

Virtual Teaching Academy  
Session 7 Recap  
Special Needs Populations  
Noon-1:30pm EDT  
June 30, 2020

On behalf of the University of Phoenix, Blackboard and everyone associated with the Alliance for Virtual Learning, thank you for attending our inaugural Virtual Teaching Academy. Following each session, a high-level outline will be emailed to you.

For your convenience, important links can be found below. Additionally, please feel free to use the hashtag #VTA2020 across your social media platforms. Don't be shy about the fantastic work you're doing on behalf of your students!

\*Please use the "Webinar link" provided below, to join each daily session.

Important links:

\*Webinar link: [https://applauncher.gotowebinar.com/#notStarted/280718920414727439/en\\_US](https://applauncher.gotowebinar.com/#notStarted/280718920414727439/en_US)

Link to presentations: <https://content.blackboard.com/virtual-teaching-academy>

Link to VTA sessions: <http://content.blackboard.com/virtual-teaching-academy>

General contact email: [info@blackboard.com](mailto:info@blackboard.com)

Note: If you have chosen to add our Webinar sessions directly to your virtual calendar of choice, you will be notified to attend each daily session at the correct local time.

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Note: This session begins on page 8 of your Virtual Teaching Academy Blueprint.

- Session Learning Outcomes:
  - Gain an understanding of the important differences between virtual and face-to-face learning when serving special needs populations. What's the Same? What's different and why?
  - Learn key considerations when home is the learning environment versus the physical classroom.
    - Student engagement
    - Parent engagement
    - Access
    - Accessibility
    - Compliance
  - Learn best practices for success in serving special needs populations virtually and when learning shifts between virtual and face-to-face.
- Virtual versus Face-to-Face Learning and Special Populations:
  - Similarities:
    - Targeted, goal-based instruction is still possible.
    - Small group instruction
    - Important: Remember, that in the virtual environment, compliance activities and requirements remain.
  - Differences:
    - Key Difference for students: Virtual learning is two-dimensional.
    - Materials are not readily available for all children; plan carefully.
      - Consider creating physical learning kits that can be mailed to students.
    - Reading level/capability has a huge impact on the ability of special needs students to learn in a virtual environment.
    - Efficient executive functioning is required for independence.
    - Special needs students and their parents must have technology skills.

- Technology Options & Gaps:
  - High Tech:
    - Use screen sharing and online curriculum tools to connect with students.
    - Access “learning websites” and appropriate online material
    - Reading online books
  - Low Tech:
    - Watch educational TV and discuss it
    - When home, parents should have their child/children talk on the phone with friends and Family.
  - No Tech:
    - Parents should try to have discussions with their child
      - Activity Idea: Parents should have their child describe household items.
    - Reading/being read to; any available, appropriate text
    - Writing stories
      - Activity Idea: Parents should have their child name/hold household utensils.
    - Help with household chores and activities that promote sequencing and direction following.
      - “No Tech” options can lead to hours of quality learning. Especially when done in concert with instruction from a physical or occupational therapist.\
- The ideal Home Environment:
  - Conducive for learning:
    - Dedicated learning space
    - Consider creating a physical schedule kids can use to help them develop a sense of routine.
  - Child Welfare:
    - Maintain consistent contact with students/parents via telephone or video.
    - Document concerns
    - Above all, make sure children are safe – engage with social workers and again, document concerns.
    - Don’t assume that a lack of engagement equates to a lack of interest.
      - Put the child first
- Connecting with Families:
  - Use Class Dojo (Software) to connect with as many families as possible.
  - Leverage Microsoft Teams/Zoom
  - Establish a regular cadence for phone calls.
  - Make sure books/lessons are mailed home.
  - Record lessons and post them to YouTube or another video platform.
  - Give passwords to parents so that they have access to a library of virtual content that they can use off-line.
    - Special needs students have unique challenges:
      - Example: Even getting them out of bed can be a reason they miss a virtual lesson and that’s okay.
        - Be patient
        - And again, schedule, schedule, schedule
        - When you do this, parents begin to feel at-ease because they feel/know that you, the teacher, has everything under control.

- Connecting with School Teams:
  - Weekly Zoom meetings
  - Online Collaboration through Individualized Education Program (IEP) tool
  - Phone calls if alarming situations that arise
    - Pro Tip: Schedule this time with colleagues in advance.
  
- Teacher Collaboration for Special Populations:
  - Virtual learning requires that teachers of special populations and their general education counterparts work together like never before.
    - Remember to front-load information for students when developing lesson plans and accompanying assignments.
    - Examples:
      - Create weekly outlines for special education teachers and general education teachers to follow.
  - The obligation to provided documented accommodations and modifications remains in a virtual environment.
  
- Instruction for MO/MI Students in a Self-Contained Environment:
  - Make sure teachers have one-on-one video interaction with students every day.
    - Parents can help with these sessions if they're open to it.
    - The challenge with this approach is that following the one-on-one session, the child may have a lot of downtime. That's why working in conjunction with a paraprofessional is key.
  - Large group synchronous learning
    - This time should be used for social activities and reconnecting.
    - It can be tricky to keep everyone involved. Parents should be part of these sessions.
    - Try screensharing activities where the teacher plays music, videos or reads books.
  - Consider using breakout rooms in Zoom/Adobe Connect/Microsoft Teams.
    - Special educators can co-teach with general education teachers by leveraging this feature.
    - Pro Tip: In Adobe Connect teachers can see what individual students are clicking on and/or hovering on with his/her cursor.
  
- Young Learners – Lessons from Head Start:
  - Short circle times:
    - Twice daily: literacy & math
  - Asynchronous content (lessons or assignments a student completes on his or her time, at his or her own pace).
    - Remember, asynchronous content for young learners involves:
      - Supplemental reading programs.
      - Verifying completion via curriculum-based assessments.
  - Young learners have attention spans between 5-6 minutes.
    - Keep this in mind when designing lessons/assignments.
  
- English Learners and Virtual Learning
  - Proficiency = frequency of instruction
    - Non-English speakers need consistency in the user-experience as it relates to software.
  - Communicate with parents in their native language
    - Make sure software teaches languages beyond Spanish.
  - Group students together and teach by proficiency level.

- Challenge them – avoid “busywork”
  - Get creative; challenging assignments
  - Consider comorbidity (the combination of chronic conditions a student may have).
    - Examples: Anxiety and depression
  - As with every student, consider the effects isolation may have on this population. Do your best to make sure they’re receiving the social and emotional support they need.
- Compliance:
    - Stay in compliance!
      - Document, document, document!
      - Update all paperwork to reflect changes in the provision of FAPE.
        - Note: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) guarantees the right to a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE).
      - Provide Prior Written Notice in accordance with IEP, section 504.
      - Document conversations with students and parents.
      - Track/document the minutes of special education services/related services provided.
        - Note: Also track/document the minutes of service teachers *tried* to provide.
      - Only share documentation with people who have an “educational need” to see it.
      - **Important:** Asynchronous instruction is not a replacement for special education services.
- Reporting Requirements:
    - Stay current, visit: OSEP Bulletin pages often.
    - Signed waivers do not mean teachers can stop collecting data.
      - Keep data even though there may be a waiver in terms of its collection due to COVID-19.
    - Create a process and parameters for calling emergency IEP meetings.
- Access:
    - Children in protected populations must have access to school.
      - Not providing access is a violation of FAPE.
    - Computers with the appropriate and necessary software must be provided.
      - Laptops are preferred
- Teachers and Compliance:
    - If teachers need help:
      - Contact the district Special Education Coordinator/Special Education Director.
      - Review the minutes and services in students’ IEPs.