

Strong Start 2020: Special Education Guidance

The [Strong Start 2020: Reopening Guidance for Special Education Leaders](#) builds off the Department's [School Reopening Guidance and Resources](#) to help school systems and educators prepare for a successful reopening that meets the needs of students with disabilities.

The guidance document includes guiding principles and considerations for supporting students with disabilities in facility reopening plans, staffing plans, academic plans, and delivery of direct services across virtual, traditional, and hybrid learning scenarios.

Strong Start 2020: Reopening Guidance for Direct Service Providers

The [Strong Start 2020: Reopening Guidance for Direct Service Providers](#) offers information and considerations for planning and implementing direct services during the 2020-2021 school year. This guidance document provides strategies for direct service providers to

- deliver services across learning environments (traditional, hybrid or virtual) and
- incorporate technology and remote learning strategies with in-person services.

The guide includes both K-12 and early childhood special education (ECSE) specific information.

Strong Start 2020: Family Toolbox: Support for Students with Disabilities

There are many ways families can support students with disabilities during the 2020-2021 school year. The [Family Toolbox: Strong Start 2020 Support for Students with Disabilities](#) guides families to

- know their rights under IDEA,
- promote health and safety,
- collaborate with the IEP team,
- prepare their children for the academic year,
- create a supportive home-based learning environment,
- support the use of accommodations and accessibility, and
- support instruction and direct services.

Strong Start 2020: Guidance to Support English Learners (EL)

The guidance includes specific considerations for providing ELs with language support services across learning scenarios including preparation and delivery of supportive instruction, accommodations, and frequently asked questions.

The Department has established a High Cost Services (HCS) grant to support school systems and schools that serve students with the most challenging needs. This grant provides additional funding for high-cost special education services for students with disabilities and is funded through the state's IDEA allocation and Minimum Foundation Program (MFP) formula.

Alternate Assessment Participation

Each year, school systems that exceed 1.0 percent participation in the alternate assessment must take certain actions. These actions outlined in the alternate assessment participation review incorporate requirements of Bulletin 111 and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

All school systems must review participation data. Additionally, school systems exceeding 1.0 percent participation must also

- participate in student level file reviews conducted by the Department;
- complete the alternate assessment review request document;
- describe how the school system will address any disproportionality in participation rates;
- provide evidence IEP teams followed the State's guidelines for participation; and
- provide assurance IEP teams received training on participation guidelines.

Under the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), Louisiana must limit the number of students who are assessed statewide on alternate assessments to 1.0 percent of the total number of students who are required to participate in statewide assessments. The Department intends to seek a waiver extension for the 2020-2021 school year of this federal requirement that would limit the number of students in the state who participate in alternate assessments.

The [notice of intent](#) to submit a waiver is available for public comment until **October 24**. Comments may be submitted via email to specialeducation@la.gov and should include a full name, organization (if applicable), and contact information.