



5 Minutes with NCSECS on FAPE in the Virtual Environment

The Educating All Learners Alliance Podcast is happy to share a new *5 minutes with* episode on the FAPE tool, created by [NCSECS](#) and [Diverse Learners Cooperative](#). Megan Ohlssen from NCSECS joined us to discuss the tool they created, which aims to show educators and parents that, despite the ongoing challenges of COVID-19, the right to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities remains in place. Here is their guide, which offers a decision-making model that aims to balance individual student needs within a virtual learning context, as well as a range of exemplars showing how this model can be applied.

Mentioned Resources:

FAPE Tool:

<https://www.ncsecs.org/resource/ensuring-fape-for-students-with-disabilities-during-covid-1/>

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Spotify: <https://spoti.fi/3i7KnV5>

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Transcript of the podcast episode:

Gabrielle Oates: Hello everyone and welcome to the Educating All Learners Alliance podcast! For today I'm happy to be joined by Megan Ohlssen, who is the Managing Director of Programs at the National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools, which is commonly referred to as NCSECS, or The Center. We want to talk about FAPE today, but before we do that, could you briefly give us a description of The Center and, you know, this project that you've worked on?

Megan Ohlssen: We are a national nonprofit organization and we're committed to ensuring that students with disabilities can both access and really thrive in charter schools. We do that in various ways: we provide research, policy analysis, coalition and capacity building, and even technical assistance to a variety of stakeholders all across the country. And for this tool and resource specifically, we have the opportunity and privilege to partner with the Diverse Learners Cooperative to create a guide that really offers a decision making model, with the goal of trying to balance individual student needs within a virtual learning context, as well as a range of the tool actually provides a range of exemplars showing how this model can be applied,



Gabrielle Oates: We first wanted to clarify for everybody, with this tool that we were mentioning with FAPE, could do first clarify what is FAPE and what does FAPE stand for?

Megan Ohlssen: FAPE stands for free appropriate public education. It's required under the Individuals with Disabilities Act IDEA. FAPE ensures that the education is appropriate and meets the individual needs of each child with a disability. And the resource actually gives even more detail about some of the, some of the guidance that comes from the US Department of Education. So there's far more detail in there. But it's you know it's important to say up front and i'm glad you asked, according to the US Department of Education, educators may still meet their legal obligations by providing children with disabilities equally effective alternate access to the curriculum or service provided to other students.

Gabrielle Oates: We definitely see this tool is a great framework for educators themselves, as well as you know, the tech representatives at schools to use and to best prioritize student learning. So just to go even further into what the FAPE tool, what are some of those things that are included?

Megan Ohlssen: You know, as as refined as the resource looks when you when you start going through it we can't underscore enough that it's really a decision making tool. And so it's presented as I think about 23 student personas, or examples, and they vary by grade range and disability category. Each offers sort of a unique student profile and an example of how you could make decisions about what traditional you know in person services look like and how to create or design for those services to be in place and effective impactful for students in a virtual environment. And we're really careful not to necessarily always use the word translate because it's not a one to one translation. It's not that. It's - in every situation you may you might not find that a student get X number of minutes and one in the in person environment and that translates perfectly to the same number of direct minutes in the virtual environment. The key questions that are embedded in each student persona there's a series of questions that are valuable and essential really for educators, and IEP teams, to consider when designing for the virtual learning environment. So there's an additional resource on the website that spells out all those key questions but they're also embedded in each persona and they're differentiated based on the age of the student, the various needs of that example student, and the disability specific needs.

Gabrielle Oates: Specifically where can people go to find the FAPE tool and to learn more?



Megan Ohlssen: The FAPE tool itself, the resource, is on our website at www.ncsecs.org. We have a whole resource page and you can actually in the search field just type in FAPE and it'll it'll show up.

There was a family that reached out to the Diverse Learners Cooperative and said, 'where can I get a template? I want to, I want to fill this out from my child as I prepare for an IEP meeting.' So Brooke Allen, who's the Executive Director at the Diverse Learners Coop has a great story of a family really driving this conversation through this tool and some of the additional resources.

Gabrielle Oates: Thank you so much for sharing about this tool. We hope everybody checks it out. Of course you can always find out more on the Educating All Learners Alliance at our website educatingalllearners.org. You can follow us on Twitter @educateall_org and you can subscribe to our YouTube channel for videos and our webinar recordings on YouTube at Educating All Learners. Until next time!