reach out to the IEP case manager or the school social worker or behavior specialist for help on how to develop structure or supports at home for your child. If you need support from another parent or would like help figuring out strategies during remote learning, you can call Family Matters and talk with Karrie or Patty. Our staff are observing the social distancing requirements and are working from home but are still available by phone and email. Our phone number is 1-866-436-7842 or you can email info@fmptic.org.

“Family Matters is wonderful and there is no way I could have done everything without your help. You have helped me understand the special education process and the language.”

Resources for Educators and Families

https://intensiveintervention.org/

NCII has a series of sample lessons and strategies that can be used by educators and families to support students. The reading lessons and activities cover phonemic awareness, alphabetic principal or phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension and are examples of brief instructional routines that include sample scripts, activities, and necessary materials to complete the activities. The mathematics lessons and activities are organized around six mathematics skill areas and include descriptions of sample lessons, activities and worksheets, and supplemental materials. Additional videos illustrating the concepts covered in the materials are also included.

The behavior strategies, organized around antecedent modification, self-management, and reinforcement strategies, can be used to support students with challenging behaviors.

The U.S. Department of Education has also provided a one-stop-shop of information on their website, the National Center for Systemic Improvement will be collecting and disseminating Part B information from OSEP TA&D Centers to support online, distance and virtual learning, and the Center for Parent Information Resources has developed a collection of information for parents and parent centers.

**Keeping Kids Safe on IPhones**

By **Amy Barry**

During this unusual time in our world, we are all learning how to adapt to the new normal. For many families this means parents figuring out how to work remotely while also trying to learn to homeschool children with and without disabilities. There are also many young adults and adults with disabilities whose day programs, apprenticeships, and group social activities are cancelled and caregivers are busier than ever.

We thought we could offer some help to parents and caregivers who are confronting more screen time than usual out of necessity, but still want to keep their kids and loved ones safe while they are online. Did you know that Apple devices have many built-in settings that allow parents and caregivers to apply safety features and restrictions? No special app to buy and figure out, just hidden in that settings icon right on your device.

Let’s explore the features and talk about how to personalize the settings for your family’s needs. After opening the **settings app**, look for **screen time** on the left side of the menu. The first step is to click **turn on screen time**. Once you have created a screen time passcode (pick something different from the device passcode so that your children cannot access these settings), there are many different ways that you can limit the types of content that can be accessed.

Here are just some examples what you can do in these settings:

- **Set limits on ratings for podcasts, movies, TV shows, books, apps, and music (PG, PG-13, Explicit lyrics or not, etc.)**
- **Limit adult content on websites and even pick certain websites that are blocked or allowed regardless of rating control.**
- **If they are allowed to play multiplayer games, add friends, and screen record games.**
- **Block location services from being used and choose which device settings the user is allowed to change without permission.**
- **Set time limits for how long certain apps are allowed to be accessed each day.**

These settings take a little time to personalize, however, the good news is that once you have chosen these settings, the device saves them and allows you to share the settings across other devices signed into the same Apple ID, set up screen time for the family, and even turn off screen time when needed without changing the settings you have made.

For complete instructions, follow this link: [https://youtu.be/0nS_P-LqFuo](https://youtu.be/0nS_P-LqFuo)

Don’t Forget to Fill Out Your Census Form

By now, most households should have received at least one invitation to respond to the 2020 Census. Responding to the census is important because it helps inform funding for key public services for your community like education programs and schools, hospitals and healthcare, roads and bridges, and emergency and disaster response. The amount of funding for programs for people with disabilities depends on the numbers that are reported in the census. The census numbers also determine how many Representatives Illinois will have in Congress. So, it’s really important that every person in Illinois gets counted!

The census only happens once every ten years, so we want to make sure that all households get reported. There are only a few questions and only one person from each household needs to answer the questions for everybody in that household. The questions will ask for names, sex, age, ethnicity and race. It will be interesting to learn about the diversity in our country after the census data has been collected and the statistics are shared.

Your Privacy Matters

When you respond to the census, your answers are kept anonymous. They are used only to produce statistics. The U.S. Census Bureau is bound by law to protect your answers and keep them strictly confidential. The law ensures that your private information is never published and that your answers cannot be used against you by any government agency or court.

It’s short, it’s easy, and it takes very little time. You can even submit it on-line, quickly and easily. Be sure to count everyone in your household, even babies! We want Illinois to receive all the funding that we should have based on our population. So, please be counted! Thank you for participating!

Donate to Family Matters each time you order from amazon. Just shop at http://smile.amazon.com/ch/20-5808691. You will have access to the same merchandise and pricing as you do when shopping at amazon.com.

Family Matters’ Board of Directors

If you have an interest in serving as a Board member, please visit our website and complete an application.
http://www.fmptic.org/sites/default/files/prospective%20board%20member%20questionnaire2.pdf

We welcome parents that fulfill demographic needs including geographical locations; parent representation of disability types; representation of age ranges, gender, and diversity; related professional interests; and volunteer experiences.
Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs about Students with Disabilities at Elementary and Secondary Schools During the Coronavirus Pandemic

School officials have an obligation to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability under Title II and Section 504, while cooperating with public health authorities to ensure that students with disabilities have access to the school’s education program. School officials should acknowledge the expertise and role of public health authorities, as well as parental concerns, to determine whether students should stay home. If a student who has an individualized education program (IEP) through the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or is receiving services under Section 504, is required or advised to stay home by public health authorities or school officials for an extended period of time because of COVID-19, provision should be made to maintain education services. This also applies if the student is absent from school as advised by the student’s treating physician, consistent with school policy and documentation requirements. During such absences, if the school is open and serving other students, the school must ensure that the student continues to receive a free appropriate public education (FAPE), consistent with protecting the health and safety of the student and those providing that education to the student. If feasible, the student’s IEP Team, or the personnel responsible for ensuring FAPE to a student for the purposes of Section 504, can be utilized to assist with the effort to determine if some, or all, of the identified services can be provided through alternate or additional methods. Accessible technology may afford students, including students with disabilities, an opportunity to have access to high-quality educational instruction during an extended school closure, especially when continuing education must be provided through distance learning. If a school district closes its schools and does not provide any educational services to the general student population, then a school would not be required to provide services to students with disabilities during that same period of time. Once school resumes, the school must return to providing special education and related services to students with disabilities in accordance with the student’s IEP or, for students entitled to FAPE under Section 504, consistent with any plan developed to meet the requirements of Section 504. The Department understands that there may be exceptional circumstances that could affect how a particular service is provided. If a student does not receive services after an extended period of time, the student’s IEP Team, or appropriate personnel under Section 504, must make an individualized determination whether and to what extent compensatory services are needed consistent with the respective applicable requirements, including to make up for any skills that may have been lost. Additionally, IEP Teams are not required to meet in person while schools are closed. If an evaluation of a student with a disability requires a face-to-face assessment or observation, the evaluation would need to be delayed until school reopens. Evaluations and re-evaluations that do not require face-to-face assessments or observations may take place while schools are closed, so long as a student’s parent or legal guardian consents. These same principles apply to similar activities conducted by appropriate personnel for a student with a disability who has a plan developed under Section 504, or who is being evaluated under Section 504. For more information on providing services to students with disabilities during the coronavirus outbreak, see: https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/qa-covid-19-03-12-2020.pdf
Assistive Technology Fund

The Arc of Illinois has developed an Assistive Technology Fund. This program will fund, or partially fund, the purchase of assistive technology for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities who have received an evaluation/assessment from a qualified provider but the purchase is not subsidized by Medicaid, Medicare or Private Insurance.

Their goal through the Assistive Technology Fund is to enhance and improve the quality of life for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities by providing opportunities for individuals to receive technology to help with education, employment, community living and independence.

The maximum amount funded will be $500.00 per person or family. In order to help more people, only one device or software will be funded. Upon approval, the device will be shipped directly to the applicant.

Who Can Apply?

- A person with an intellectual or developmental disability
- Family member on behalf of a person with an intellectual or developmental disability
- Must be an Illinois resident

How Do I Apply?

- The application form must be completed and returned to The Arc of Illinois.
- You must include a letter from the doctor, healthcare provider, or someone else who works closely with the individual to show the need for the assistive technology device, how it would benefit the individual, and what type of device is needed.

Visit the ARC of Illinois website by going to: https://www.thearcofil.org/assistive-technology-program/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=fa572e8f-9a99-4007-b560-646c93eaa2e0

Consumer Financial Protection

If you are facing financial difficulties because of the pandemic, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) can help you protect your finances. The CFPB has curated resources to help guide consumers on how to protect their finances during this pandemic. At the CFPB website, https://www.consumerfinance.gov/coronavirus/, you will find resources and information on steps to take if someone is experiencing difficulty meeting their financial obligations; working with credit counselors; debt collectors; credit reports; avoiding scams; what to do if you lose your income.

Do check this out and share broadly.

CFPB also has a variety of free print materials that you can order and share with anyone.

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Book Review: All About Tests & Assessments
By: Melissa Lee Farrall, Phd, SSIF; Pamela Darr Wright, MA, MSW; and Peter W.D. Wright, Esq.
Reviewed By: Debbie Einhorn

School districts frequently ask parents to sign consent forms that give school district evaluators permission to conduct testing and assessment of their children. Tests and assessments are important for identifying children’s learning problems and for targeting interventions to remediate those learning problems. Often the evaluators report the test results during eligibility or Individualized Education Program (IEP) planning meetings. Most parents are confused or uncertain about what all the numbers mean and how IEP teams use them to develop an individualized program that will help their child build skills, reach goals, and make progress in school.

All About Tests & Assessments is a book that answers all the frequently asked questions parents have about when and why children should have evaluations, how the tests measure skills, what the test scores mean, how to prepare for an assessment, and what should be included in a comprehensive assessment. It includes charts showing tests that assess specific skills and abilities and explains the strengths, weaknesses and potential problems with tests.

Two of the authors, Pam and Pete Wright, are the founders of an invaluable website filled with resources about everything related to special education – www.wrightslaw.com. That website is also the place for parents to sign up for email newsletters about important ways to advocate for appropriate special education services and supports. Pete Wright is a special education attorney and Pam Wright is a social worker.

The other author, Melissa Lee Farrall, is an adjunct faculty member in the Language and Literacy Program at Simmons College, and the author of a research-based integrated approach to reading and assessment in Reading Assessment: Linking Language, Literacy, and Cognition. Together, along with consultation from numerous experts in the field, they have put together a definitive resource book that will guide parents in understanding school evaluations.

Have you been at a school meeting, when the IEP team talked about standard deviations, age equivalents, T scores, Z scores, and your eyes glazed over and you were afraid to ask questions because you didn’t know where to start? Then this book is for you. Or, have you helped your child with homework and noticed they had trouble understanding what they just read out loud perfectly to you? This book is for you. Maybe you have concerns about your child’s language development, or their struggles with Math. This book is for you.

Does your child need a lot of time before they can answer a question and you think it is affecting their ability to follow directions but you aren’t certain what kind of evaluation they need? This book is for you.

In addition to explaining the child find mandate of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the special education evaluation process, the meaning of test terminology and scores, the authors also provide information about specific tests used in evaluation of 12 different areas including:

- Intelligence or IQ
- Reading
- Writing and spelling
- Mathematics
- Speech and language
- Specific learning disabilities and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders
- Hearing, vision, and motor skills
- Auditory, visual, visual-motor, and sensory processing
- Adaptive behavior and functional behavior assessments
- Transition assessments
- Assessing English language learners

An appendix includes a table of tests which lists evaluation tools by the test name, author, publisher, website, age range, and what the test measures. The book also contains a glossary of terms, which is a helpful resource when you forget what a term means while you are reading.

To be strong advocates, parents must be experts on how their children learn; and understanding tests and assessments can help you learn their strengths and needs and enable you to identify the appropriate supports and services that will help your child succeed.

All About Tests & Assessments can be purchased from www.wrightslaw.com or you can borrow a copy from Family Matters’ lending library. Go to www.fmptic.org
In our world today, we have access to information and stories from all over the world. We hear stories about inclusion working, stories questioning if inclusion is right for all kids, stories of successes and struggles. Sometimes, it is hard to filter through and take away what we need to know to make decisions that are right for our children. At Early CHOICES, we like to use data to make decisions. So, when we think about inclusion, we turn to the many years of research about the outcomes of inclusion. We would like to share a few that are really important to us:

Inclusion benefits children with and without disabilities.

Children with disabilities can be effectively educated in inclusive programs using specialized instruction.

Children with disabilities do not need to be “ready” to be included. Programs need to be “ready” to support all children.

And, if you are like us, you want to read, know and see things for yourself! Please check out this resource and investigate what the research shows us:

https://eclre.org/media/88375/brief_inclusion_factsheet_.pdf

“Technology is activated by touch, but can keep us from touching others”. Kingsley Opuwari Manuel

**Reading to Infants and Young Children Boosts Their Vocabulary**

Shared reading between family members and very young children is associated with stronger vocabulary skills for nearly all children by age 3, say physicians at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. According to research published in *The Journal of Pediatrics*, this is true also for children who genetically may be vulnerable to barriers in learning, attention and behavior development. Researchers found that shared reading with children at 1 year old was associated with higher vocabulary scores on a standardized assessment at age 3. Children with genetic variations that put them at risk fared just as well as their peers on the assessment when shared reading was conducted at age 1. [https://news.rutgers.edu/research-news/young-children-and-infants-read-parents-have-stronger-vocabulary-skills/20191120#.Xqq8Xm5FzAw](https://news.rutgers.edu/research-news/young-children-and-infants-read-parents-have-stronger-vocabulary-skills/20191120#.Xqq8Xm5FzAw)
The game that can spot preschoolers at risk for reading deficits

New screening app can identify struggling readers as early as preschool

by JACKIE MADER

The Hechinger Report is a national nonprofit newsroom that reports on one topic: education. Sign up for our weekly newsletters to get stories like this delivered directly to your inbox.

What if a short digital game for young children could help lower the high school drop out rate? That’s a long-range goal of a new effort by a team from Boston Children’s Hospital in collaboration with Florida State University, which has developed a 15 to 20-minute game that tests children’s early literacy skills and generates a red flag for those in need of extra support. Research shows if a child is not reading by the end of third grade, they are far more likely to drop out of high school, which means early support can be critical.

Called the Boston Children’s Hospital Early Literacy Screener, the new game is administered on a touchscreen tablet. Kids as young as 4-years-old do tasks geared at assessing their literacy skills with the help of on-screen cartoon animals. Those include touching the picture that matches the word that is said out loud, identifying rhyming words, and finding the picture that matches a spoken sentence.

Current methods of helping struggling readers are more “reactive” than proactive, says Nadine Gaab, an associate professor of pediatrics at Boston Children’s Hospital and the Harvard Medical School and the creator of the game. Under current practice, many children aren’t identified as struggling readers until second or third grade or even later, Gaab said, when their teachers flag them and, hopefully, begin to provide extra support. That means they miss out on a prime early reading intervention period during kindergarten and first grade. “We basically let a child struggle over a long period of time before we take severe actions and give them access to the help they need,” Gaab said. “What we are trying to do is move...to a preventative support model in early literacy.”

The game is targeted at ages 4 to 6. Gaab hopes the screener will ultimately help teachers who must teach reading to large groups of children. After a student finishes the game, the program creates a risk profile for that student and provides resources and suggestions for next steps on an online platform. Most states, at least 37, have a policy regarding early identification of dyslexia, a learning disorder that impacts reading, spelling and writing; and 21 states have a statute or code that addresses screening students in grades K-3, according to a 2018 report by Education Commission of the States. But many teachers lack the capacity to live up to the requirements. Gaab said she was partly inspired to create the game after meeting with teachers who were overwhelmed about the imperative to screen students and interpret the results. States currently use a range of methods to screen students.

The screener, which was selected as one of eight winners by the 2019 MIT Solve program for early childhood programs, has been tested by about 800 kindergarteners or entering kindergarteners in 42 schools in nine states with an anticipated release date of this fall. The game will be offered at a low-cost to schools, Gaab said, with the eventual goal to partner with preschools, libraries and pediatricians “so that every child has the chance to be screened and develop their full potential.”

This story about struggling readers was produced by The Hechinger Report, a nonprofit, independent news organization focused on inequality and innovation in education.

Website: https://hechingerreport.org/

“We basically let a child struggle over a long period of time before we take severe actions and give them access to the help they need.”

Nadine Gaab, an associate professor of pediatrics at Boston Children’s Hospital and the Harvard Medical School and the creator of the game.
Social Distancing: Thoughts from a Ligas Family Advocate

Written by Megan Mutti Poole, Mom and Arc Ligas Family Advocate, and Family Matters Trainer

Well, that escalated quickly... what initially felt relatively manageable has suddenly become deeply isolating. Information is not in short supply, but sourcing it is challenging. Families across the state who are parenting a child or young adult with developmental disabilities are navigating new and murky waters. We are not unfamiliar with social distancing. As a matter of fact, unintended and unwanted social distancing has been a large part of our lives for years. From schools that are poorly resourced, community programs that are built around rigid rules and standards, inaccessible social spaces, outings that lead to sensory overload – being “apart” from the crowd is not new to us. But, this larger sense of vulnerability brings with it so many new concerns.

For our children, regardless of age, who rely so deeply on the school system for relationships, social interaction, and routine – what now? How do students who have worked to make so many gains avoid regression and skill loss amidst this shut down? Parents have reached out to us feeling overwhelmed and unprepared to provide effective academic support. Teachers have provided an excellent framework, hands-on learning tools, and online resources, but the reality for parents is that this is unchartered territory. Most of us are not natural home schooleers, and this new reality around academic support brings real concern and a sense of ineptness. How do we help our children understand the changes that we are facing in a way that doesn’t increase anxiety?

For working parents, the nurses and doctors, janitors and postal workers, the police officers and firefighters who will not be able to miss a beat during this shutdown – how are they to navigate? For these workers who are parenting children and adults with complex medical needs, intellectual disabilities, and mental health challenges that make day-to-day life more challenging, how can we serve them? All of a sudden, the lack of community day programming, school and transition programs, consistent mental health programming and reliable child care has produced real concerns about employment security and basic safety. It is hard to care for others in a professional capacity when you aren’t certain that your own child is safe.

Families have shared their fears regarding the isolation that their adult child living in a CILA may be feeling during a time of strict visiting limitations. They question whether to temporarily remove them from the CILA, upending their routine and daily relationships for likely two months or more, or leave them in the CILA, knowing that they will certainly struggle with the lack of regular in-person connections with their family and friends. For families trying to navigate Home-Based supports, the challenges are different, but not easier. How do you find PSW’s to care for your adult son or daughter who has gone to community day programming for years? Do you set aside your own work to take on a full-time PSW role, knowing that puts your employment at risk? Home-based families are challenged with managing medical needs, emotional and social support, and recreation with little to no planning time or outside support for what is likely weeks of isolation.

Today, at our house, we will navigate it – with some humor, a puzzle or two, and lots of movies. We will remember that we have done this in many different ways through the years, and we will let go of expectations (another area of expertise for each of us!), eat some junk food, and try not to allow ourselves to get sucked into watching the numbers and the closings ramp up. We will remember that this is simply a necessary season. Check in with one another, share your struggles and worries, ask for help, and know that we are with you in this.
Featured Archived Webinars

Our webinars are available any time of day as archived recordings on our website. Learn beneficial information as your schedule allows. Just visit [www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings](http://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings) and choose a topic of interest. Click on the event you plan to watch, submit basic registration data (name, email, etc.), and the webinar will begin.

Visit our website today to watch an archived webinar you may have missed! You will find the following webinars and many more.

**Surviving Summer Vacation**  
Presenter: Bec Oakley

**Including Children with Disabilities in the Community Settings**  
Presenter: Karrie Potter

**Let’s Get Visual! Visual Strategies for All**  
Presenter: Jenn Skalitzky

**Understanding MTSS: A Parent’s Perspective**  
Presenters: Nikki Michalak & Roxanna Alldredge

To view these webinars and more go to: [http://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings](http://www.fmptic.org/recordings/family-matters-recordings)

Items Available From Our Lending Library

**100 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum Choosing the Right Curriculum and Approach for Your Child’s Learning Style**  
This book will help homeschoolers accomplish critical tasks. The author gives her top choices from every subject, approaching everything through a Christian worldwide perspective.

**A Mind at a Time**  
The author shows parents and those who care for children how to identify these individual learning patterns, explaining how they can strengthen a child's abilities and either bypass or help overcome the child's weaknesses, producing positive results instead of repeating frustration and failure.

**13 Things Mentally Strong Parents Don't Do: Raising Self-Assured Children and Training Their Brains for a Life of Happiness, Meaning, and Success**  
This book gives practical tips, specific strategies, and proven exercises to help preschoolers to teenagers build the mental muscle and grit they need to develop into healthy, strong adults.

**Getting it Right with Children - Discipline for Life**  
The tips, traps and stories found in this book help us discipline effectively today yet keep an eye toward the future.

To borrow these items free of cost go to: [www.fmptic.org/library](http://www.fmptic.org/library)
Test Your Knowledge About…Supplementary Aids and Services

Questions:

1. In a child’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), the term “supplementary aids and services” means aids, services, and other supports that are provided in regular education classes or other education-related settings to enable children with disabilities to be educated with nondisabled children to the maximum extent appropriate. True or False?

2. A child with an IEP that includes the provision of an individual aide in her classroom would also require the service of the aide while attending a class field trip. True or False?

3. Examples of supplementary aids and services that might be included in a child’s IEP include: a note taker, an interpreter, an alternate grading system, large print, audio books, and study guides. True or False?

4. Training for teachers or consultation to teachers cannot be included in an IEP as supplementary aids or services. True or False?

Answers:

1. True. The regulations for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require that the IEP must contain a statement of the special education and related services and supplementary aids and services to be provided to the child, or on behalf of the child. The description in question 1 is how IDEA defines supplementary aids and services [34CFR300.320(a)(4)]. Related services include things like speech and language therapy, music therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy, nursing services, orientation and mobility, etc. Assistive Technology (AT) items that a student might need such as communication devices, laptops and software, magnifiers, pencil grips, clipboards, or adapted seating, etc. would be included in the AT section of the IEP.

2. True. Field trips, after-school activities that are school events, clubs, sports and other school-sponsored activities are all education-related settings. When a student has supplementary aids and supports written into their IEP, then the IEP team members need to consider what extra-curricular activities are appropriate for the student and if the supplementary supports are needed for the student to participate.

3. True. Those are just a few examples and there are many others. Curriculum modifications and accommodations would also be written into the supplementary aids and services section of the IEP. Other examples include modifications to school rules, graphic organizers, reduced assignments, extended time, preferential seating, tests read aloud, verbal responses in place of written responses, keyboards instead of writing, etc. The list is endless and all supplementary aids and supports are determined by the student’s individual needs.

4. False. Support and training for teachers and staff who work with a child are included in supplementary aids and supports when needed. For example, if a student with emotional disabilities is being disciplined excessively for behavior that results from their disability, the staff who work with the student may need training in behavior supports and may need consultation time with a behavior specialist.

To learn more about how a state Supreme Court ruled on the intent of IDEA to include supplementary aids and supports in extra-curricular and nonacademic activities, check out the following link: https://www.wrightslaw.com/blog/mn-supreme-court-refuses-to-limit-extracurricular-nonacademic-activities-to-those-that-educate-the-child/
Emotional Support Resource for Students

From Creator Rudolph Keeth Matheny

Like all of us, I have been absolutely overwhelmed and saddened by what is happening with Coronavirus. I know many are struggling, some in traumatic ways, and we are all dealing with heavy emotions. Educators are facing challenges of trying to move learning online, while balancing the strong concerns of how to support students as they cope with daily changes, fears, and challenges.

I am a social and emotional learning (SEL) teacher, speaker, and author (A.K.A. Emotional Intelligence or EQ) who spends most of his time presenting to large groups, keynotes, and workshops. Obviously, I am not doing any of those currently, and wanted to find a way to be a help. “When you can’t do what you do, do what you can.” - Bon Jovi

Determined to help students and families cope with challenges, I asked my filmmaker son to work with me to create some videos for online support. He was home from college and, graciously, he agreed, did some amazing early work, and the idea has inspired others to chip in. It is now a whole family project, with my wife and daughter contributing to videos and resources. We partnered with School-Connect, a national research and evidence-based SEL curriculum for secondary schools to help make some of the additional resources. Truman, my son, and I spent over 60 hours filming our first video series last week, and a team of colleagues at School-Connect helped create handouts, activities, and other resources (we now have a few other colleagues chipping in with quizzes and other interactive components).

We decided to call our video series “EQ in your PJs.” The idea is to create calming, supportive, educational resources that students, teachers, and families can use to grow some social and emotional skills to help navigate the crisis and build some skills for the future. We plan to release a new unit of lessons every other week. The first unit “Managing Stress Before it Manages You” is now up. It has been reviewed by many school psychologists, teachers, students, administrators and received some rave reviews. These resources are 100% free and we all hope they are a light in dark times to many.

I hope you are all safe, healthy, and finding reasons to smile. Check out the resources here! https://school-connect.blog/eq-in-your-pjs/

Creator of EQ in PJs Rudolph Keeth Matheny is a social and emotional learning teacher, speaker, and author. He is a co-author of School-Connect, a research and evidence-based social and emotional learning curriculum that is now in over 2,000 schools. Check out his site, SEL Launchpad!

The Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse (EIC) has resources across the lifespan for your whole family!

The Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse (EIC) is funded by the Illinois Department of Human Services and has many resources (books, eBooks, CDs and DVDs) that can help Illinois families who have children with disabilities. If you are interested, the materials will be mailed to you; when you are done with the materials, you can drop them off at your local public library.

Although focused on early childhood, the EIC has resources across the lifespan. Such resources include addressing adolescence, sexuality and marriage, and future planning. So, no matter the age of your child, you may find a resource at the EIC! To find resources go to: Cloud Library eBooks! This is a fast and convenient way to check out items from the EI Clearinghouse (IL residents only). Download the Cloud Library App onto your mobile device and contact the EI Clearinghouse (http://eiclearinghouse.org) or give them a call at 1-877-275-3227) for your login and password.

Further, the resources can be used for your whole family! For example:

- Are you expecting a new child to add to your family? The EIC has books for siblings! The books range from welcoming a new child into your home to being a sibling of an individual with a disability. You can share these books with the children and adolescents in your family.

- Are you navigating the service delivery system? The EIC has books for parents to learn how to access school services for their children with disabilities.

- Are you looking for new ways to engage with your child? The EIC has books about indoor and outdoor activities for children of all ages. You can share these books with grandparents and extended family members.

If you have questions or would like more information about the EIC, please reach out to: illinois-eic@illinois.edu or 1-877-275-3227.
**APPS for Special Education Students**

Edutopia reached out to special education colleagues via the Facebook Group called **Education App Talk (E.A.T.)**, asking for their favorite digital tools; what follows includes some of their recommendations, but it is just the tip of the iceberg of what is available. Remember, as with any tool, what may work wonders for some students will only frustrate others. Customization is key with any app, so adults and educators should be prepared to put in some time learning the apps themselves or how to make modifications in the settings. Many apps come with great teacher-made materials; look for video tutorials, lesson plans, and extension activities.

**FREE APPS OR APPS WITH A FREE TRIAL**

**My PlayHome** is a free app that gives kids a digital doll family of up to 15 people in various skin tones with whom they can explore, play, and share stories with other people. These shared stories help to increase student verbalizations, provide a place for social and emotional learning, and teach necessary early language skills.

**SoundingBoard** is a free mobile augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) app designed for children who are unable to speak (or who have limited speech) to help them communicate. In order to meet the needs of this particular population, the app comes with preloaded boards using symbols with recorded messages. Students select and press images on the board to prompt a verbal message.

**LetterSchool** promotes early literacy and numeracy skills by guiding children to tap, touch, and trace colorful animations. Children learn letter formation, letter sounds and names, spelling, counting, and other preschool and primary skills. This app, which offers a free trial, also does an excellent job of developing fine motor skills and eye-hand coordination.

**Tales2Go**, an audiobook service that offers a free one-month trial, helps students who struggle to read while boosting their listening skills. This app has an extensive collection of stories and books for all ages, with scores of splendid narrators who bring stories from every genre to life.

**Epic!** is an e-library that is great for supporting reluctant or struggling readers. It provides access to more than 20,000 high-quality children’s books and educational videos and includes an assortment of both fiction and nonfiction books from prominent publishers. Epic is offering free access to schools during this time.

**PAID APPS**

**Busy Shapes**, by Edoki Academy, is based on Piaget’s research on cognitive development, and it begins with cause-and-effect play that evolves into an exercise in problem-solving and tool use. The game also helps children improve their fine motor skills through a series of puzzles in an exploratory and evolving playground.

**Edoki Academy** also offers a series of math apps using a step-by-step approach whereby students learn Montessori math by manipulating various objects that appear on the screen. It also helps boost motor skill development.

**Math Drills** is a skill-based math drills app that students tend to love, as they can compete against themselves to increase their speed and accuracy. It includes basic math operations like addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and also features advanced options in the settings so that teachers and students can create personalized environments, and track scores and test history.

**Phonics Genius** provides a simple way for children to learn how to recognize, read, and speak words through letter sounds. The app contains more than 6,000 words, compiled by phonetic groups, in addition to the fun games for practicing skills.
SentenceBuilder is a conversation simulator designed to help elementary-aged children learn how to have conversations with their peers in a variety of social settings, which can be a particular challenge for special needs students. ConversationBuilderTeen, for older students, is geared to help kids learn when it is appropriate to introduce themselves, ask questions, and change the subject of the conversation. This app also covers sarcasm and addresses how kids should respond to bullying.

Word Wizard has a talking alphabet that allows kids to experiment with phonemic awareness and word building. The verbal feedback helps teach children in a nonthreatening way, as the voice reads any words the child creates—allowing for self-correction. The app also supports letter recognition, phonological awareness, and spelling, and comes with 184 built-in word lists such as the 1,000 most frequently used sight words. It even keeps tabs on children’s progress with detailed monitoring and has an extensive teacher activity guide.

The Anti-Coloring Book App series is my personal favorite resource of all time and is now available in app form. This suite of online books uses the space at the bottom of the page for a question and the child draws the answer. These are open-ended questions—with no right or wrong answers—that promote a child’s critical thinking skills, foster creativity, and encourage risk-taking and problem-solving.

DIGITAL MODIFICATIONS
Aside from apps, digital modifications are critical for online home learning for special needs students. Text to speech (TTS) is a type of assistive technology that reads digital text aloud and works with almost all digital devices—phone, iPad, computer. Many types of text files and most web pages can be converted into audio with TTS software.

Mac/iPad—in Settings under Accessibility
Windows—in Control Panel under Ease of Access
Android—in Settings > Accessibility > Text to Speech Output
Chromebook—in Settings under Accessibility

Speech recognition (dictation) is another necessary tool, found on most digital devices, that enables students to express themselves by simply talking without having to worry about typing, spelling, and grammar. Dictation software is available on most devices in the settings menu, and it helps students expand their writing skills and achieve new levels of success. Note: Apple has a more advanced speech recognition system than Windows.

During the coronavirus pandemic, out-of-school learning is a great challenge, but it is particularly so for special needs students, who already face hurdles in their schooling. Be mindful—and patient—with special needs students as they try to adapt to this new dynamic. Change alone can be very disruptive for many children, and they will need time to adjust to their new routine. Don’t be surprised by regression in social and emotional behaviors. Small strategies like breathing exercises, creating structure, and helping students methodically work through problems are essential at this time. [https://www.edutopia.org/article/apps-students-special-needs-school-buildings-shutter](https://www.edutopia.org/article/apps-students-special-needs-school-buildings-shutter)

Upcoming Workshops

Register at: [http://www.fmptic.org/events/](http://www.fmptic.org/events/)

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