Understanding Extended School Year (ESY) Services and Student Support

Supporting Skill Retention and Preventing Learning Regression

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Purpose & Overview

This guide supports educators in understanding Extended School Year (ESY) services and their role in maintaining critical academic and functional skills for students with disabilities. ESY services are designed for students who are at risk of losing essential skills during extended school breaks and who may require additional time to regain those skills once school resumes.

The purpose of this guide is to help teachers identify potential ESY needs, collect meaningful data, and contribute to IEP team discussions. It also provides practical strategies for supporting students before, during, and after school breaks to reduce regression and promote continued progress.

Instructional Outcomes

By applying the strategies in this guide, teachers will be able to:

- Understand the purpose and eligibility considerations for ESY
- Identify students who may demonstrate regression of critical skills
- Collect and interpret data related to student performance over time
- Support skill maintenance and continuity of learning
- Provide meaningful input during ESY decision-making

What is Extended School Year (ESY)?

Extended School Year (ESY) services are special education services provided outside of the regular school year. ESY is not based on convenience or enrichment, but rather on whether a student requires continued instruction to maintain essential skills.

Key Distinction:

- **ESY** → Focused on maintaining critical skills
- **Summer School** → Focused on general academic enrichment

Key Factors for ESY Consideration

IEP teams consider several factors when determining ESY eligibility.

Factor	*Description*	*Classroom Example*
Regression	Loss of previously learned skills during a break	A student loses reading fluency after winter break
Recoupment	Time required to regain lost skills	A student takes 4–6 weeks to relearn math facts
Critical Skills	Skills necessary for independence or access to learning	Communication, behavior regulation, or basic reading skills
Emerging Skills	Skills that are not yet mastered and are at risk of being lost	A student beginning to write complete sentences

Real Classroom Examples of ESY Need

Example 1: *Academic Regression*

A student demonstrates strong progress in reading comprehension before spring break but shows a significant decline upon return, requiring reteaching of previously mastered skills.

Example 2: *Behavioral Regression*

A student who has learned to follow classroom routines begins to display disruptive behaviors again after a long break, impacting learning and classroom participation.

Example 3: *Functional Skill Loss*

A student working on communication goals loses the ability to consistently request help after a school break, requiring reteaching of foundational skills.

Teacher Role in ESY Planning

Teachers play an essential role in ESY decision-making by providing data, observations, and instructional insight.

Teachers can support this process by:

- Monitoring student performance before and after breaks
- Documenting changes in skill levels over time
- Identifying skills critical to student independence
- Sharing data with the IEP team
- Providing input on how regression impacts classroom performance

Example Data Collection for ESY Consideration

Skill Area	*Performance Before Break*	*Performance After Break*	*Time to Regain Skill*
Reading fluency	80 words per minute	62 words per minute	3 weeks
Math computation	85% accuracy	60% accuracy	2–3 weeks
Behavior (on-task)	90% of class time	65% of class time	2 weeks

This type of data helps teams determine whether a student demonstrates significant regression and delayed recoupment.

Supporting Students Before and After Breaks

Teachers can help reduce regression by implementing simple strategies:

Before Breaks

- Review key skills and concepts
- Provide structured practice opportunities
- Send home reinforcement activities or strategies

After Breaks

- Conduct brief skill reviews
- Re-establish routines and expectations
- Provide guided practice before independent tasks

Example:

A teacher reviews math strategies before a break and provides a short review activity upon return to reinforce retention.

Teacher Implementation Reflection

Teachers may consider:

☐ Does the student lose critical skills after breaks?
☐ How long does it take the student to regain those skills?
☐ Are the skills essential for academic success or independence?
☐ Is there consistent data to support ESY consideration?
☐ How does regression impact classroom performance?

Connection to IEP Goals and Instruction

ESY decisions are directly connected to IEP goals and student progress. Students who demonstrate regression in key goal areas may require continued support to maintain progress.

ESY may be considered for goals related to:

- reading and math foundational skills
- communication and language development
- behavior and self-regulation
- daily living and functional skills

Closing Reflection

Extended School Year services play a critical role in supporting students who are at risk of losing essential skills during school breaks. When teachers collect meaningful data, monitor student progress, and contribute to IEP discussions, they help ensure that students receive the support needed to maintain progress and continue developing important skills over time.

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