



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING


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MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

## **MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** March 18, 2020

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

**FROM:** Venessa A. Keesler, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent   
Division of Educator, Student, and School Supports

**SUBJECT:** Guidance on Transition to Online Learning: Considerations and Technical Readiness

Due to recent events, many districts have inquired about options for providing online instruction during the mandatory school closure. Districts should be aware of the considerable thought and planning that must occur prior to fully transitioning traditional instruction to online delivery. Understanding that districts want to ensure continuity of learning to the extent possible, proper planning is critical to providing an equitable, quality learning experience for all students.

This memo is intended to provide a series of questions to pursue before predominant transitioning to online learning, as well as to provide a resource for technical considerations. Please note: this memo pertains to online learning when delivered to students as a full substitute for normal instructional delivery methods. It is not specifically about the supports that districts and schools are providing to students at the present time as supplemental learning in a time of closure. The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is preparing additional resources to support supplemental online learning and will release them shortly.

Questions to ask before pursuing online learning:

- Do **all** students have access to appropriate learning devices?
- Do **all** students have access to the internet?
- Can the district successfully support the needs of **all** learners, including students with Individualized Educational Programs (IEP), students with a 504 plan, English learners (EL), and other students who may need accommodations?
- Have educators previously participated in professional learning opportunities that prepared them to transition teaching and learning online successfully?

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- Have students had enough prior exposure to blended or online learning to be successful?
- Does the district have online tools available to effectively support instruction (i.e., a learning management system)?

Only those districts and schools that can ensure that **all** students have equitable access to quality learning opportunities should pursue a full transition to online learning.

### **Technical Readiness**

MDE has created the document, [Technical Readiness and Considerations for Online Learning](#), that includes more detailed technical considerations for online learning. The document is broken into five key consideration areas:

- 1) Infrastructure
- 2) Teaching and Learning
- 3) Accountability
- 4) Communication
- 5) Planning

The [Technical Readiness and Considerations for Online Learning](#) document also contains links to resources for more information and planning. Districts choosing to transition to online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak must continue to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to students with disabilities. Schools must ensure that, to the greatest extent possible, each student with a disability can be provided the special education and related services identified in the student's IEP developed under IDEA, or a plan developed under Section 504. For additional information on providing services to children with disabilities during the COVID-19 outbreak, see this [guidance](#) from the United States Department of Education.

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) at the U.S. Department of Education has released a webinar <https://youtu.be/DCMLk4cES6A> on ensuring web accessibility for students with disabilities for schools utilizing online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. This federal guidance will assist education leaders in making distance learning accessible to students with disabilities and in preventing discrimination during this Administration-wide response effort.

MDE will be providing additional communication regarding resources that can be shared with parents for additional practice in a home setting. For questions, please contact Ann-Marie Mapes, [mapesa@michigan.gov](mailto:mapesa@michigan.gov), 517-335-2775. Questions specific to special education should be addressed to [mde-ose@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-ose@michigan.gov), 517-241-7075.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance