Reopening Instructional Programs for Our Most Vulnerable Students:

A Reopening Guidebook for the 2020-2021 School Year

CCNETWORK Comprehensive Center Network

REGION 3
Puerto Rico
Virgin Islands

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Introduction

Recent events have created new educational challenges for the U.S. territories in the Caribbean. Earthquakes in Puerto Rico and COVID-19 lockdowns in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (USVI) have forced educators to rethink how they can support our most vulnerable students from afar. With schools closed, digital learning has come to the forefront as a way to support student learning. These trying times have disproportionally affected our youngest students in pre-kindergarten (Pre-K), English Learners (ELs) in the USVI, Spanish Learners (SLs) in Puerto Rico, and students with disabilities (SWDs). To support these groups of students, the Region 3 Comprehensive Center (R3CC) has researched ways that educators can address today's challenges while trying to reopen schools. The results have been assembled in this Guidebook.

This Guidebook has four chapters. The first concerns the virtual learning environment and includes instructional tips for teachers and students, learning analytics, and assessment of students and teachers. It also includes resources to detect plagiarism and how to manage the situation if an infraction is found. Finally, the chapter discusses ways to keep parents engaged in the age of virtual learning.

The second chapter focuses on Pre-K to grade 3 and parent supports. This chapter presents The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) position statement, which provides research evidence on the predictors of successful outcomes for children, informing educators on how to promote every child's optimal development and learning. In addition, it reviews the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) guiding principles and suggestions from the National P-3 Center that may prove valuable to education leadership, school administrators, teachers and families. Lastly, this chapter includes suggested evidence-based practices for parents to support their child's learning in the school setting or at home so school administrators can share these suggested practices with their community.

The third chapter shares evidence-based practices to support ELs and SLs language development. It includes tips on using tools, setting up a virtual learning environment (if needed), and emphasizing and scaffolding language production. The chapter also includes classroom strategies for ELs/SLs that can be applied in school, the virtual learning environment, or both. It rounds out the research with providing COVID-19 supports and other online resources.

The final chapter focuses on students with disabilities. Regardless of the academic setting, students with disabilities maintain their rights to equitable access to instruction. As such, the chapter includes instructional tips to virtually support students with disabilities, providing support for Social Emotional Learning (SEL), as well as the development and monitoring of students' Individual Education Plans (IEPs).

These four chapters should help educators address the pressing issues that students face, particularly our most vulnerable learners, as schools reopen their programs in the 2020-2021 school year.

Chapter 1: Virtual Learning

In the wake of lockdowns due to COVID-19, teachers have had the opportunity to provide instructional delivery in a virtual learning environment. While there were challenges across the entire country, some best practices emerged. As schools reopen for the fall in 2020, there is a good possibility that at least part of instruction will be virtual, either completely at first or a hybrid model (some in-school instruction and some virtual instruction). Below are some examples of best practices for virtual learning.

For Teachers:

- Implement, model, and hold themselves to the same standard of expectation that they expect of the students
- Maintain high expectations for students
- Maintain consistent scheduling
- Mute microphone when not speaking to limit distraction
- Speak slower and more clearly than normal, but not overly so as to add to distraction
- Provide a three-second pause to allow for response
- Address one individual at a time
- Blur background to limit distraction and allow for clear view of presenter
- Describe visual supports in detail; don't assume everyone can see the same content
- Provide time for students to reflect on their own learning
- Provide explicit instruction on chat features within the online platform
- Use web-based apps rather than downloaded software that may not be compatible on all devices

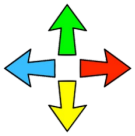
For Students:

- Mute microphone when not speaking to limit distraction
- Blur background to limit distraction
- State name every time you contribute to the conversation
- See Table 1 below for additional tips

Table 1: Virtual Learning Tips for Students

Preparation	
	Get ready! Your teacher has sent an invite to you or your family. Check what day and time you will be meeting.
	Appropriate clothing. If your teacher enables the camera option, you will be seen from your shoulders up. Please wear school appropriate clothes.
	Check the technology. Check the audio on your device to make sure your speakers are not turned off. You will be able to check the microphone when you get to the video conference program.
	Choose a quiet area. Try to find a place to set up your device where it is quiet with few distractions so you can engage in the conference. Try to keep other siblings and pets free from the conference.
	Check your lighting. Make sure you have front lighting so your teacher and classmates can see your face. A window in the background may create shadows on your face and others will not be able to see you.
	Check camera framing. Make sure that your face and shoulders are centered in the frame of the camera.
	Check your background. Make sure whatever is behind you, and visible to the camera, is simple and school appropriate.

During	
	Be on time. Click on the time when your teacher has scheduled the video conference. Actually, you may want to join a couple of minutes early, just to be safe!
	Be Ready. The program may ask you to do a few things after you click on the link. Some tools ask you to download a client or connect by browser. Use the browser option, if possible. It may ask to allow the microphone and camera, click on allow. If your teacher set up a waiting room, you will get a message that the host will open the meeting shortly. You can check the microphone and sound here to test before the conference.
	Troubleshoot. You may have some technology difficulties. Check the settings on the video conference interface. The video and microphone icons usually have settings close by. Also, use the chat function to communicate with your teacher/classmates. You may be able to get help from the chat.
	Listen for expectations. You will be muted when entering the room. This means that no one will be talking except your teacher. Your teacher will talk about the expectations and functions of the video conference tool. It will be awesome!
	Look at the camera. If you get a chance to talk, look into the camera on your device so your teacher and classmates feel like you are looking at them.

	**Follow directions.** It is important that all participants follow the directions of your teacher to avoid distractions. Help your teacher and classmates enjoy this limited time together!
	Say goodbye. The teacher will end the video conference. This will close the video conference window. Make sure you understand the assignment/action (if any) from the video conference.
After	
	Follow-up. The teacher may follow up with a survey or instructional materials. You certainly can connect with your teacher if you have feedback, questions or need clarification. We are all learning and want to hear your voice!

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Learning Analytics

Navigating the new era of online or hybrid learning means educators must also adjust to new ways of collecting and analyzing data. Some data sources may remain the same, such as assessment results and submitted assignment grades. However, additional sources should be considered, if appropriate. Such sources include the following.

- Learning Management System Data
  - Access to course content
  - Module/page visits
  - Use of teacher-provided web links
- Communication and interaction
  - Participation in forms, chat, email threads, and group assignments
  - Patterns of occurrences
  - Contents of communications

  - Communication Initiation
  - Communication Response
- Assessment of Learning
  - Tracking assignments
  - Self-assessment quizzes
  - Traditional grading for submitted work
- Student Feedback Survey
  - Course content
  - Content delivery
  - Course satisfaction
  - Accommodations/services provision
  - Access to teacher

Assessment of Online Learning

It is important to maintain high standards and expectations for all students in all academic settings, including the virtual learning environment. Just as in a brick-and-mortar setting, teachers must explicitly instruct and remind students that integrity of work is just as important online. The nature of online learning may make cheating and plagiarism easier and more tempting. Therefore, teachers and support staff should implement tools and strategies to support academic integrity, such as the following recommended strategies and practices.

- Enable teacher access to online curriculum and materials to make adjustments in case of infraction
- Use randomized question banks
- Include academic integrity orientation during student virtual on-boarding
- Use discussion-based assessments between teacher and student
- Provide synchronous instruction
- Virtually proctor exams in small groups
- Randomize exam distribution
- Arrange for an in-person proctor, such as a caregiver, service provider, interpreter, or school support staff, so long as it adheres to local social distancing guidelines

Free resources to help detect an infraction include the following.

- Grammarly
- DupliChecker
- Quetext
- EasyBib

In the event of an infraction, a teacher should:

- Compile evidence
- Notify parent and student of suspected violation
- Collaboratively build a plan to resolve the issue
- Provide options for the student
  - Resubmit work
  - Alternative assignment

Assessment of Online Teaching

Despite the shift from traditional brick-and-mortar instruction to online instruction, standards for instruction and professionalism should still be upheld and modeled. NSQ National Standards for Quality Online Teaching provides a comprehensive guide designed specifically for online teaching and provides the foundation for creating a rubric that would assess:

- Professional Responsibilities
- Digital Citizenship
- Digital Pedagogy
- Diverse Instruction
- Community Building
- Assessment and Measurement
- Learner Engagement
- Instructional Design

Parental Engagement

Do not forget that parental engagement is an integral component to the success of any student, particularly in a virtual learning environment. In the Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 3 and Parent Supports chapter, support for families, particularly those with young children, is discussed. One way to support parents is to hold consistent office hours or, if permitted, face-to-face meetings.

Office Hours

When in a virtual learning environment, teachers should provide a minimum of two hours of online office hours per day (when daily instructional time is 3-4 hours). During this time, teachers can respond to student and parent correspondence and provide additional support on a bi-weekly basis, via newsletters, mass or individual emails, website postings, and the like. Teachers should also consider offering brick- and-mortar office hours to allow for in-person service, meetings with parents, and IEP meetings in 90-minute segments. The remaining time of the teacher's contractual day, apart from instruction, could be spent on collaboration between general and special education teachers on pedagogical strategies, co-teaching models, lesson planning, grading, and other administrative duties including IEP meetings and drafting IEPs. Time could also be provided for teachers at grade or content level to plan and create online instructional activities so that teachers lacking in digital literacy skills have mentors and support. Consider organizing these teams with similar virtual office hours in case there needs to be coverage due to illness or other personal emergencies.

Face-to-Face Meetings

At the time a parent requests an in-person meeting to support their child (via phone or online) the Local Education Agency (LEA), school, or teacher should assess risk by asking and recording the responses to each of the following questions.

1. Has there been any travel within the last 14 days to an area identified as a hot spot?
2. Has there been any exposure to an individual diagnosed with COVID-19?
3. Is anyone in the home/family showing signs of illness including a fever greater than 100 degrees, a cough, or shortness of breath?

If the answer is "yes" to any of the questions, the meeting should be rescheduled for a later date or conducted virtually.

While conducting the face-to-face meeting or service:

- Reassess risk by asking the same questions at the time of arrival and before entering the home/clinic/location for the visit. If the answer to any question is yes, act as directed above.
- Don't shake hands or touch others when greeting or interacting.
- Wash your hands frequently or use hand sanitizer when soap and water isn't available.
- Limit unnecessary contact with surfaces/items and avoid shared use of tablets, laptops, writing utensils, and cell phones. Regularly wipe-down all items.
- Follow the current COVID-19 guidance to protect yourself and those with whom you come in contact.

Additional Evidence-Based Resources for Virtual Learning

What considerations have education systems across the world made when choosing a distance learning model?
[442 KB]
May 29, 2020 | FAQ | REL Pacific
Audience: school leaders, district leaders

Adapting Educator Professional Learning to a Virtual Environment
May 20, 2020 | Webinar | REL Pacific
Audience: teachers, school leaders, staff development coordinators

Dropout Prevention in the Time of COVID-19
May 11, 2020 | Blog | REL Appalachia and REL Northwest
Audience: secondary school leaders and counselors

Preventing Students from Dropping Out During COVID-19 School Closures
April 30, 2020 | Blog | REL West
Audience: school leaders

How are districts addressing student promotion and retention?
[394 KB]
April 24, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: school leaders, district leaders

Refining Your Distance Learning Strategies Using a Data-Driven Approach: The Evidence to Insights Coach
April 24, 2020 | Webinar | REL Mid-Atlantic
Audience: school leaders, district leaders, school boards, state leaders

Overcoming Challenges in K–12 Virtual Learning: Research Findings and Lessons from the Field
April 21, 2020 | Webinar | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

How can districts promote a safe and secure digital learning environment?
April 14, 2020 | FAQ | REL West
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Learning Remotely in the Age of COVID-19: Lessons from Evidence and Concerns for Equity
April 14, 2020 | Webinar | REL Mid-Atlantic
Audience: district leaders, school boards, state leaders

Distance Learning Resources for Education Stakeholders in the Northwest
April 13, 2020 | Resource roundup | REL Northwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

What guidance related to COVID-19 are states in the REL Northeast & Islands region providing?
[154 KB]
April 10, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: school leaders, district leaders

Digital learning for students and educators
[93 KB]
April 8, 2020 | Resource roundup | REL Appalachia
Audience: school leaders, district leaders, state leaders

Research-Based Resources, Considerations, and Strategies for Remote Learning
April 8, 2020 | Webinar | REL Midwest
Audience: teachers, instructional coaches, school leaders

During Challenging Times, How Can Schools Learn From Each Other?
April 2, 2020 | Blog | REL Mid-Atlantic
Audience: school leaders, district leaders

What are considerations and strategies for implementing continued learning during school closures?
[333 KB]
April 1, 2020 | FAQ | REL Central
Audience: school leaders, district leaders, state leaders

What does the literature/research suggest about the effect of unexpected school closures, such as natural disasters, on student achievement?
April 1, 2020 | Ask A REL response | REL Mid-Atlantic
Audience: school leaders, district leaders, state leaders

Quick Chat: Shifting Classroom Practices to a Virtual Environment
March 26, 2020 | Webinar | REL Midwest
Audience: teachers, instructional coaches, school leaders

Additional Evidence-Based Resources for Reopening Educational Programs

Personalizing Instruction to Address COVID-19 Learning Gaps
June 11, 2020 | Webinar | REL Central
Audience: teachers, principals, curriculum directors

Using Assessments to Identify and Address COVID-19 Learning Gaps
June 4, 2020 | Webinar | REL Central
Audience: district leaders, state leaders

Chapter 2: Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 3 and Parent Supports

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) position statement *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8* provides research evidence on the predictors of successful outcomes for children, informing educators on how to promote every child's optimal development and learning.

All the domains of children's development and learning interrelate; cognitive, social emotional, and physical. Careful attention to known learning sequences (in literacy, mathematics, science, physical education, and other domains) and emphasis on developing children's self-regulation, engagement, and focused attention are essential. Additional positive practices include relationship-based teaching and learning, partnering with families, adapting teaching for individual children; active, meaningful, and connected learning, and smaller class sizes.

Outcome Guidelines for Early Learning

The following guidelines reflect the belief that in early childhood, education should address the intellectual, social emotional, and physical development of children. It is important to create a learning environment that fosters development of many aspects of a child. By nurturing development in these interrelated human domains, children will discover varied and exciting talents and dreams. They will be socially and civically competent and able to express themselves effectively.

The outcomes identified here may provide a direction for general learning experiences, management, culture, environment, and inclusion. These outcomes may be interwoven in standards.

1. Demonstrate a positive learning attitude:
    - Display a sense of curiosity.
    - Practice personal responsibility for learning.
    - Demonstrate persistence in completing tasks.
    - Apply prior knowledge and processes to construct new knowledge.
    - Voluntarily use a variety of resources to investigate topics of interest.

2. Develop social skills and ethical responsibility:
    - Respect similarities and differences in others.
    - Treat others with kindness and fairness.
    - Follow rules.
    - Include others in learning and play activities.
    - Function positively as a member of a family, learning group, school, and community.
    - Initiate and respond to social interactions with peers and adults.
3. Demonstrate responsible emotional behaviors:
    - Recognize own values, talents, and skills.
    - Express self in positive ways.
    - Demonstrate behavior appropriate to the situation.
    - Express feelings appropriately.
    - Meet and respect needs of self and others.
4. Develop physical skills and personal hygiene:
    - Learn proper care of the body for health and fitness.
    - Develop knowledge that enhances participation in physical activities and healthy food choices.
    - Display persistence in learning motor skills and developing fitness.
    - Use physical activity for self-expression.
5. Understand and use basic concepts and skills:
    - Develop phonological and phonemic awareness.
    - Develop expressive and receptive vocabulary.
    - Develop reasoning and sequencing skills.
    - Demonstrate problem-solving skills.
    - Observe, sort, and classify objects.
    - Make connections from content areas to application in real life.

Reopening Guidelines

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the NAEYC have provided updated guidance for the reopening of Pre-K programs and K-12 schools. Although stating that the guidance does not supersede applicable federal, state, and local laws and policies for child care programs, it is valuable information. The recommended guidance and checklists for educators and parents can be found at

- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#ScreenChildren
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/checklist.html
- https://www.naeyc.org/resources/topics/covid-19

The *CDC Guiding Principles* for school settings to decrease the spread of COVID-19 state that the more people a student or staff member interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in school settings as follows:

- **Lowest Risk:** Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events.
- **More Risk:** Small, in-person classes, activities, and events. Groups of students stay together and with the same teacher throughout/across school days and groups do not mix. Students remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects (e.g., hybrid virtual and in-person class structures, or staggered/rotated scheduling to accommodate smaller class sizes).
- **Highest Risk:** Full sized, in-person classes, activities, and events. Students are not spaced apart, share classroom materials or supplies, and mix between classes and activities.

Furthermore, when considering the reopening of schools, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) stated that for schools to safely reopen, there needs to be better testing and tracking for the virus, and schools will need access to personal protective equipment (PPE).

Considering the CDC Guiding Principles for setting up schools for lowest risk, the National P-3 Center, www.nationalp-3center.org, focused on two fundamentals to guide work across

the Pre-K-3rd grade continuum: child development and equity, and "at-home" teaching and learning in Pre-K-3rd grade.

The following documented suggestions from the National P-3 Center may prove valuable to education leadership, school administrators, teachers and families.

Fundamental #1: Lean on Child Development

The National P-3 Center stated that Pre-K-3rd grade children are in a unique developmental stage and the kinds of opportunities and environments that support their learning will not change during a pandemic. It may be helpful for educators to remember the following key principles from child development.

Focus on Relationships and Social Emotional Development

Relationships are particularly important to children in the primary grades. Children flourish when they feel supported, safe, and have close emotional attachments to adults who are important in their lives. Relationships are important and the most important use for technology should be to encourage interactions between children and adults, and among children.

Strategies for Pre-K-3rd Grade Administrators and Teachers

- Encourage active (instead of passive) use of technology at home. This can be done by providing families with suggestions such as:
  - Talking to their child about the online content before the child engages, and suggest things to watch for or pay attention to;
  - Viewing content and interacting with their child in the moment (e.g., asking children to tell you what this means in their own words, why they think it is important, predict what might happen next when reading or watching);
  - Helping children learn more about the content by connecting it to things they already know, things he or she is interested in and to things in the outside world. Engage children in drawing pictures about the content.
- Chat either by phone or video with 2-3 students each day. Use this time to engage in conversation; check in on what they are doing and how they are feeling; and to provide personal, specific feedback to students on assignments or work products.
- Encourage students to send you photos of what they have been doing at home.
- Use technology to engage students with one another; either do a "whole class" meeting once a week, pair up students to check in with one another, and assign collaborative,

small group work that will require children to be in virtual touch, but not close physical contact, with one another. This can occur through video chats, phone conversations, and old-fashioned letter writing.

- Encourage activities that promote "helping" behaviors. This could mean encouraging creative ways for children to help with household chores; drawing pictures, taking photos, or writing jokes or letters to send to friends and relatives.
- Scaffold ways for children to talk about their emotions and mental states. This could mean encouraging discussion about books or movies or other assignments that include prompts such as, "How do you think that made that character feel?" "How would you feel if that happened to you?"
- Create online office hours a few times a week and at different times of the day (morning, afternoon, evening) to be available for students if they have questions or need support.

Emphasize Active, Experiential Learning

Children, Pre-K-3rd, learn best when they are active and engaged. Learning should be creative, experiential, and keep children in motion. Physical activity is essential for children's concentration, learning, and interactions with others. Equally important is to limit the amount of passive screen time.

Strategies for Pre-K-3rd Grade Administrators and Teachers

- Create and assign experiences that last an hour or stretch over a multi-day period that get children to touch, move, listen, explore, and engage.
- Don't stress about direct instruction in specific subject areas. During the early grades, children are increasing mastery in every area of their development and learning by reading, writing, exploring, problem-solving, and undertaking experiments every day.
- Focus on integrated learning that sparks children's natural curiosity and investigation. Children during this age range learn best when experiences are integrated and experiential. Suggested assignments might include:
  - Take daily walks around the neighborhood to document the changing environment. Get children to draw (or photograph) the changes they're seeing.
  - Encourage imaginative and dramatic play; i.e., ask children to design and create their own grocery store or classroom or other culturally relevant place.
  - Let children build and create with blocks, cardboard boxes, and not-too-heavy furniture.

- Suggest a variety of schedules and options to families so they can best structure their day. Emphasize active learning experiences more than adherence to rigid daily schedules. Children's time at home is not going to look like or be structured like their "regular" school days.

Fundamental #2: Keep Equity Front-and-Center

The National P-3 Center states that young children are particularly vulnerable to issues of inequity and cited the following from the Center on the Developing Child, 2020.

> "For the millions of parents who were already struggling with low-wage work, lack of affordable child care, and meeting their family's basic needs from paycheck to paycheck, the stresses are increasing exponentially. When unstable housing, food insecurity, social isolation, limited access to medical care, the burdens of racism, and fears related to immigration status are added, the toxic overload of adversities can also lead to increasing rates of substance abuse, family violence, and untreated mental health problems."

Therefore, the National P-3 Center emphasizes that there is a need to be attentive and responsive to the diversity of family contexts.

Recognize Families' Variable Access to E-Learning Options

Families have different access to internet connectivity and to mobile devices, and in some cases, no available devices. In other cases, families may be sharing one device among multiple children, so support for at-home learning may differ greatly from student to student.

Strategies for Pre-K-3rd Grade Teachers

- Be mindful and realistic with your expectations for how and when students complete assignments that require access to online resources. Keep schedules very flexible and provide students with the option to complete assignments across a week's time rather than daily.
- Keep lessons/activities for students to 25 –30-minute chunks of time. Be mindful that if families have multiple children and possibly one device, they will need to coordinate online class time.
- Many parents and caregivers are still working and juggling "at-home learning" with their own work schedules and space. Be thoughtful as this may influence whether students can get online and have access to technology.

- Offer paper packets for students and families who do not have access to technology by allowing them to pick up packets in designated locations within the community.

Strategies for Pre-K-3rd Grade Administrators

- Repurpose school buses as Wi-Fi Hotspots. Park them in neighborhoods that lack broadband access. https://tech.ed.gov/stories/when-bus-rides-become-hotspots/
- School devices could be deployed to parents who don't have devices at home by creating a lending library system.

Provide Supports to Families Experiencing Stress

Schools often serve as a hub for families and may provide access to resources related to emergency child care, health care, mental health support, housing/homelessness, and domestic violence. The National P-3 Center recommends the following to support families experiencing stress.

Strategies for Pre-K-3rd Grade Administrators and Teachers

- Expand and extend programs and strategies that were put in place during summer breaks.
- Engage student support staff (e.g., school psychologists, counselors, interventionists, para-professionals) to contact and support students and families who are not engaged in remote learning experiences.
- Provide school mental health staff to check-in and support students and families in need of assistance.
- Keep the State Education Agency (SEA), LEA and school websites up-to-date with links to additional resources in the community.
- Conduct virtual meetings with families that have e-learning access. Use these conversations to ask them what kinds of support would be most helpful.

Additional Resources for Ages 0-5 Early Care and Education (ECE) Programs:

Child Care Aware Resources (good ones for providers and parents):
https://info.childcareaware.org/coronavirus-updates

Head Start Resources https://www.nhsa.org/coronavirus/resources-1

Zero to Three Resources:
https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/3210-tips-for-familiescoronavirus

Additional School Supports for Parents

As schools adjust to the "new normal" in light of the challenges that continue to impact the teaching and learning process, it is not easy for parents and caregivers. School officials should encourage parents to support their child's learning, which includes ensuring that parents and families know what "support learning" actually means and what is expected of them. This can easily be done with a little planning and providing a few helpful resources.

The following are evidence-based practices for parents to support their child's learning in the school setting or at home.

Create a time and space for the child to learn

- Create a learning space
- Set a routine

Create a plan to manage behavior

- Encourage the child to learn and to do any work that is assigned
- Stay in contact with the child's teacher or school
- Support learning opportunities provided by the school
- Create learning opportunities for the child if they are not provided by the school
- Support the child in reading if he or she is struggling
- Support the child in math if he or she is struggling
- Answer the child's questions or provide help when needed

Support the child socially and emotionally

- Reduce the child's stress
- Help the child stay connected to friends and family
- Encourage the child to be active and have fun

Support the child with a disability

- Keep in contact with the child's school
- Support the child's individualized learning needs at home

Additional Evidence-Based Resources for Early Learning

Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home: Second Grade
May 26, 2020 | Videos and activities | REL Southeast
Audience: families, caregivers

Teaching Math to Young Children for Families and Caregivers
May 20, 2020 | Videos and activities | REL Central, REL Appalachia, and REL Northwest
Audience: families, caregivers

Three ways early childhood educators can support young children and their caregivers during the COVID-19 health crisis
May 13, 2020 | Blog | REL Midwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders

Supporting Families in Promoting Early Learning at Home
May 13, 2020 | Webinar | REL Southwest
Audience: families, teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Teaching Young Learners in a Pandemic: Supporting Children Pre-K–Grade 3 and Their Learning Partners at Home
May 6, 2020 | Webinar | REL Mid-Atlantic
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders, state leaders

Family Resources for Supporting Children's Reading at Home
April 30, 2020 | Blog | REL Southeast
Audience: families, caregivers

Where can teachers, caregivers, and parents find free digital resources to support early math learning?
April 23, 2020 | FAQ | REL West
Audience: families, caregivers, teachers

Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home: First Grade
April 17, 2020 | Videos and activities | REL Southeast
Audience: families, caregivers

Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home: Kindergarten
April 7, 2020 | Videos and activities | REL Southeast
Audience: families, caregivers

What are developmentally appropriate ways to use technology and media with young children? [187 KB]
April 3, 2020 | FAQ | REL Central
Audience: families, caregivers, teachers

Additional Evidence-Based Resources for Parental Support

How Can I Help My Teen With Their Reading Skills in Different Subjects? [157 KB]
June 1, 2020 | Infographic | REL Pacific
Audience: families, caregivers

Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home: Second Grade
May 26, 2020 | Videos and activities | REL Southeast
Audience: families, caregivers

Teaching Math to Young Children for Families and Caregivers
May 20, 2020 | Videos and activities | REL Central, REL Appalachia, and REL Northwest
Audience: families, caregivers

Three ways early childhood educators can support young children and their caregivers during the COVID-19 health crisis
May 13, 2020 | Blog | REL Midwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders

Supporting Families in Promoting Early Learning at Home
May 13, 2020 | Webinar | REL Southwest
Audience: families, teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Engaging Parents and Students from Diverse Populations in the Context of Distance Learning
May 11, 2020 | Webinar | REL West
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Teaching Young Learners in a Pandemic: Supporting Children Pre-K–Grade 3 and Their Learning Partners at Home
May 6, 2020 | Webinar | REL Mid-Atlantic
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders, state leaders

Family Resources for Supporting Children's Reading at Home
April 30, 2020 | Blog | REL Southeast
Audience: families, caregivers

How are districts communicating with families about student progress?
[392 KB]
April 24, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: families, teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Where can teachers, caregivers, and parents find free digital resources to support early math learning?
April 23, 2020 | FAQ | REL West
Audience: families, caregivers, teachers

How can educators engage families in at-home learning and provide support to them during these challenging times?
April 17, 2020 | FAQ | REL West
Audience: families, teachers, school leaders

Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home: First Grade
April 17, 2020 | Videos and activities | REL Southeast
Audience: families, caregivers

How are districts engaging parents and families to support student learning?
[180 KB]
April 10, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: families, school leaders, district leaders

Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home: Kindergarten
April 7, 2020 | Videos and activities | REL Southeast
Audience: families, caregivers

Additional Evidence-Based Resources for Equitable Learning Opportunities

What considerations have education systems across the world made when choosing a distance learning model?
[442 KB]
May 29, 2020 | FAQ | REL Pacific
Audience: school leaders, district leaders

Key Considerations for Promoting Culturally Relevant SEL During COVID-19
May 19, 2020 | Blog | REL Pacific
Audience: teachers, school leaders

Engaging Parents and Students from Diverse Populations in the Context of Distance Learning
May 11, 2020 | Webinar | REL West
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Using Culturally Responsive Practices to Foster Learning During School Closures: Challenges and Opportunities for Equity
April 23, 2020 | Blog | REL Mid-Atlantic
Audience: teachers, school leaders

Strategies to Support Learning Along a Continuum of Internet Access
[360 KB]
April 16, 2020 | Fact sheet | REL Central
Audience: school leaders, district leaders

Strategies to Support Remote Learning Along a Continuum of Internet Access
April 16, 2020 | Webinar | REL Central
Audience: school leaders, district leaders, school boards, state leaders

Learning Remotely in the Age of COVID-19: Lessons from Evidence and Concerns for Equity
April 14, 2020 | Webinar | REL Mid-Atlantic
Audience: district leaders, school boards, state leaders

Distance Learning Resources for Education Stakeholders in the Northwest
April 13, 2020 | Resource roundup | REL Northwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

How can districts support families' access to technology during school closures?
[294 KB]
March 25, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: district leaders

How are districts providing meals for students who typically qualify for Free and Reduced Lunches?
[214 KB]
March 25, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: district leaders

Chapter 3: English Learners and Spanish Learners

Best Practices to Support English Learners and Spanish Learners

School represents a transition time for all children. We expect them to enter a system with structured expectations for learning and instruction that may not match any of their previous experiences. For some students, school represents their first formal educational experience. Many of the programs in place to ease this transition may not be possible due to the present challenges. State and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) should strive to find ways to collectively prepare English learners (ELs) and Spanish learners (SLs) and their families for success. It is important that LEAs work with all educators to ensure they are using evidence-based practices to deliver instruction and provide supports. The following tips, strategies and activities can help schools support ELs and SLs language development.

1. **Get to know your tools**

LEAs should keep in mind that:

- the focus should be on how the tools can best support teaching and learning goals rather than on the tools themselves
- it is best not to introduce too many new tools - otherwise students will spend their time learning the tools rather than learning the content
- the district may have a list of approved and vetted platforms for home and virtual learning

2. **Establish a structured virtual learning environment (if needed/available)**

This is a lot like arranging a classroom at the beginning of the year without the inspiring posters. Decide what tools students need to use regularly (only pick a few) and set up a dashboard or learning activity page. For example:

- post a calendar with assignments
- post announcements
- engage students on the discussion board
- use a chat room
- record a video greeting
- assign two readings

- connect with a partner
- write or record (audio or video) a short discussion of your take-aways from the learning, etc.

3. Emphasize language production

Remember to keep the focus on academic learning and to avoid providing only skills-based activities, even if your primary activity is content review. If students are isolated in their homes, exposure to the new language is limited. While this is a valuable time for students to deepen their native language skills with family members, it is critical that teachers build in activities that support the student's new language development.

4. Scaffold supports

Differentiate instruction and activities to accommodate different language proficiency levels for ELs and SLs. For beginning level ELs or SLs, the educator should analyze the instruction, readings, and activities to provide accommodations such as:

- native language or simple English/Spanish explanations through video
- more visuals
- native language or leveled English/Spanish text
- an activity completed in a small group rather than independently.

Pairs and groups can be assigned in online learning platforms and it can be helpful for students to collaborate on learning just like in the classroom. Online learning does not mean everything has to be done in isolation - many young people connect with each other through electronic platforms and this is no different.

5. Get creative

It is important to keep a sense of fun and personalization in the online environment. Students like it when teachers share little personal stories or pictures. Give students choices of how to demonstrate their learning by engaging in creative projects and sharing them online. Their classmates can respond on each slide with a text or verbal response. It is also a good opportunity for a project presentation video or graphic design/artwork assignment.

6. Look for ways to support Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Look for ways to help provide positive encouragement, continue building relationships, and offer support during a time of anxiety and stress. This is especially important for students who may have experienced trauma and a lot of upheaval or students with

interrupted education. More information on supporting SEL is included in the Students with Disabilities chapter below.

7. Virtual "office hours"

As mentioned in the Virtual Learning chapter, offering office hours is a good way for teachers to be available for families, students and colleagues. It requires setting aside time within the teaching hours. Teachers can choose the time and frequency of their availability. The recommended time is a minimum of two hours, which could also be split into chunks. Office hours can be comprised of answering emails, making calls, and having Google Meet sessions.

Additional Classroom Strategies

Though ELs and SLs do not learn differently than their native speaking peers, they do have particular educational needs. Emphasized below are best practices for addressing both big-picture mindsets and teaching tactics that can be incorporated into all classrooms, benefiting both native speakers and ELs/SLs.

1. Cultivate Relationships and Be Culturally Responsive

A successful classroom is one in which students feel known, appreciated, and comfortable taking emotional and intellectual risks. This requires intentional planning and consistent messaging by the teacher. Creating a supportive environment is also about cultivating an appreciation of diversity—it is critical that both the curriculum and the classroom environment honor and reflect the lives of the students.

2. Teach Language Skills Across the Curriculum

ELs and SLs should not be learning the fundamentals of English/Spanish in isolation; they should be applying their developing language skills to rich academic content in all subjects.

3. Emphasize Productive Language

Productive language skills—hard-to-master dimensions of language fluency like speaking and writing—should be front and center from day one, even if students feel hesitant about them.

4. Speak Slowly and Increase Wait Time

Add an extra three to five seconds after posing a question offers all students time to think. This also gives ELs and SLs time to translate, process their thinking, and develop the courage to answer.

5. Differentiate and Use Multiple Modalities

All children learn better when they engage with material in multiple ways. Lessons that involve writing, speaking, drawing, and listening give students the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the work. For ELs/SLs, those additional engagements also provide a little breathing room so they can work through the language barrier.

COVID 19 Supports for Schools

The National P-3 Center recommends that the SEA, LEAs and schools provide supports to meet the needs of the ELs/SLs and their families.

Strategies for EL/SL Administrators and Teachers

- Use EL/SL instructors, family liaisons, or even school-community partners to reach out early and often to ELs/SLs and their families.
- Provide all essential information regarding COVID-19 to families in their native language (e.g., phone calls, texts, website, newsletters).
- Ensure that students and families are provided with visuals, videos, etc. on prevention steps like hand washing, what to do if sick, and social distancing guidelines.

The U.S. Department of Education and many of the programs that make up the federal network of support are curating resources to support educators across the country as they respond to COVID-19. Here are a few collections to bookmark:

- Innovative Resources for Instructional Success Center: Parents: Supporting Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Comprehensive Center Network: Resources for Continuity of Learning
- Regional Educational Laboratories: https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/covid-19/
- What Works Clearinghouse: Studies of Distance Learning
- U.S. Department of Education: COVID-19 Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel

Additional Online Resources

- Colorin Colorado website: https://www.colorincolorado.org/coronavirus-ell
- California Dept. of Ed K-12 resources: https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/distancelearning.asp

- Resources to support Dual Language Learners: https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/dlel20200514.asp
- Lessons learned from the field: https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/appendix2.asp

Additional Evidence-Based Resources for ELs and SLs

Adapting Instruction for English Learner Students During Distance Learning
May 5, 2020 | Webinar | REL Southwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Guidance for navigating remote learning for English learner students
April 17, 2020 | Blog | REL Midwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders

Distance Learning Resources for Education Stakeholders in the Northwest
April 13, 2020 | Resource roundup | REL Northwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Supporting Educators in Implementing Reading Across the Content Areas
April 13, 2020 | Webinar | REL Pacific
Audience: school leaders, district leaders, state leaders, community college staff

What are some specific practices used to support English learner students and their families?
[183 KB]
April 10, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: families, teachers

How can educators provide high-quality instruction to English learners in an online environment?
[294 KB]
March 25, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Chapter 4: Students with Disabilities

Parental Support

Parental engagement is an integral component to the success of any student, particularly students with disabilities who require additional support. Regardless of the academic setting, students with disabilities maintain their rights to equitable access to instruction. As such, given the unique circumstances of the COVID-19 crisis, it is imperative to work with parents and communities to support students enrolled in the special education program. In a virtual or hybrid learning environment, monitoring virtual learning for students with disabilities includes ensuring that parents are continually engaged and supported. Additional suggestions for engaging parents are included in the Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 3 and Parent Supports chapter.

Delivery of Services

The SEA and LEAs should fully support teachers in building their instructional capacity to provide evidence-based strategies and practices virtually, and in person, to ensure that students with disabilities have the same opportunity as general education students. Instructional tips to virtually support students with disabilities include the following.

- Pre-record videos with close captioning
- Provide transcripts of podcasts, interviews, and sound-bites prior to lesson
- Chunk information
- Use the read-back features on Microsoft Word when sharing screen
- Adjust font sizes
- Adjust color contrast from white background and black text to slightly tinted background and black text
- Decrease workload; it takes longer to complete work online
- Decrease amount of content delivered; choose 1–2 standards
- Establish daily objectives/checklist
- Teachers should offer virtual office hours
- Teachers should offer brick-and-mortar office hours to provide services in person with individual students, so long as it adheres to local guidelines

Providing Enrichment and Support for Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Enrichment courses may be elective courses or depending on the individual student's needs, transitioning support, or other programming options that support and comply with the students' Individual Education Plan (IEP).

Enrichment may also include providing direct and indirect Social Emotional Learning (SEL) support to students. SEL is particularly important in the age of COVID-19 recovery and the trauma that it has incurred. School for students with disabilities, and other vulnerable students, may continue to transition from largely traditional in-person instruction with direct contact with educators, to indirect contact via online platforms, or a combination of the two. Research over the last decade has indicated that student screen time can have an adverse effect on cognition and social emotional response. So it is particularly important to keep this in mind when designing instruction for students with disabilities. While virtual learning may afford some students the ability to share their voice more readily and openly, it may also harm the ability of some students, particularly those with autism, to discern human emotion over an online platform. Therefore, it is extremely important to integrate SEL into daily instruction.

Direct SEL instruction will entail prioritizing the most critical academic, career, and social emotional lessons for the highest risk students via online platforms. Skills should be assessed and developed in the following areas (aligned with the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) recommendations):

- Self-Awareness – Demonstrate and recognize awareness and labeling of emotions
- Self-Management – Use verbal and non-verbal language to demonstrate and express emotions, and display and manage emotions
- Focus Attention – Demonstrate focused attention for longer periods of time and tolerate distractions
- Social Awareness – Recognize, identify feelings of others
- Relationship Skills – Adapt behavior, demonstrate listening and communicative skills
- Decision Making – Demonstrate, describe, and honor social norms

The Wisconsin Social and Emotional Learning Competency Crosswalk with Information and Technology Literacy (ITL) Standards provides a robust rubric to track student SEL progress across the elementary grades. It also provides a rich source of data to share at IEP meetings and with parents during regular check-ins.

Other Services to Consider

- SEA or LEA staff should consider visiting schools on certain days to provide services to individuals and/or small groups, if applicable
- Use LEA or school facilities to provide online services and telehealth services
- Consistently maintain professional standards of licensure, ethics, and business
- Ensure collaboration among general education and special education teachers and parents
- Virtual or in-person IEP meetings, as applicable
- Coordinate with parents and the IEP team to coordinate evaluations/reevaluations
  - Evaluations that can be administered virtually are encouraged
  - Evaluations that must be administered in-person are to be done so in accordance with local health guidelines, and district/school building visitation guidelines
- Meet with students and parents at a facility that accommodates providing services

Given the need to comply with the Family Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as well as to protect the privacy of students and teachers in a possible virtual learning environment, teachers, service providers, and administrators may request that a caregiver join the virtual one-on-one session. If a caregiver is not available, the one-on-one session may be observed by a sibling, mentor, or coach, or may be recorded. When recording a session, note that audio and video recordings maintained by the school will contain information directly relating to the student and could be considered educational records under FERPA. Schools should ensure student privacy accordingly.

IEP Monitoring

Special education teams coordinate IEP meetings with parents and service providers. According to local guidelines, special education teams may meet at the child's school in person or team members and parents can meet virtually via phone or an online platform, such as Microsoft Teams or Zoom. In either case, teams should adhere to and model the appropriate protocols. If IEP teams meet virtually, it is recommended that the team gets the parents' consent in writing via email or hard copy. Otherwise, the same standards, regulations, and practices set forth in federal law, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and state law, (e.g., Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act [IDEIA]), apply to IEP meeting protocols.

In order to appropriately draft the IEP, special education teams should review:

1. The current level of performance data as of the 3rd quarter of the previous school year
2. 4th quarter data including but not limited to:
    - Virtual attendance, participation, log-in
    - Work submission
    - Assessment
    - Online behavioral observations
    - Observed social-emotional response to trauma
3. Parental observations
4. Service provider data, if applicable

Based on this data, the special education team may begin drafting the IEP. The IEP team should assess the need for new services and supports that were not previously provided to assist with successfully reentering the school environment. The analysis should focus on determining what additional services are required to lessen the impact of school closures so the student can continue to make appropriate progress, given the student's unique circumstances. Such additional services may include efforts to close regression gaps and accelerate progress.

The IEP team should also gauge the amount of review and other activities that will be provided to all students to address the loss of instructional time. Consideration of Response to Intervention (RTI) or Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) data will be vital in making these determinations. A reevaluation might also be warranted if the IEP team or parent has data that indicates that the student's disability-related needs have changed due to the extended school closure.

Making the determination of what additional services are required should be made as soon as possible through a phased-in model - prioritizing the highest needs students - over a six-month period.

> Phase 1 – Make determinations, within two months, and complete IEP drafts for the highest risk students, students with complex or intensive needs, those who did not receive special education services or were unable to access the services provided, and students with newly identified needs.
>
> Phase 2 - IEPs will be drafted and implemented during the second two-month phase for students with less complex or intense needs or are considered to have minimal or inconsistent access to services.

Phase 3 - Finally, over the next two months, IEPs will be drafted and implemented for the remaining students who received special education services but did not make anticipated gains.

All three phases should be implemented no later than the first six months of the 2020-2021 school year. Additional services should be documented in the program summary of the student's IEP and include a description of the service, frequency, amount, location, and duration. IEP teams should also maintain documentation as to why timelines for eligibility determination were delayed and evaluations were not conducted due to school closures.

While using a video platform (such as Microsoft Teams or Skype) the screen should be shared and described in detail so that all participants can understand and interpret the data. Special education personnel should provide further data interpretation support for parents as needed, including sending them hard or email copies of materials.

LEAs or schools may elect to permit electronic or digital signatures. Electronic or digital signatures include, but are not limited to:

- DocuSign
- Adobe Sign
- HelloSign
- Email from parent giving consent to the proposed action taken on the IEP, so long as their legal name is printed

Considerations for providing consent with an electronic signature include:

1. The document identifies a particular person as the source of the electronic consent
2. The document authenticates a particular person as the source of the consent
3. The document indicates a person's approval of the information is contained within the electronic consent.

To meet item one, the document must include a statement identifying the person providing the signature. For example, the document could include a statement such as: "I (name of parent) am the parent / guardian of (name of student), and I consent to: _____."

To meet item two, there must also be something to authenticate that the person sending the signature electronically is the person named in the document. That could be accomplished by requiring that a parent respond to the request for consent using their own email address (where the consent form was sent). Or, the LEA or school could send the request for consent to the parent electronically and protect it with a password known only to the sender and the parent.

The fact that the parent is able to open the request for consent and send a response is reliable evidence that it is the named parent who is responding. The third item would apply to any request for consent, whether hand-written or electronic. The document should describe the action for which consent is being requested and include a statement that the parent's signature means the parent is consenting to that action.

Additional Evidence-Based Resources to Support Social Emotional Learning

Key Considerations for Promoting Culturally Relevant SEL During COVID-19
May 19, 2020 | Blog | REL Pacific
Audience: teachers, school leaders

Strategies for Districts to Support Self-Care for Educators During the COVID-19 Pandemic
April 29, 2020 | Webinar | REL West
Audience: district leaders

Distance Learning Resources for Education Stakeholders in the Northwest
April 13, 2020 | Resource roundup | REL Northwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Research-Based Resources, Considerations, and Strategies for Remote Learning
April 8, 2020 | Webinar | REL Midwest
Audience: teachers, instructional coaches, school leaders

How can educators and families support students' mental health and social emotional needs?
[218 KB]
March 25, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: families, caregivers, teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Additional Evidence-Based Resources to Support Students with Disabilities

How Education Leaders Can Support Students with Autism During School Closures
May 10, 2020 | Blog | REL Northwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Plan and deliver: Educating students with disabilities in remote settings
April 22, 2020 | Blog | REL Midwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders

Distance Learning Resources for Education Stakeholders in the Northwest
April 13, 2020 | Resource roundup | REL Northwest
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

Supporting Educators in Implementing Reading Across the Content Areas
April 13, 2020 | Webinar | REL Pacific
Audience: school leaders, district leaders, state leaders, community college staff

How can educators make online instruction accessible to students with disabilities?
[200 KB]
April 1, 2020 | FAQ | REL Central
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

What are some methods of providing online instructional support for students with disabilities?
[181 KB]
March 25, 2020 | FAQ | REL Northeast & Islands
Audience: teachers, school leaders, district leaders

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