

Technical Readiness and Considerations for Online Learning

When a traditional school setting moves to online learning, many considerations must be considered to ensure equitable access and high-quality instruction. Considerable thought and planning should take place prior to an online transition. While districts want to ensure continuity of learning, without proper planning and implementation, inequities may arise.

District considerations:

Infrastructure

- Do all students have access to necessary learning materials and devices – devices should be laptops, computers, or tablets, but access to a cell phone should not be considered adequate (this includes internet access in the home)?
 - Do any students reside in areas that lack internet access?
 - Does the district provide hotspots to students who do not have access in the home but reside in areas that have internet access?
 - Does the district collect family data on home internet access? If so, how recently was the data collected?
 - If the district does not have data on home internet access, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) recommends that a district conduct a parent/guardian survey to ensure that all students have access.
 - For those students who lack access, the district should explore provision of hotspots for student use through companies such as Kajeet or Mobile Beacon.
 - For those students who reside in areas that lack internet, what are some potential solutions so that those students have equitable access to learning?
- Do staff have access to technology and internet access in the home?
 - Devices and internet access
 - If staff lack internet access, what are district plans to provide it?
- Can the district network handle the increased inbound/outbound traffic?
- Do any adjustments to security protocols need to be made?
- Can the district ensure systems in use are secure and will not allow for the release of protected student or staff information?

Teaching and Learning

- Does the district have a Learning Management System (LMS) to effectively support instruction?

- Can the LMS support the district’s various learning and teaching needs, including differentiated instruction and interventions?
- Can the LMS and the virtual learning environment provide supports identified on a student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 plan? For more information about supporting students with IEPs or who need accommodations, see this [guidance](#) from Michigan Virtual.
 - Do English language learners (ELL) have support? Do they have access to information regarding the LMS and content in multiple formats?
- Have students engaged in blended or online learning experiences before the transition? If not previously exposed to a digital learning environment, district needs to consider likelihood of student success.
- How are students given opportunities to demonstrate mastery of the content? Are they provided options and choices so that they can show mastery in the way that best fits their learning style?
- Has the district trained staff on use of LMS and in online pedagogy?
 - Quality virtual learning relies on technology tools that enhance learning. Learning experiences may need to be carefully modified to ensure meaningful engagement online.

Accountability

- How will the district track virtual attendance? Students, parents and guardians must be aware of how attendance will be tracked. Attendance can be tracked in multiple ways, including but not limited to:
 - Sign-ins to LMS
 - Sending/receiving emails
 - Viewing who is in attendance during a live video session or online chat
 - Uploads of images or videos documenting student learning

Communication

- How has the district involved parents, guardians, teachers, and students in the planning for digital learning and subsequent communication regarding digital learning expectations?
 - Parent/guardian responsibilities for creating a learning space and schedule
 - Identify a space in the home that is dedicated to learning and free from distractions (an easy place for this is a kitchen table or desk, away from television and toys). Lighting should be adequate. Create a learning schedule and build in breaks and time for lunch. Daily routines are important. If parents/guardians have questions about schedules, teachers should be ready to help. Make sure that students have access to all learning materials including, textbooks, paper, writing

- utensils, calculators, etc., and a phone or device for taking pictures or recording videos of student learning evidence.
- Elementary students and others may need additional parental and guardian supports, including checking email messages or LMS for communication. Again, parents and guardians need to know how attendance will be tracked and what assignments need to be completed, the timelines, and how assignments will be submitted in order to support their learner(s).
 - If a parent or guardian is not available to supervise student learning in the home, who can help?
 - Is there a trusted individual in the neighborhood?
 - Could the neighborhood use a rotation schedule to provide supervision and support for a small group of students?
 - Might older students in a family be able to support the learning of younger siblings?
 - Consider developing a parent/guardian Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) list.
 - When planning communication strategies, consider multiple methods of reaching parents and guardians (emails, broadcast meetings, posting presentations, etc.). Bring parents and guardians into the planning and conversation to ensure coordination and collaboration.

Planning

The MDE advises districts to create a comprehensive, formalized plan to address the considerations above. Some sample plans: [MSD Wayne Township Remote Learning \(Indiana\)](#), [Northshore Learns: From Classroom to Cloud](#), [Miami-Dade County Public Schools Instructional Continuity Plan](#) (which includes a continuity planning checklist), [Falls Church City Public Schools](#). Again, many districts will choose not to move instruction online due to inequitable access. Districts such as Highline Public Schools in Washington state share the reasoning to support the decision on their [website](#).

Resources:

Information from the United States Department of Education

- [COVID-19 \("Coronavirus"\) Information and Resources for Schools and School Personnel](#)
- [Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During a COVID-19 Outbreak](#)

Infrastructure

- Devices
 - [REMC Save](#)
- Home Internet access
 - [Home Access: Working Toward Digital Equity](#)
 - [Kajeet hotspots](#)
 - [Mobile Beacon](#)
 - [Charter to Offer Free Access to Spectrum Broadband and Wi-Fi for 60 Days for New K-12 and College Student Households and More](#)
 - EveryoneOn
 - [Low-Cost Internet Solutions Toolkit](#)
 - [Tool for families to find low-cost internet service](#)
 - [Digital Access National Programs](#)
- Network Support
 - State Educational Technology Directors Association (SETDA) [Broadband Imperative III](#)
 - [Education Superhighway: How much bandwidth do I need?](#)
 - [Michigan State Education Network \(MiSEN\)](#)
- Security
 - [Essential Cybersecurity Practices for K12](#)
 - [Protect Your Students' Data and Privacy](#)

Teaching and Learning

- Online tools and resources are frequently district specific. The MDE encourages districts to work with their technology directors, instructional technology specialists, school librarians, media specialists, and curriculum directors at the district level to ensure that guidance is in place for educators. At the Intermediate School District level, individuals in similar roles, as well as [Regional Educational Media Center](#) (REMC) Directors and Regional Instructional Technology Specialists (RITS) can support district guidance. REMC provides professional learning courses, including courses for educators to [learn at their own pace](#) how to use technology tools. REMC also provides [classroom resources](#) to improve instruction. Teachers in the district may have already participated in [REMC virtual courses](#) and have developed expertise in personalized, blended, or virtual instruction. Leverage those teachers as experts within their district to help their colleagues.
- [EduPaths](#) has short, bite-sized courses on technology.
- Free, openly licensed instructional resources (OER) are available www.goopenmichigan.org.
- [Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning \(MACUL\) Guidelines for Helping Classroom Teachers Transition to Online Learning](#)
- Michigan Virtual [Student Guide to Online Learning](#)

- Michigan Virtual webinar, [Simple Strategies for Learning Continuity During School Closures](#)
- Sample [curriculum playlist](#) from Greenwich Public Schools (Connecticut)
- [Rapid Transition to Online Learning](#) - RTOL is a free emergency roadmap for making a rapid transition to remote learning during forced school closures. This quick-start guide will walk you through a simple step-by-step process to maintain your continuity of teaching and learning in a crisis.

Accountability

- A district may have already worked through student attendance and participation requirements for virtual learning options. To satisfy a participation requirement, a teacher may have two-way interactions with the student, or a combination of one or more of the following activities:
 - Documented attendance where synchronous (live) instruction occurred with the teacher.
 - Documented completion of a course assignment.
 - Documented completion of a lesson or activity.
 - Documented access to an on-going lesson.
 - Documented email dialogue between student and teacher.
 - Documented coaching provided by a teacher to a student.
 - Documented telephone or teleconference conversation between a teacher and a student.
 - Alternate forms of attendance as identified by the district and teacher.
- The attendance and participation requirements selected by the district and teacher should be clearly communicated to students, parents, and guardians.
- More information can be found in the MDE [Pupil Accounting Manual](#) (PAM).

Communication

- [Communicating with Districts, Schools, Parents, and Students](#)
- Michigan Virtual [Parent Guide to Online Learning](#)
- [Resources for Learning at Home When Schools Close](#)
- For sample district communication to families see this [letter to families](#) from Northshore School District in Washington state.

Planning

- [SETDA Coalition for eLearning](#)
- Michigan Virtual [School Closure Learning Continuity Readiness Rubric](#)
- [Sample District Plans](#)
- [Rapid Transition to Online Learning](#)

- [Virtual Learning Team \(VLT\) District \(or Building\) Plan](#), Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
- [Northshore Learns: From Classroom to Cloud](#)
- [Miami-Dade County Public Schools Instructional Continuity Plan](#) (includes a continuity planning checklist and extensive resources particular to student populations, including student checklists, and supplemental resources for parents of students on modified curriculum, as well as accessibility features and [home learning for families of young children](#))
- From the Michigan Association of Secondary School Principals (MASSP), a comprehensive [School Closure Learning Continuity Planning Checklist](#)
- Wayne RESA Remote Learning Toolkit