FALL 2020 LEARNING RECOMMENDATIONS

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Illinois
State Board of
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Acknowledgements

The Illinois State Board of Education gratefully acknowledges the following Illinois educators who contributed their time, experience, and ingenuity to this work.

Introduction

> *Hope is a compass needed to navigate us in these troubled times. By understanding hope as a cognitive function rather than an emotional response, new opportunities present themselves in ways that were previously unimaginable. The science of HOPE has revealed its "DNA." HOPE is made up of GOALS, PATHWAYS to those goals, and AGENCY required to pursue goals. (Rick Miller, Kids@Hope)*

Educating our children takes on a whole new meaning during these unprecedented times, when two traumatic national crises have converged to impact all of us in unimaginable ways. Our students, families, and communities are looking to educators to lead the way as we prepare for our new normal in education. Educators are coming back to uncertainty, the possibility of both in-person and remote learning or a novel combination of the two, and children who need additional supports to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19, stay-at-home orders, and widespread protests and unrest in the wake of the death of George Floyd. This collaborative document created by a diverse group of *hopeful* educators from all over our state is our attempt to provide instructional recommendations for a unique fall Instructional learning environment. In the absence of hope, we will fail. Our collective hope is that these recommendations will help mitigate the learning loss suffered by our students and support educators in creating new learning opportunities for students in the fall. Our aim is not only to help students recover unfinished learning from spring 2020, but also to support the development of innovative instructional practices that will reduce or eliminate future learning loss.

While both the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) agree that in-person learning is the goal, it may not be safe or feasible to fully resume in-person learning in every school community. As such, the purpose of this document is to provide recommendations to educators for implementing in-person, blended, and/or remote learning during the 2020-21 school year. Unfinished learning and learning loss are likely to be significant due to an extended period of remote learning in spring 2020 and summer break; these recommendations are to support teachers as they attempt to address these challenging realties and get students caught up and back on track. These recommendations honor local control and acknowledge that each school community is unique. The goal is to support educators in minimizing, to the extent possible, any negative impact these circumstances have had on our students, staff, and communities and maximizing recovery and learning for all.

For the purposes of these recommendations, in-person learning refers to learning that occurs when a teacher and student are in the same physical space; remote learning occurs when students and teachers are separated physically; and blended remote learning is defined as an instructional program involving both in-person learning and remote learning. All instructional programs, whatever their form, for fall 2020 must be designed with an emphasis on continuity of learning despite the impacts of our national health crises and social unrest.

ISBE strongly recommends in-person learning but understands that during this unmitigated crisis intermittent closures may be unavoidable. ISBE also recognizes the importance of

partnering closely with caregivers to provide flexibility and choices to best meet the needs of every family and child. Even if a district reopens for in-person learning there will be some students who cannot attend, and districts must be prepared to meet the needs of those students through remote learning. The nature of the pandemic changes every day; public health experts are continuously tracking data and new developments. All reopening guidance will continue to rely on what IDPH experts tell us is best for the safety and well-being of our students and will be developed in partnership with IDPH.

We strongly encourage prioritizing in-person learning for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), English Learners (ELs), and students under the age of 13. Depending on what is occurring in your community, districts may decide to take a blended learning approach, wherein some students are in class while other students are working from home remotely. Other districts may determine. in collaboration with the local health department, that fully remote learning is best given the data. All districts need to plan for the possibility that some or all students may need to transition quickly from in-person to remote learning due to individual coronavirus exposure or local community outbreaks. It is also important that all districts have plans for students who many need to receive full-time remote instruction due to a caregiver request, pre-existing health conditions, or living with individuals with pre-existing health conditions that deem them high-risk for COVID-19-related complications, even if the district is officially back to in-person learning. We respect and support each district and caregiver in determining what is best for each student.

ISBE strongly recommends that districts should strive to provide all their students with at least 2.5 hours of synchronous learning with real-time instruction and interaction between students and their teachers.

These recommendations will assist educators as they develop an approach that is inclusive of, and equitable to, all students, regardless of their race, age, location, background, and available resources. This recommendation document accomplishes these goals by:
- Providing transparent access to information for all education stakeholders (families, districts, students, and others);
- Ensuring all parties have a common understanding of terminology and best practices necessary to provide all students with equitable and continued access to high-quality education, while acknowledging the diversity of contexts for schools/families/students throughout the state;
- Providing suggestions on how to recover some of the learning loss experienced by all students and especially our most vulnerable students;
- Providing specific recommendations to address the trauma suffered by students, families, faculty members, and the community;
- Suggesting what should be offered for all students from an equity standpoint;
- Promoting innovation and outside-of-the-box thinking; and
- Providing examples of success and possibilities to serve as models and catalysts for districts/teachers to prepare and implement an appropriate learning model.

Commitment to Local Control

These recommendations are grounded in a commitment to local control. The information presented is meant to support districts and schools in making decisions that honor their local needs. Districts should weigh these recommendations in light of the reality of their local contexts, such as the opportunity for professional development, access to technology, and the needs of their unique student populations, in addition to public health information and regulations.

This document should not be interpreted to override the existing mutual obligations of the educational employer and the representative of the educational employees to plan at reasonable times and bargain in good faith with respect to wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment that may need to be addressed in order to effectuate an appropriate learning model.

Role of Advisory Group

These recommendations were initially developed by ISBE's Remote Learning Advisory Group and have been revised in light of the current context by a second advisory group. Both groups consisted of students, teachers, paraprofessionals, related service personnel, principals, district superintendents, regional superintendents, and educational advocates and experts. The role of the advisory groups was to bring diverse voices from across the state to create a document that provides a clear path forward for all school districts and caregivers. The advisory workgroups were intentionally created to represent geographic, role, experience, and content expertise diversity. Given the unprecedented nature of this moment, the advisory groups were tasked with synthesizing best practice around how to maximize learning for the students of Illinois.

Addressing Unfinished Learning and Learning Loss

The current devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and social unrest accelerated by the murder of Mr. Floyd have provided us with an opportunity to demonstrate American ingenuity and commitment to our children and to display our creative problem-solving skills in the face of these unprecedented life-altering events. *The New York Times* stated that this generation could be identified as the "COVID generation," which exemplifies the profound effect this pandemic is expected to have on our youth. The unfinished learning and learning loss from the 2019-20 school year may not be resolved in one academic year. Instead, as educators, we should consider developing a multiyear plan that is purposeful, comprehensive, and rooted in data, and which positively impacts the learning and recovery of the whole child. This inclusive plan may include aligning before- and after-school programs focused on increasing core academic and developmental skills, where possible.

This is a great time to reconsider the best ways to reach and educate our students. We often watch in amazement and marvel at how students can do multiple things at one time. Our children at home play videogames on their computers while watching sports highlights, Facebook Live, or YouTube on their phones, or using Snapchat as they watch their favorite shows on television-- all while interacting with family and even while doing chores. We have heard similar stories from family, friends, and colleagues: Many students are multitasking with

multiple devices at one time. These same students will be coming to a school near you soon and will require a different type of engagement to learn in meaningful ways. Jal Mehta posits in *A Pernicious Myth: Basic before Deeper Learning,* **"If there is one prevalent assumption that stands in the way of deeper learning, it is that you have to do 'the basics' before you can engage in deeper learning."** We strongly encourage all educators to go deeper now and challenge your students, while effectively differentiating and scaffolding their learning. We do not need to go "back to basics" to meet student needs; in fact, we need to do the opposite. We need to resist the "*Ay bendito* syndrome," that is the "poor student, you have gone through so much, let me help you (and end up lowering my standards)" mentality. This is a time for master teachers to display their full array of exceptional strategies and for newer teachers to learn and try new techniques for every student to go deeper and achieve higher.

The public health emergency and suspension of in-person learning are different in every community and, in fact, for every child. Still, some researchers have weighed in to attempt to project aggregate quantifiable impacts. NWEA, for example, projects that students will return with 70 percent of the learning gains in reading relative to a typical school year. This means that students will return to school with 30 percent unfinished or lost learning in reading as they begin the 2020-21 school year. The projections are more startling for math, in which students in some grades are likely to return with less than 50 percent of the expected learning gains; in other grades, they will be nearly a full year behind what we would observe in normal conditions (Kuhfeld & Tarasawa, 2020).

The series of events that has unfolded these past several months across our country and world are truly unprecedented in scale, but there are some historical events that can shed light on the most promising practices for addressing learning loss following trauma and disruption. For example, several scholars have closely reviewed educational recovery in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Paul Hill, the founder of the Center on Reinventing Public Education and a research professor at the University of Washington Bothell, recently wrote an article, "What post-Katrina New Orleans can teach schools about addressing COVID learning loss," that provides some insights into what was tried by schools in Louisiana post-Katrina. Among the most significant lessons learned were the following:

- Elementary schools that emphasized skill recovery found that students scored poorly on state accountability tests — poorly enough to threaten charter schools' existence.
- A consequent re-emphasis on grade-level instruction improved score performance.
- High schools found that spiraling[1] greatly improved students' persistence in school and graduation.

Other researchers and policymakers have released COVID-19-specific recovery recommendations as well. For example, in May 2020, Chiefs for Change, in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins University Institute for Education Policy, released "The Return: How Should Education Leaders Prepare for Reentry and Beyond?" It provided the following recommendations:

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[1] **Addressing learning standards strategically and repeatedly throughout the year providing multiple opportunities for success, as opposed to in stand-alone units or "chunks"**

- Base all learning on **high-quality instructional materials** and **curriculum-based assessments.**
- **Curriculum matters** -- The research record on the difference that a knowledge-rich curriculum can make for student learning is extensive and growing, and the COVID-19 pandemic has brought the message home. As leaders prepare their school communities for the challenge of restarting face-to-face learning -- as well as considering hybrid models -- students and teachers need access to high-quality, sequenced, and knowledge-rich materials in every subject.
- School systems need **curriculum-based formative and summative assessments** that not only inform differentiated instruction, but also help mitigate the kind of confirmation bias that often leads to lowering expectations for what historically disadvantaged students can achieve. Assessments should be tied to specific curricula; teachers should receive timely and actionable data on not only about students' skills but also conceptual and specific knowledge that reflects classroom content.

Another recent research article from [Brookings Institute](#) provides statistics and graphs on projected learning loss and links to other data/research. The Brookings Institute provided these additional recommendations:
- Students may start school substantially behind, especially in mathematics. Thus, teachers of different grade levels may wish to coordinate in order to determine where to start instruction. Educators will also need to find ways to assess students early, either formally or informally, to understand exactly where students are academically.
- Students are likely to enter school with more variability in their academic skills than under normal circumstances. Therefore, educators may need to consider ways to further differentiate instruction or provide opportunities for individualized learning.
- Students who lose the most during the summer tend to gain the most when back in school, but this may not hold for this school year. Regardless, the ground that students have to make up during the 2020-21 academic year will probably be greater due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, educators may want to work with students to determine growth rates needed to catch up and set learning goals for the year that are ambitious yet obtainable.

ISBE strongly recommends the following:
1. **Utilize Instructional Leadership Teams (ILT) --** Utilize your ILT to ensure the selection of high-quality curriculum and assessments and develop schoolwide systems and structures specifically designed to recover lost learning. Use your ILT to consistently monitor data that informs if strategies are working to improve student learning.
2. **Leverage Vertical Planning Teams --** Teachers of a given set of students in 2019-20 should meet (remotely) with teachers who will teach those same students in 2020-21. During summer planning time, teachers should discuss the standards covered and mastered in the past year and how the suspension of in-person learning impacted their plans. This will help all teachers have an idea of where their incoming students were when remote learning began and what their unfinished learning may look like.
3. **Assess Students for Unfinished Learning/Learning Loss --** Schools should utilize locally determined diagnostic assessments to determine where students are

academically when they return in the fall. This will need to happen as soon as possible, during the first couple weeks of school at the latest, to understand where students are academically in time to inform planning.

4. **Develop a Process for Data-Informed Instruction --** It is imperative that schools, departments, or grade levels develop a data-driven instruction process. A clear process will help all educators understand progress being made toward goals and plan for any necessary adjustments. This process may also help teachers put students together for flexible cooperative groupings that best meet student needs and accelerate learning.
5. **Support Teachers with Differentiation --** Teachers will have to plan for greater differentiation in instruction than ever before and will need clear strategies to individualize learning.
6. **Create Individualized Student Growth Goals --** Just as students have been impacted individually, they will recover individually. Take the time to set individual goals with students and families and build in regular monitoring check-ins and encouragement.
7. **Engage in Cycles of Inquiry --** Teams of educators should work together to ensure that instructional strategies are being implemented with fidelity across classrooms.
8. **Go Deeper into the Standards --** Resist the urge to get back to basics. Instead take more time to develop lasting student proficiency in authentic contexts Resist the urge to get back to basics. Instead, go deeper into your standards, taking more time to develop lasting student proficiency in authentic contexts.
9. **Accelerate Student Exposure to Prioritized Grade Level Content --** Identify the priorities of grade-level content collaboratively and hold one another accountable for keeping the standards high and the instruction focused.
10. **Provide Social-Emotional Supports --** Teachers, staff, students, and caregivers may all have additional needs during this time, be attentive and supportive.
11. **Assume the Best --** Students, educators, and caregivers all have valuable perspectives that need to be understood and heard.

This document is intended to provide recommendations/resources/strategies to help implement the important activities outlined above. We are hopeful that if each of our communities of educators across Illinois unites for the sole purpose of providing the highest quality and most equitable education possible for our students, we will address unfinished learning and learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare students for the successful continuation of their educational journey.

Ultimate Aim
The ultimate goals of these recommendations are to provide direction, information, and resources to ensure that:

- All students have opportunities for continued learning that focuses on high-leverage Illinois Learning Standards;
- Additional instructional loss is minimized;
- We align after-school activities to support specific strategies to gaps in learning; and
- Students are given routines and structures to ensure they stay connected to schools and are provided opportunities to learn regardless of the delivery model.

To accomplish these goals, we uphold the following principles in this document:

- All students and caregivers should have access to quality educational materials and to the supports needed to successfully access those materials.
- All remote learning, including implementation of quality remote learning tools, must comply with existing children's privacy laws (e.g., Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act. Implement high-quality remote learning tools that to not invade privacy and comply with children's privacy laws.
- Given the reality of the digital divide, schools may need to provide students and families with digital and non-digital access to content, and to their teachers.
- It is still possible and imperative that students access meaningful and high-quality educational materials that align to the most critical standards.
- It is essential that students and schools/teachers maintain a personal connection that supports necessary, rigorous academic work in a manner that is respectful of students' contexts (their mindset, feelings, responsibilities, etc.).
- Simplicity is best during this time -- simplicity of the framework, of communication structures, of expectations.
- We must all support the whole child -- their mental health, nutritional needs, and safety needs.
- Caregivers need access to clear information and ample resources.
- Educators need support, encouragement, and compassion to ensure their success and resilience.

Finally, consider:

- All means all. Districts must seek to implement an appropriate learning model that addresses the needs of all students and caregivers by taking into consideration language, diverse learning needs, home living situations, access to technology, access to parental support, and access to transportation. Our most vulnerable student populations still need us most.
- Underpinning these recommendations is the need for resilience, critical and creative thinking, thoughtful responsiveness, and empathy to help ensure that each and every student continues to grow personally, academically, and linguistically.

It is suggested that readers of this document examine closely the Overarching, Multilingual, and Special Education & Related Services sections before moving on to the segments directly pertinent to the ages or grade level they serve as these later sections build off the ideas presented in earlier sections.

Overarching Recommendations

This section provides a general overview of instructional considerations to assist districts, schools, and educators in developing a flexible learning framework to implement as we recover from the COVID-19 public health emergency. This framework will include a locally determined mixture of in-person, remote, and blended learning, depending on school capacities and individual student needs. At the core of all considerations is the goal of maximizing student learning while ensuring equity for all students during the 2020-21 school year and beyond.

The Illinois student population is diverse. This diversity is what makes Illinois a unique, vibrant, and innovative state in which to teach and learn. When designing and implementing flexible learning, educators must be especially attentive to the diversity within their community to ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational opportunities tailored to their needs. Proactive decisions made by carefully considering the students' needs will make learning a more equitable and engaging experience through which all students can flourish.

Establishing Consistency During Flexible Learning

A school community can be connected and thriving even if the physical school building is operating under modified conditions. As we transition to the new school year, however, it is structured, flexible learning that emphasizes interaction and authentic and differentiated learning opportunities that will help students stay connected to teachers and classmates. Developing consistency for flexible learning in the 2020-21 school year, which will likely include further remote learning as well as modified in-person learning, is key as students and their caregivers adapt to continuous unprecedented changes in education and society. The transition from in-person learning to remote learning, whenever and however it occurs, should be as seamless as possible.

Thoughtful, consistent flexible learning includes:
- Clearly articulated goals centered on equity, accommodation of all students' needs, community collaboration, and local best practices;
- Cross-curricular collaboration to focus instruction and optimize student learning;
- Options for students that tap into students' interests, readiness levels, and learning styles while providing caregivers flexibility;
- A mix of real-time, flexibly timed, technological, and non-technological options to meet student needs;
- A common platform where students can access work and find support and resources (for both online and non-online work);
- A clear plan of communication and student engagement, with multiple methods of communication to reach as many caregivers as possible, involving the school, teachers, students, and caregivers;
- Genuine interest and effort in supporting students' social, emotional, and academic growth; and
- Continuity between and clear communication regarding in-person and remote instruction.

Family Engagement

Continued family engagement remains a priority during in-person and remote learning contexts. The following section provides guidelines for practitioners to use in their planning. At times it may be helpful to reach out to community-based service organizations to assist in supporting caregivers with social, emotional, physical, or other needs in the home.

Considerations for Home Context

When remote and/or blended remote learning occurs, home is an extension of the classroom. In order to support students' academic and emotional well-being, teachers and staff should seek to better understand what may be occurring in the home. This is especially relevant in this time of rapidly changing public health, economic uncertainty, and heightened awareness of racial injustice and systemic inequities.

Districts must take into consideration the following:
- Students may be home alone while caregivers are working;
- Students may be caretakers for siblings or ill family members;
- Students may be working extra hours to help support their family;
- Students may be coping with the illness or loss of a family member;
- Students may suffer from anxiety and/or depression;
- Caregivers may not be available to supervise school work for a myriad of reasons; and
- Multilingual families may need to communicate in a language other than English.

We recommend that districts and educators respond to the myriad situations experienced by students with empathy, flexibility, and creativity to help mitigate challenges and maximize learning. The recommendations in this document provide ideas for how to get started.

Communication

Districts, schools, and teachers must have a reciprocal, clear, consistent, concise, and accessible communication plan that prioritizes student connection to school personnel. Caregiver access to information is also especially important in a flexible learning context. The guidelines below provide considerations that schools should review in communicating with caregivers during in-person learning, remote learning, or blended learning. All expectations for staff communication with students during times of blended learning should be established in accordance with local policies and agreements. Remember that electronic messages or communications, whether they are sent by email, instant messaging, text messaging, multimedia messaging, chat messaging, social networking, or any other current or future electronic messaging technology or device, may be subject to the provisions of the Local Records Act regardless of the media the information is maintained in or on. Such information that fits the definition of a public record under the Illinois Local Records Act can only be deleted if it is listed on the Application for Authority to Dispose of Local Records subject to approval by the Local Records Commission.

General Guidelines
- Use communication platforms that stakeholders are already familiar with and that currently exist in the system (applications, websites, email, telephone, letter, face-to-face with social distancing as much as possible);
- Communicate important information in multiple modalities to ensure that every family receives the information;
- Be clear, consistent, and concise, using clearly defined terms/ideas to avoid miscommunication; and
- Utilize paraprofessionals, multilingual staff, translation services, and other resources to communicate with multilingual families in their home language to minimize language barriers.

Communicating with Students
- Establish regular communication and set a minimum threshold for contact and clear procedures to follow in cases of unresponsiveness (e.g. text message, live call, letter, home visit), in accordance with district policies;
- Frequent check-ins by teachers or other school staff are highly recommended;
- Ensure all students have access to information through at least one form of communication (mail, packets, phone, video, email);
- Maintain classroom customs and norms as much as possible;
- Develop video tutorials for students on how to best communicate with teachers and properly use technology;
- Encourage positive peer-to-peer communication to support cooperative learning and social-emotional well-being; and
- Support students in navigating live video usage due to concerns regarding oversharing their home life.

Communicating with Caregivers
- Establish two-way communication with caregivers to ensure students' academic and social emotional support;
- Provide timely information;
- Conduct regular [wellness check-ins](#);
- Avoid educational jargon and define terms to ensure understanding; graphics and visually-accessible information are always helpful;
- Survey caregivers to identify needs and follow through to provide support;
- Share recommendations on how to support the whole child;
- Establish a process to follow up with caregivers/students who become disconnected with school;
- Communicate with multilingual families in the home language, whenever possible;
- Regularly verify correct contact information and preferred mode of communication, as economic changes may require families to switch phone plans/numbers or physical addresses; and
- Provide caregivers with supplemental material resources, when possible, for students to complete projects (paper, school books, supplies etc.)

Communicating With and Among Staff
- Develop a communication plan that addresses educational issues and provides for professional support;
- Establish norms for communication;
- Maintain a regular schedule of meetings with colleagues;
- Access ongoing virtual professional learning opportunities;
- Provide a system to quickly prioritize any issues or events that are out of the ordinary or may need immediate support; and
- Include all relevant staff members, especially paraprofessionals, itinerant teachers, visiting specialists, related service providers, and substitute teachers, as infection among staff may require increased need for substitutes. Increased communication will contribute to smoother transitions between teachers.

Social-Emotional Learning and Relationships

It is imperative during this time that districts create in-person, remote, and blended learning environments that attend to students' well-being, safety, social-emotional, and behavioral health needs. Some ideas to ensure that students stay connected and feel included in all learning environments are below:
- Establish a behavioral health model for remote and blended learning settings that includes virtual small group and individualized counseling sessions, if allowable locally;
- Establish daily check-in routines with students to recognize and respond to at-risk student behaviors;
- Encourage ongoing communication among caregivers and teachers;
- Establish predictable routines to help students maintain a sense of psychological safety;
- Provide opportunities for positive feedback/connection between students and teachers;
- Acknowledge students' current situation and context, and help all students feel valued and welcomed regardless of their background or identity;
- Provide students with appropriate strategies to help them process events, such as providing them factual information and explanations, assigning journaling, facilitating healing circles, etc.;
- Place students in small groups to work on projects and encourage students to work together using web-based conferencing and/or phone communication;
- Introduce mindfulness exercises to help quell student anxiety;
- Utilize school and community resources to provide mental health supports;
- Offer resources and support to caregivers;
- Contact each caregiver regularly to check up on students. If there has been no contact from caregivers for a certain amount of time -- for instance, after one week -- schools are encouraged to conduct home visits to ensure student well-being; and
- Provide additional wrap-around services to students with higher risk, such as:
  - Students with a history of anxiety, depression, or suicidal ideation;
  - Students who have learning and attention disorders;
  - Students whose families have lost jobs or income;
  - Students who have loved ones with underlying health conditions that make them particularly at-risk to COVID-19;

- ○ Students who have caregivers who are health care or essential workers; and
- ○ Students with food or housing insecurity.

The social and emotional health of staff members should also be prioritized during these unprecedented times. Some ideas to support them are below:
- Set up predictable work routines with clear boundaries that include turning off the computer, scheduling time for meals, etc.;
- Encourage staff to maintain a daily journal of thoughts, feelings, and needs;
- Set up a daily or weekly staff, grade level, department or course team virtual or safe in-person check-in to allow staff members to share professional and personal challenges and receive support and encouragement from their colleagues;
- Make individual phone or video conferencing calls to check in on and offer support to staff members with 1) underlying health conditions, 2) loved ones in the health care industry, 3) a history of anxiety or depression, 4) working remotely while simultaneously providing care for their own families and young children, and 5) technological challenges;
- Confer with individual staff members when planning for a transition to in-person learning to ensure that their needs and concerns are addressed; and
- Use self-care routines throughout the day that might include mindfulness, deep-breathing exercises, yoga, and other strategies that support emotional and physical well-being.

Professional Learning
Blended and remote instruction are new for many teachers, staff, administrators, students, and caregivers, so ongoing support should be provided to develop everyone's capacity to meet the remote and blended learning goals for each school. This can be accomplished in myriad ways to support development on the essential skills needed for daily instructional success. Remember, we are in this together. Our best resource is each other! Below you will find some ideas to get started:
- Redesign teacher induction programs that focus on providing equitable instructional opportunities to all students, regardless of instructional setting;
- Deliver professional development aligned to student survey responses gauging student experiences with last year's remote learning and, subsequently, tiered, small group, virtual professional development workshops to build the capacity and meet the needs that surfaced;
- Utilize annotated hyperlinked bibliographies of accessible, free resources to help everyone shift from a fully face-to-face teaching model to blended and remote models;
- Update acceptable use communication guidelines and re-educate caregivers, students, and staff on them;
- Provide training opportunities on the impact of trauma and stress to educate everyone on the signs of stress, anxiety, and depression;
- Consultation or collaboration with other educators to provide professional development on remote and blended learning best practices;

- Develop teacher leader-created podcasts, videos, and other materials that demonstrate ways in which teachers can develop effective and engaging remote learning lessons that engage all learners. Teacher leaders can also host virtual professional development workshops and virtual Q&As, and offer other supportive strategies to engage and develop staff capacity to accomplish each district's remote learning goals;
- Provide video examples of model remote learning lessons at varying grade levels for the spectrum of learners in a school (e.g., English Learners, children with IEPs, gifted and talented students), and across disciplines;
- Collaborate for alignment of digital and non-digital resources and work for students; and
- Offer extra supports for classroom management for the virtual and blended learning environment as well as in the return to in-person learning.

Content Selection/Prioritization

We want to acknowledge that students have undoubtedly missed learning content and skills as a result of the sudden shift to remote learning in spring 2020. To mitigate that, ISBE recommends that prior to the start of the school year, wherever possible, content-specific, vertical teams should work collaboratively to make recommendations regarding what critical/essential standards should be prioritized for the new school year. They should take into account material that may not have been addressed in its entirety due to last year's school closures. To support these efforts, ISBE will release a set of educator-developed Essential Illinois State Learning Standards as a starting point for local conversation. In whatever context they find themselves in this coming school year, teachers are encouraged to teach to those grade-level, critical standards, while spiraling in/strategically revisiting what students may have missed.

Considering Knowledge and Skills

Research has shown that background knowledge can play a greater role in students' ability to perform well on standardized tests than skill acquisition. Along this line, flexible learning can present an opportunity for teachers to build students' background knowledge through more thematic, interdisciplinary project- and inquiry-based learning that may present more choice, as well as a more authentic learning experience. This could contribute greatly to more intrinsic motivation on the part of students as it would engage them more authentically. Along those same lines, using materials (e.g., movies, videos, stories, articles) that represent a diversity of culture and language can also be more engaging for students. These alternative types of learning scenarios present a unique opportunity to build students' background knowledge through multi-day or multi-week projects that can incorporate new content/skills as well as reference content/skills that need review due to last year's shift to remote learning.

Content Delivery

ISBE understands that remote and blended content delivery is still a new and challenging endeavor for districts and their educators, and that it involves more than just printing non-digital materials, uploading files, and sharing links to media content. Delivering remote and blended content and moving seamlessly between in-person and remote instruction is a skill that must be

developed, and districts should provide the support, resources, and professional development needed for educators to accomplish effective learning in these new conditions. The content delivery recommendations that follow provide ideas across the continuum from printed instructional materials to fully online curricula.

Content Delivery Best Practices
- Be as present and fully engaged as possible regardless of the content delivery model and try new methods to connect meaningfully with, reassure, and provide students with encouragement and psychological safety, while maintaining high academic expectations.
- Work within grade-level and or content-specific teams to support the development of remote and blended learning. Remote and blended teaching, if not done collaboratively, can become burdensome and tedious. Teachers should be encouraged to leverage the expertise, insight and respective strengths of novice and veteran teachers to fully support the creation of engaging, effective lessons for all learners (e.g., advanced and gifted, twice-exceptional, Multilingual Learners, etc.).
- Focus on engaging and accessible learning materials and techniques. Prioritize mini-lessons and short mini-lectures to keep students engaged. When planning for remote learning, incorporate mixed media content, such as interactive videos, television clips, newspapers, maps, and political cartoons and interactive web-based, free software tools, etc., to keep students engaged and challenged while not in the physical classroom.
- Remain flexible with pacing and student assignments. Students with non-traditional schedules and diverse learning styles can stay engaged, connected, and abreast of learning expectations if all assignments and accompanying resources offer student choice and flexibility within clearly defined parameters (e.g., posting all assignments at the beginning of the week that are due by the end of the week or before the start of the next week). Meaningful and substantive long-term projects with weekly benchmarks and personalized feedback are also recommended for the blended/remote learning environment.

Non-Digital Learning (in all contexts)
- Non-digital learning materials should include information that, when possible, includes multiple modes of representation of content (e.g., text, diagrams, graphic organizers, large print, manipulatives, maps, and illustrations) -- in color whenever possible -- that will help students grasp content. Expectations should include multiple ways for children to demonstrate their developing understandings.
- Manipulatives and other materials that students might use to support learning can be included with non-digital materials, such as paper, colored pencils, scissors, and other supplies. Math manipulatives and similar materials for other subjects (e.g., science) can also be shared with caregivers.
- Instructions for projects and activities should be provided in clear, age-appropriate language, free of jargon, that addresses students as directly as possible without having to rely on caregivers as they attempt to support their children at home.

- Districts are encouraged to leverage their mass communication resources to text students and caregivers with links to content that is accessible by cell phone, when possible.

Digital Learning (in all contexts)
- If fully digital learning is viable within your district for intermittent or scheduled remote learning days, provide the various resources, with video tutorials and explanations (for both students and caregivers) on when and how to use those resources.
- Resources should help teachers use a combination of technology and media in the creation and delivery of content. The selection of digital platforms and tools is a local decision dependent on local acceptable use policies. During periods of fully remote learning, educators are encouraged to consider ways to use available technologies to increase the number of virtual homogeneous and heterogeneous discussion groups in which students can collaborate and respond to one another's ideas. Teachers can monitor, prompt, and cue the students' work and provide ongoing feedback virtually as well. Teachers may want to seek professional development opportunities to enhance their use of instructional technology.
- Teachers should be mindful of the subjects in which caregivers may have the least skill, such as middle- and high school-level mathematics and science or languages that are not the home language. They should ensure digital tools and classroom interactions adequately support students' knowledge development in areas where caregivers may not be able to provide student support at home.
- When expecting fully digital learning, districts and educators must ensure that all students have access to the necessary devices and levels of connectivity required to meet expectations. Alternative learning opportunities that do not require the use of digital resources must be provided if students do not have access to the resources they need to succeed in a fully digital learning space. It is important to remember that even within a single class, student access to the right technology and connectivity to engage in digital learning at home may vary widely. It is recommended that educators regularly connect with or survey students and/or caregivers to make sure they have the technology and access they need to engage in remote digital learning.
- Most schools or districts already have processes in place for evaluating vendor contracts for privacy and security considerations. Use these established procedures to evaluate proposed online educational services. It is particularly important that teachers and staff not bypass internal controls in the acquisition process when deciding to use free online educational services.
- Educators must be mindful of the extent to which there is student interaction with third-party digital platforms to prevent possible disclosure of personally identifiable student information.

Supporting Student Engagement During Flexible Learning

New opportunities to maximize student learning through innovative and engaging teaching methods are emerging as we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 public health emergency and practice more flexible instructional approaches. Careful consideration should be given to the best methods to engage students, especially during periods of remote and blended learning.

Schools should also make whatever efforts they can to ensure that students are connected to other students, in order to prevent isolation and encourage students to continue learning. Teachers can use online shared interactive tools to help students support one another and collaboratively create presentations, particularly in areas that have readily available internet access for all students. Students should be assigned projects that encourage safe collaboration even in areas without consistent internet access.

When in-person learning and/or collaboration are not possible, continuity of learning can still be encouraged when students are working independently by:
- Ensuring that directions are presented so that the student can understand them without assistance;
- Using visuals, video modeling, headings, bullet points, appropriate text size, boldness, and color to create a clear workflow for students to follow;
- Utilizing virtual platform for grouping purposes; and
- Considering the following questions:
  - How will a student know where/how to start?
  - How will a student know what to do next?
  - How will a student know when the work is successfully completed?
  - How will I know a student completed an activity?

ISBE recognizes that developing school scheduling options that maximize in-person learning time is a challenge while following the current public health requirements necessary to keep students safe. ISBE encourages educators to make the most out of every instructional minute, both in-person and remote, through thoughtful and creative planning.

The State Superintendent has determined that Remote and Blended Remote Learning Plans must ensure at least five clock hours per day of a combination of instruction and school work for each student who would normally receive a full day of instruction any time remote or blended remote learning days occur. Districts can be flexible in determining how to best meet the requirement in their own context by counting all learning activities toward the five clock hour expectation. Nevertheless, ISBE strongly recommends that on any Remote learning day that at least 2.5 hours per day of synchronous learning with real-time instruction and live interaction between students and their teachers take place.

For students who would normally receive a half day of instruction, a minimum of 2[2] total clock hours per day is required. ISBE strongly recommends for half-day students that on any Remote

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[2] Please note that the instructional time required for Preschool For All (PFA) programs remains 2.5 hours.

learning day that at least 1.5 hours per day of synchronous learning with real-time instruction and live interaction between students and their teachers take place.

All learning activities may include, but are not limited to, in-person learning, the teacher delivering instruction via recorded video or synchronous (live) platform, remote small group work via breakout room or conference call, independent/flexible student work time, and virtual/telephone teacher-student check-ins. If using non-interactive platforms, students must have means to confer with an educator and receive feedback before assignments are graded or assessments are administered. Suggestions for developmentally appropriate learning activities are presented in the sections that follow.

Students in any district learning environment must continue to have equitable access to extracurricular activities. Students in blended or remote learning environments must not be denied normal access to in-person extracurricular activities the district or school provides to students learning in-person.

Subsequently, districts should consider outlining district, school, teacher, student, and caregiver responsibilities to further support student learning that must occur away from the school. Sharing these responsibilities with the school community will create stability and relieve anxiety as everyone is aware of their role within the larger context.

Example Responsibilities This is not an inclusive list of recommended responsibilities. Responsibilities should be appropriate for the context.	
District Responsibilities	- Review board policies to ensure they do not prohibit remote/blended learning. - Develop thoughtful, accessible blended remote learning day plans using stakeholder input, when possible. - Support schools in planning and implementing remote learning plans. - Help schools identify needed resources in the community (academic, health, social, emotional). - Develop a district wide social-emotional learning plan.
School Responsibilities	- Implement blended remote learning day plans. - Communicate regularly with all caregivers and stakeholders. - Support teachers in planning and implementing remote learning plans. - Help caregivers develop skills necessary to support remote/blended learning and find needed resources in the community (academic, health, social). - Develop a plan to check on students' well-being.
Teaching Faculty Responsibilities	- Plan for modified in-person and/or blended remote learning, as applicable. - Be available at scheduled times to answer student/caregiver questions. - Provide timely feedback on student work.

	● Communicate regularly with students and caregivers. Make sure to ask questions that will provide information as to a student's mental and physical well-being. ● Uphold your duties as a mandated reporter, even when teaching remotely. ● Regularly ask your students if they have questions or need help and demonstrate that you are a trusted adult supporter. ● Provide a range of meaningful, differentiated learning opportunities that meet the needs of all learners during the period of remote or blended learning. ● Provide regular feedback to students on progress related to learning activities.
Non-Teaching Faculty & Staff Responsibilities	● Conduct regular wellness checks via phone and in-person, when possible, on teacher-identified groups of disengaged students. ● Deliver instructional materials, digital devices, etc. to students and caregivers who do not have transportation. ● Form support groups to encourage social interactions for students struggling with the change in learning environment. ● Uphold your duties as a mandated reporter, even when working remotely. ● Conduct small group, research-based counseling sessions to support students' social, emotional, and behavioral health. ● Form parent support groups to help caregivers navigate remote and blended learning expectations, technological challenges, employment challenges, etc. ● Provide academic and emotional support to students before, during, and after class sessions. ● Assist classroom teachers with relevant educational duties (attendance, organization, small/large group instruction, etc.). ● Participate in virtual/remote classrooms to better assist students during class times or online availability. ● Collaborate with classroom teacher(s) on content and delivery systems.
Student Responsibilities	● Review assigned work. ● Complete assigned work by the due date. ● Ask clarifying questions when you need help and communicate if you are struggling emotionally, physically, or academically. ● Be respectful to yourself, teachers, and peers. ● Comply with new health and safety policies ● Take care to get enough rest and commit to self-care.
Caregiver Responsibilities	● Review syllabi, digital learning platform expectations, deadlines, etc. ● Reserve a space for students to complete remote learning work. ● Encourage students to get enough sleep. ● Set sensible time limits for technology use. ● Talk to students about their work every day. ● Set a schedule to help students establish and follow regular daily routines.

	● Request technological support, as needed. ● Encourage students to follow the school's/teacher's behavioral expectations while engaged in learning.

Specials Recommendations

Art	● Follow all state and district guidelines, especially those on social distancing and students' transition procedures between classrooms, as much as possible. ● When planning remote or blended lessons, try to be cognizant of access to supplies and technology variables. ● When possible, provide students with their own art supplies that can be used at school and taken home in the event of remote learning. Adhere to all sanitary practices with consumables. ● Provide students with examples of how art can be integrated into instruction (visual note-taking, diagrams, and illustrations to introduce concepts, simulations, etc.) and assessment (student-created audio and video recordings, graphic representations, concept webs, content raps, etc.) will invite more students to show what they have learned. ● Consider having blended art lessons and online art resources for flexible learning transitions.
Gym/PE	● Follow state and district guidelines on social distancing and students' transition procedures between classrooms, as much as possible. See page 42 of Part 3 – Transition Planning for more details. ● When planning remote or blended lessons, try to be cognizant of supplies and technology variables of caregivers. ● Encourage structured activities that are physical and focus on social-emotional engagement. ● Consider having blended gym lessons and online physical educational resources for flexible learning transitions. ● Consider adjusting in-person activities to accommodate face covering requirements. For example, move PE outdoors so coverings can be removed while distance is maintained
Music	● Follow state and district guidelines on social distancing and students' transition procedures between classrooms, as much as possible. See page 37 of Part 3 – Transition Planning for more details. ● When planning remote or blended lessons, try to be cognizant of access to supplies and technology variables. ● When possible, all students should have their own musical instrument or instruments that they can take home. Make instrument consumables available to student: reeds, slide oil, etc.

		• Sheet music will be needed at home and the ability to interact with students (QR codes embedded, smart music software, or teacher demonstration/exemplar and student playback). • Consider student small group virtual lessons, if possible. • Consider utilizing composers through virtual classroom/webinar visits. • Consider virtual ensembles. • Consider having blended music lessons and online music resources for flexible learning transitions.
	Media	• Follow state and district guidelines on social distancing and students' transition procedures between classrooms, as much as possible. • Follow ISBE and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggestions when circulating books. • Consider pulling and displaying books for students to view and have easy access for checkout. • Consider not allowing self-checkout or self-use computers in the media center. • Consider, if technology allows, for students to search the automated library system while at home or in the classroom, reserve item(s) for checkout, and have the librarian deliver or have the item ready upon the student's arrival. • Consider having a plan for a mobile library system. • Consider having blended library lessons and online reading resources for flexible learning transitions.

Grading

ISBE's original guidance on grading considered the sudden and unexpected impacts of COVID-19 on all students, beginning with "Act of God" days. The original guidance provided students and districts every available flexibility regarding grading to ensure that grading "did no harm" to students.

Grading policies are ultimately a local decision. We recommend that districts reconsider their regular grading policies and procedures and implement or modify them to best meet the needs of their students.

We prioritize the connectedness and care for our students and one another during these unprecedented times as we maintain continuity of learning. We recognize the importance of providing feedback, assessing student progress, and learning, and communicating this to students, caregivers, and teachers in the form of grades.

We strongly recommend that you focus on providing feedback in a timely manner to your students. We strongly believe that providing specific feedback in a timely manner will help improve student learning. Feedback consistently ranks as one of the most powerful drivers of student achievement, according to research (Hattie, 2012). Some have even speculated that

effective feedback is equivalent to eight additional months of learning per school year.

Teacher feedback must be actionable and specific. Feedback that is actionable provides students with something they can do to improve their assignment or project toward deeper attainment of the aligned standards. Specific feedback helps students to know in detail what improvement is needed. Keeping your feedback to the goal of mastering a standard or content will encourage and motivate the students to apply themselves.

Our primary focus remains on keeping children emotionally and physically safe, fed, and engaged in learning. We encourage educators to understand the unique circumstances each student is experiencing and consider those when giving assignments and grading. It is imperative that we focus our collective attention on educating the whole child.

For the purposes of this document, assessment is what teachers do to collect evidence about student learning to help provide them with feedback and inform instructional design. Grading is defined as the evaluation of student work and academic performance reported on an ongoing and summative basis. Grading is the result of the documentation of ongoing assessment of student performance. Grading and assessment provide meaningful and ongoing feedback to students and caregivers in a confidential manner. **It is important to keep in mind that students can learn without grades, yet they cannot learn without formative assessment and feedback.** Meaningful, differentiated grading and assessment practices encourage dialogue among practitioners and students in individual and collaborative settings. Grading and assessment are ongoing and related to student learning and growth. The advisory group, in collaboration with ISBE, emphasizes flexibility and responsiveness to students' needs as a priority. The chart below provides characteristics and some examples of monitoring student learning in both the remote and blended contexts.

Formative Assessment for Learning	Summative Assessment of Learning
- Standards-based grading - Portfolio (digital, hard copy) - Performance-based - Benchmark assessment - Coaching, cueing, prompting, questioning - Supportive, purposeful - Focused on student growth - Curriculum- and classroom-based instructional assessment - Part of the learning process - Student/teacher partnership - Dialogue journals, learning logs - Self-assessment - Collaborative - Reflective	- Criteria for work and expectations (exemplars) - Benchmark - Portfolio (digital, hard copy) - End of unit interviews, conversations, presentations, - Products, performances, projects with rubrics - Self-assessment - Writing reflections - Recorded presentations, explanations - Collaborative - Practice in online platforms

Blended and remote learning during this pandemic may be formatively and summatively assessed to support student learning and continuity of education. Grading and assessment are meant to provide feedback and communication to students and caregivers with the focus on learning, growth, and progress. Meaningful grading and assessment provide students the opportunity to redo, make up, or try again to complete, show progress, or attempt to complete work assigned.

All Illinois students are expected to continue with the learning activities assigned during remote and blended contexts. We call on educators to be mindful of the impact of time on task, time on screens, and time on reflection during this pandemic. We strongly recommend that to support the return to regular grading policies, districts should ensure that students have all the necessary tools to complete assignments, take assessments online or on paper, and complete projects in a timely manner. In addition, we must take into account the technological resources at students' disposal to complete learning activities. This may mean ensuring that all students have devices and connectivity opportunities at their homes or at another location. Grading and assessment can provide ample opportunities for coaching and implement specific intervention to support students to make progress. Note that during any remote learning period, a district or school is not required to maintain a hard copy (i.e., analog record) of grades and assessment upon creation of a digital record unless the district's *Application for Authority to Dispose of Local Record*s states otherwise.

This recommendation document includes commentary, suggestions, and ready-to-use ideas for different age bands and students (e.g., grades 1-2, grades 3-5, middle school grades 6-8, special education, multilingual students, high school grades 9-12, and birth through age 5) for both formative and summative grading and assessment.

Classroom Setup for In-Person Learning

The organization of the classroom when students return is vital to creating an environment that is safe and optimal for learning. The classroom setup also will allow for the foundation to be set for relationships within the classroom. Classroom sizes and layouts differ and vary from school to school. Teachers should work to ensure that desks are distanced six feet apart in all directions to the extent possible. Social distancing efforts should provide ease for the teacher and students to travel through the classroom. Planning your setup around a collaborative model will allow for students to understand working with different students and prepare for this possibility during remote instruction.

Helpful hints to use within your own room:
- Use floor tiles to help with layout.
- Use ceiling tiles to help with layout.
- Utilize different color tape to mark out a variety of layouts.

Traditional Setup - Approximately 600 square foot classroom
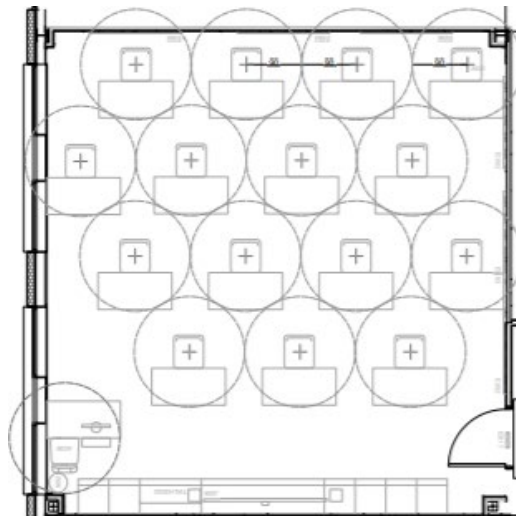
Collaborative Setup - Approximately 600 square foot classroom
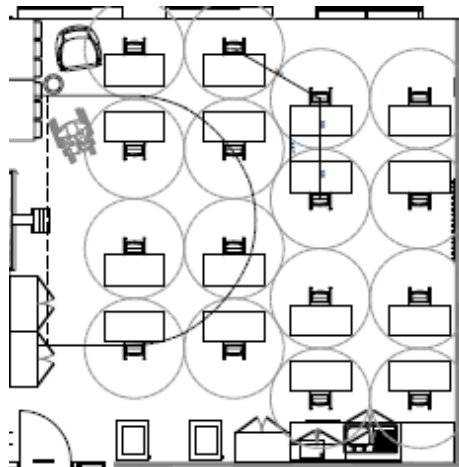
What is Blended Instruction?

Both ISBE and IDPH agree that in-person learning is the goal, but it may not be safe or feasible to fully resume in-person learning in every school community. In some instances, individual districts will have autonomy and responsibility for determining the best methods to reopening their schools and may choose to adopt a blended learning program. When designing the best blended learning model to suit their communities, schools will combine some aspects of in-person learning with some aspects of remote learning in order to meet the unique needs of their students while adhering to the reopening requirements set forth by IDPH. Recommendations for the structure and scheduling of blended learning programs are available in the ISBE and IDPH

[Joint Guidance for Starting the 2020-21 School Year](#). Uniformity is not the expectation, as no two districts will have identical paths forward in returning to in-person learning, but district leaders are encouraged to collaborate with others in their regions, as well as consult with their local public health department, to compare plans, share ideas, and brainstorm possibilities.

Elements to Consider about Blended Learning

There is no single blended learning model. Blended learning means combining traditional, in-person teaching with remote experiences, conducted through technological or non-technological means. Blended learning offers the opportunity to merge the strengths of both in-person and remote learning methods to create a cohesive learning experience.

Planning

1. Select what needs to or should be done in person and what can be achieved remotely. What can be completed remotely to make in-person classroom time even more productive?
2. The instructor may consider providing pre-recorded presentations/lectures/material, followed by in-class exercises. Students might first view multiple presentations of ideally five to seven minutes each. An advantage to this approach is that it puts the use of video and other pre-recorded media/presentations/lectures under the control of the students: They can watch, replay, and fast-forward as needed. By contrast, in a traditional class presentation, students often try to write down notes at the same time the instructor is speaking. Trying to transcribe the instructor's presentation may make it hard to capture significant points.
3. The in-person classroom could be turned into a workshop where students do higher order thinking learning activities like creating, collaborating, and applying what they learned from the remote material.
4. Transition between classroom and remote learning should be as seamless as possible; both modalities (in-person and remote) should inform, build upon, and support the other.
5. Getting the right balance of in-person and remote instruction to best meet the needs of each student is important. Consider the following variables when designing the balance:
   a. Analyze Your Students' Circumstances
      i. What is each student's availability of technology? Do students have the one-on-one tools, connectivity, space, etc. to learn remotely in digital formats? Until barriers to technology access are very low or removed, it will be difficult to rely too heavily on a fully digital remote portion of the class. Planning meaningful non-digital remote learning experiences/lessons for all students, including those with barriers to technology, is essential.
      ii. Is each student equally able to attend in-person (has access to transportation and is not medically high risk)? If not, they may need to rely almost entirely on digital and non-digital learning materials or other remote learning experiences. Tools like online meetings and discussion boards become more important to facilitate real-time interaction if classroom time is unlikely or intermittent.

iii. How many students will be involved in each learning experience? The larger the group, the more important it is to factor in small group and one-on-one activities both remotely and in-person.

iv. How comfortable is each learner with online tools? Are they used to communicating and collaborating online? A student/caregiver survey of familiarity and comfort may be helpful.

b. Analyze Your Content

i. What do you want students to know? For example, background information that's important to know is often best sent home to students or placed online prior to the in-person session. Students can examine articles, videos, interactive scenarios, and demonstrations on their own remotely or synchronically with the expectation that this information will be applied during in-person activities.

ii. What do you want students to be able to do individually and collectively? For example, group activities like discussions, brainstorming, or hands-on activities will likely be better accomplished during the in-person session.

iii. How do you want students to demonstrate what they know, understand, or are able to do? How can students show what they know, have mastered, and can apply?

c. Build on the Strengths of Each Modality/Format

i. Ask yourself: How does each modality contribute to the other? What does each format do best? The point is that in a blended class both modalities are equally credible, and neither is secondary in importance. Typically, it is helpful to first examine the standards and objectives to be taught, then determine which format or combination of formats is best for those objectives.

The following are three important considerations for blended learning course design:

1. Provide unique material in each format. That is, you don't want students to see and experience the exact same materials and activities in both in-person and in the remote learning components of the course. They should supplement one another.

2. Be sure there is coherence between online and in-person modes. There should be no disconnect between in-person and remote modes within a blended course. Neither should stand alone. When students do not see the connection between the two modes, they may tend to participate less.

3. In planning a blended course, teachers should take into account the differences between remote and in-person modes and not attempt a direct conversion from one mode to another. When teachers try to simply convert their in-person presentations/lectures to the online format, the material is likely to be less effective. ***It's not about conversion; it's about translation.***

Delivery

Getting the right balance of in-person and remote learning is important. The following are variables to consider when delivering blended instruction:

1. Balance Time Between the Modalities
    a. How can students be engaged in a relevant and meaningful blend of in-person and remote instruction for a total of at least 5 hours per day?
    b. Devoting class time to application of concepts might give teachers a better opportunity to assess understanding and detect misconceptions, particularly those that are widespread in a class.
    c. In-person class time could be prioritized for collaborative projects and developing a learning community among students.
2. Building Student Engagement
    a. Student engagement is threefold: cognitive, affective, and behavioral — which means intentionally structuring activities to engage students intellectually, emotionally, and behaviorally. Learning should be challenging, relevant, and developmentally appropriate.
    b. Regardless of context, students should be engaged in active learning, constructing knowledge, and building skills as they collaborate with their classmates. There can still be opportunities for cooperative learning even when students must work remotely.
    c. Stress student *doing*. Ask yourself: Is there a way for students to be more active in what they are thinking or doing?
    d. Pairing students can be helpful when creating an "active learning" environment in which students are highly engaged. Students can be paired during in-person or remote sessions. Small remote groups (two-three students) can work very effectively.
3. Presentation Sequencing
    a. It's good practice to frontload material that you want students to learn. In other words, the first 10 minutes of either an in-person or remote presentation can situate the important *facts or important concepts* that students need to know (Routman, 2018).
    b. Don't overload students with new material in either of the modalities. Remember, the two modes need to strategically reinforce each other in support of maximum student learning.
    c. Chunk the material students need to learn in a way that allows them to transition from one modality to the next.
    d. Make sure you "close the loop" of every lesson or unit of study by providing opportunities for reflection or other means of processing the new knowledge or skill that has been learned.
4. Use of Different Techniques
    a. Whether in-person or remote, alternating the mode of presentation will help to maintain attention and sustain memory. For example, lecture for 10 minutes, then switch to a small group (if in-person) assignment. If remote, have students read an excerpt from a text, then watch a video related to the subject of the text.

Students can also be remotely paired to prepare a response to the material that they will then present to the class during the following in-person session.

b. During a blended class, the remote session can be synchronous or asynchronous with an in-person session. Synchronous or live/real-time can still involve small groups. If synchronous, the teacher may not be able to be present to the whole group at the same time, so a level of student independence with the task may be necessary. When the teacher is present it should be for a purpose; it may not be a good use of the time if the teacher is simply watching students work. Asynchronous or self-paced learning should be used to provide information that supports the ability of the students to apply the learning. (Think of Bloom's higher order taxonomy elements.)

Feedback & Assessment

Consider the following regarding planning for meaningful feedback and assessment in remote and in-person modalities:

1. Remote instruction can productively provide multiple opportunities for formative assessments. The in-person session may likewise be more appropriate for summative assessments.
2. Technology-supported assessments may offer grading automation, provided that products do not disclose personally identifiable student information.
3. Use the remote session to administer quizzes, polls, short answers, answers to factual questions, or replies to prompts that prepare the students to dig deeper when attending the in-person session.
4. Assign a "One-Minute Paper." In the remote session, ask students two questions: What was the most important thing you learned? What big question do you still have about the subject? The student's answers to the second question can be further developed during the in-person session.
5. Create pro/con, advantage/disadvantage, and cost/benefit exercises and assessments.
6. Use ungraded formative assessments, such as polls, surveys, quick writes, audio/video explanations or reflections, interviews, mini-conferences, and learning logs, to help students synthesize learning and help teachers get valuable information related to student progress.

Multilingual Education

Multilingual Learners are children and youth who are, or have been, consistently exposed to multiple languages. Multilingual Learners include students known as English Language Learners, English Learners, or Dual Language Learners, as well as heritage language learners, students who speak varieties of English, and learners who speak indigenous languages.[3]

Multilingual Learners come from a broad range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds and include students with varying levels of proficiency in English and in their home language. They may have recently arrived from other countries or have been born in the United States. This section aims to provide educators with recommendations on how to build on families' cultural and linguistic strengths and resources by providing students with authentic language activities that allow them to participate and access material in both English and their home language during this time of flexible learning.

Existing Guidelines
It is worth reiterating highlights of the guidelines previously issued from ISBE regarding English Learner instruction:[4]
- First, teachers need access to students' ACCESS or screener scores so that they can differentiate instruction.[5] Teachers need to know what students can do at various levels of language development, so they can differentiate the English they are expecting their students to use.
- Buildings with Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE) programs need to ensure that students are receiving instruction from teachers who have bilingual endorsements. Those teachers should provide instruction in both English and the language other than English so that students continue to learn in both languages.
- Buildings with Transitional Programs of Instruction (TPI) need to ensure that English Learners are being taught by teachers with English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsements. Those teachers should provide differentiation and supports in such a way that students gain access to grade-level content while the language expectations are differentiated for their level of English language development.
- Districts need to screen potential English Learners with the prescribed screener or screening process at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year. Students who were provisionally screened in the 2019-20 school year during school closures will also have to be screened. (See Phase 4 Screening Recommendations.)

Schools should use these guidelines to provide the bilingual and language supports and resources that students need to successfully participate in the academic curriculum.

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[3] https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Guiding-Principles-of-Language-Development.pdf
[4] https://www.isbe.net/Documents/228ARK.pdf
[5] https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors

Schools should honor and build on Multilingual Learners' background knowledge, experiences, and strengths. Development of multiple languages contributes to students' intellectual, social, and emotional development. WIDA's Guiding Principles speak to the strengths and advantages multilingual, multicultural students bring to their learning.

Honoring and Engaging Caregivers and Community

In addition to providing instructional activities appropriate to students' language proficiency levels, it is recommended that educators consider how to leverage the culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds of their families during this time. To the extent possible, communication with caregivers of multilingual students should take place in the home language as well as English.

There are immense funds of knowledge[6] within multilingual families and communities that are often overlooked or undervalued as sources to inspire and support learning. We have the opportunity to highlight the skills and knowledge that already exist within students' homes – particularly language practices and cultural understandings – as valuable and enriching to their education. With this in mind, educators can:

- Encourage and affirm caregivers in their roles as children's first and most important teachers, but without creating undue pressure. Families should recognize the intrinsic educational worth of their home experience without trying to re-create a classroom experience at home or take on the role of a classroom teacher.
- Encourage families to spend time together to bond and talk. Teachers can create prompts that help elicit conversations within the home through storytelling (e.g., generational lore, family history) or making meaning of stories together (e.g., watching and discussing movies or favorite shows).
- Remind families that language practices in the home are rich and worthy. All opportunities to use, make meaning through, and play with language – ANY language – are valuable to students' cognitive growth and language development.
- Encourage finding meaning in real-life experiences in the home together with family, while integrating necessary tasks with learning opportunities. Teachers can prompt student inquiry, observation, and reflection around everyday activities (e.g., making meals, collaborating on chores, problem solving, fixing things together, reducing waste by reusing and recycling).
- Take the lead on setting up "mutual aid" groups. These are networks in which families can both say what they need and say what they can offer, provide support to each other, or set up swaps (e.g., exchange recipes, books, games).

Collective Responsibility

Of primary importance when it comes to the education of Multilingual Learners is that educators are mindful of students' essential needs when engaging them in instructional activities. These essential needs include physical safety, nutrition, and emotional care. Educators should ensure

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[6] http://blog.tesol.org/tap-into-funds-of-knowledge/

that students are physically and emotionally ready to engage in learning activities as part of their interactions with students.

Collective Responsibilities	
Administrators	As the primary decision-makers, we encourage administrators to ensure that the above-mentioned existing guidelines are met and, optimally, exceeded throughout the school. "Compliance is the floor, not the ceiling." (ISBE document: Equitable Access to Educational Excellence) Ensure that there are systems in place that honor caregiver preferences and needs in terms of instructional delivery methodologies. Some students may need remote instruction even if in-person or blended learning is happening for other students.
Teachers	As the instructional experts, teachers are encouraged to prioritize engaging their multilingual learners with ample opportunities for "live" interactions (e.g., using internet-based platforms, phone calls, etc.) and not to rely on caregivers for facilitating learning when it needs to be happening at home.
Caregivers	Caregivers are essential in the home/school partnership that is necessary for our students to excel academically and socially.
Students	Multilingual students need the support of caregivers and teachers to flourish at school.

General Recommendations for Multilingual Learners

In this section, we would like to take the time to document and outline some general instructional options and opportunities in connection with a number of topics. More specifically, this section will address planning, delivery, assessment, research-informed instructional frameworks, authentic learning, language of instruction, educational needs, and content knowledge that are all relative to the Multilingual Learner.

Planning, Delivery, & Assessment

It is understood that planning, delivering, and assessing instruction/learning during this unprecedented time of change in the educational field will bring about feelings of uncertainty. Whether the method of delivery is remote, in-person, or blended (a hybrid of the two), the ways in which we plan, deliver, and assess instruction/learning will certainly look different than times of past. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the chosen design should be flexible to ensure a more seamless approach to teaching and learning. Planning for all three models of

learning will be elucidated in subsequent sections; however, in this section we will outline general planning, delivery, and assessment practices for English Learners.

When planning, educators should focus on the essential content for their grade level or content area with an included emphasis on language objectives. Language objectives outline the demand on language the content objective carries. For example, a content objective might be: Students will find the lowest common denominator of two or more numbers. A related language objective could be: Students will explain orally the process they used to find the lowest common denominator of two or more numbers. When it comes to general learning and language assessment, educators can create broad rubrics that can be used across grade-level and content areas.

Other suggestions include:
- Provide options of multiple tasks or projects for students to meet the unit objectives.
- Describe criteria broadly so that it can be demonstrated in multiple ways.
- Use flexible structures and rubrics that allow for a huge variety of experiences and resources. Rubrics do not have to be task- or language-specific.
- Place student reflection and self-assessment at the center of feedback by using assessment practices that promote engagement.
  - For example, students (with caregivers) take the time to organize and design their learning portfolio (digital and/or paper), creating bilingual books, family interviews, journals, learning logs, identity text creation, etc.
- Apply a Universal Design for Learning as an overarching approach for planning and assessing student learning/progress.
- Engage all four language domains (reading, writing, listening, speaking) in planning for instruction of English Learners.

Taking a Purposeful, Research-Informed Approach to Instructional Planning

As educators, we are accustomed to a certain amount of conformity in how learning takes place in our classrooms; however, there can be fewer expectations for conformity while students are at home. Therefore, if a blended or remote learning model is adopted, teachers may take the opportunity to re-embrace research-informed planning frameworks[7], such as Backward Design, Universal Design for Learning, the 5E model, or the Accelerated Learning Cycle. Using a research-informed planning framework can improve and optimize teaching and learning for all students by providing tight alignment between desired learning outcomes and activities; inclusive cultures for learning; and multiple ways for students to access, engage with, and demonstrate their learning. With this in mind, educators can:
- Take the opportunity to make time and space to get to know students even better. Connecting with students is essential, and the opportunity to build rapport and obtain deeper knowledge of various dimensions of their identities will help teachers be more

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[7]For more information about research-informed learning frameworks: https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/BackwardDesign

culturally and linguistically responsive and to be able to design more meaningful learning experiences.
- Create collaborative, online learning toolkits that contain resources in multiple formats and languages and/or prompt students to choose a format and language for their work product.
- Create modules that are structured by goals and essential questions but are also flexible and offer multiple options to accomplish and address such goals. These modules can thus maximize opportunities for students to engage in ways that are most appropriate, interesting, and authentic for them.

Authentic Learning

Many of our school schedules are compartmentalized around educator specialization. Students who may need to continue with some form of remote learning might not be able to adhere to comparable schedules. Learning modules that integrate various kinds of content and learning can make organizing students' at-home schedules more feasible, while aligning to strong pedagogy for Multilingual Learners. Keeping this in mind, educators who are teaching in any of the three learning contexts can:
- Tap into the extensive funds of knowledge students and their families possess as sources to inspire and support learning as outlined in the "Honoring and Engaging Caregivers and Community" section on page 33.
- Use thematic approaches to make connections across content. Multilingual Learners will benefit from learning that is integrated around a theme, rather than disparate topics that each require specific vocabulary, disciplinary language, or background knowledge (Freeman, 2016).
- Encourage the arts as much as possible. Music, song, storytelling, drama, crafts, textile arts, and visual arts all provide enormous cognitive, emotional, and cultural benefits and can happen in any language.
- Embrace inquiry, problem, and project-based learning. Prompt students to brainstorm the questions they genuinely want to pursue and prompt them to engage in authentic inquiry-based learning in the context of their everyday life. Invite students to find ways to address the problems they identify as needing their attention. The experiences they are having or creating for themselves in this current context can become part of the inquiry process. The more we ground learning expectations in questions and actions that are relevant to their lives, the more they will feel engaged and empowered by the experience leading to an increased level of intrinsic motivation (Paris, 2017; Peirce, 1995; Herrera, 2015).

Student Needs

It is important that educators seek to meet Multilingual Learners' essential needs prior to asking them to engage in instructional activities. These essential needs include physical safety, nutrition, and emotional care. Educators should work with their school leaders to ensure that students are physically and emotionally able to engage in the designed learning activities prior to assigning them to students.

Once students' basic social-emotional needs are met, educators can then take language needs into consideration throughout the planning, instructional, and assessment processes (Goldenberg, 2008). Therefore, below is a non-exhaustive list of guidelines to help navigate planning to best meet the needs of Multilingual Learners, as well as articulate what may be common practice but is not considered best practice.

Best Practices for Instruction of Multilingual Learners	What Research does NOT Support
Auditory language activities with visual support (such as illustrations or graphic organizers) in a contextualized setting (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; Kervin & Derewianka, 2011)	An abundance of worksheets in a decontextualized setting
Inquiry-based and authentic learning opportunities	Rote memorization of facts
Kinesthetic learning opportunities such as Total Physical Response to introduce concepts and build content area schema (Choi & Yi, 2015; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011)	Lecture-driven instruction
Activation of background knowledge in both English and home language(s) (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978)	Teaching/learning new content without reference to previous learning experiences
Differentiated instruction/assessment based on proficiency levels	A one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning
Utilization of the WIDA Can Do descriptors for planning and instruction and learning	Lessons planned without considering students' language proficiency levels
Lessons planned through a sheltered instructional approach that incorporate language objectives (Short & Echevarria, 1999)	Lessons planned that focus solely on content objectives and are not differentiated for language
Modeling of expectations (Hill & Flynn, 2006)	Written or oral instructions only
High expectations of English Learners along with levels of support necessary for students' learning of grade-level content	Lowered expectations with or without language supports for access to grade-level content
Fluid use of the home language as needed by the student (García, Johnson, & Seltzer, 2017; Hornberger & Link, 2012)	Banning the use of the home language in learning situations
Lessons that incorporate all four language domains (reading, writing, listening, and	One-dimensional lessons that focus solely on literacy

speaking) (Choi & Yi, 2015; Zwiers & Crawford, 2011)	

Language of Instruction

Educators must be thoughtful and explicit about the language of instructional activities in which students are being asked to engage. Multilingual Learners should be provided with opportunities to utilize their home language, whenever possible. Multilingual Learners (both typically developing and Multilingual Learners with special education needs) should also have daily opportunities to engage in activities in both English and/or the home language within the four language domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. When designing activities for multilingual students, educators should be aware of the language proficiency level of the students, both in English and the home language.

We recognize that there are times when English needs to be the language of instruction/assessment, especially in Transitional Programs of Instruction. However, we also recommend that the home language be invited into the learning environment and utilized by teachers and students in order to activate prior background knowledge as well as new learning in the content areas. Use of the home language provides students with increased access to the content of a lesson, emphasizes the importance of student multilingualism, and aids in the preservation of a positive cultural and linguistic identity. Inviting students to use their home language(s) when conversing with other students can provide them the opportunity to process their learning and self-advocate while clarifying key concepts. It should also be reiterated that concepts and skills learned or acquired in the home language can transfer to the language of instruction and vice versa, even between languages with different writing systems.

Home languages of students can be supported even in multilingual settings, such as Transitional Programs of Instruction models. Schools can engage bilingual or multilingual paraprofessionals/instructional assistants to promote students' multilingual journeys. Educators can consider how support staff might be able to help students with remote learning activities and also act as a resource when communicating with caregivers.

Additionally, local school districts can connect with institutions of higher education or other community organizations to create collaborative and mutually beneficial relationships. Multilingual college students and others could provide tutoring opportunities – whether via phone, internet, or other means. Home language tutoring is an opportunity for students to build deeper content knowledge without language barriers. Use of online multilingual books and resources to preview and support understanding is another way for all educators to invite students' home languages into instruction and demonstrate to families that they honor and value these languages.

Content Knowledge

The use of various methodologies, strategies, and modalities, such as inquiry-based learning and performance-based assessments, described in previous sections and in more detail below become more salient in the effort to increase student choice, student engagement, and motivation. We advocate for Multilingual Learners to be given every opportunity to access and showcase the knowledge they possess in the content areas. Educators can create assessments that allow students to demonstrate their understanding of content-area knowledge and skills separate from their level of English language development. See WIDA's Can Do Descriptors Key Uses at https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors for more information on how to differentiate instruction for language.

The planning, delivery, and assessment for the three modes of learning (in-person, blended, and remote) will be expounded upon in the subsequent sections.

In-Person Learning

Planning

When planning for in-person learning, multilingual/bilingual/ESL teachers should be included in grade-level teams or curriculum teams to determine which content standards and language development standards must be integrated into a unit or lesson. Collaborating on the development of multidisciplinary units of study is an efficient way to address as many content and language standards as possible while multilingual students are physically in school and then continue this practice during periods of blended and remote learning. Another benefit of this collaboration with multilingual/bilingual/ESL teachers is that all teachers can begin to incorporate supports and scaffolds into their units and lessons that give Multilingual Learners access to the curriculum no matter the context. These elements of universal design that support Multilingual Learners can also support all learners' access to the academic content, language, and literacy of a unit or lesson.

Delivery

The delivery of instruction for in-person learning is much the same as pre-pandemic. However, social distancing guidelines as well as the social emotional effects of the pandemic require the educator to reflect and revise what were once viewed as "normal" delivery of instruction to what will now be the "new" normal delivery of instruction. Instruction on topics such as self-care, hygiene routines, and adjusted behavior expectations should utilize scaffolded instruction in English and in students' home languages. Educators should check that students are physically and emotionally able to engage in the designed learning activities prior to assigning them to students.

When delivering instruction to Multilingual Learners in this environment, expectations must be targeted and authentic and activities should be meaningful for students to ensure linguistic and academic growth. The use of cloth face coverings means that facial expressions and cues are absent. Losing this layer of contextual cues makes it more difficult to make oral language in English comprehensible to learners. Consider providing Multilingual Learners and their teachers

with clear face coverings. In the absence of clear face coverings, it is important that teachers consider using images with different facial expressions or colors to help convey emotions, social norms, and feelings. The use of pre-recorded demonstrations or mini-lessons can help mitigate some of these barriers. Other scaffolds for English or native language instruction may include an extension of time for assignments, videos with captioning or embedded interpreting, accessible or translated reading materials, or other technological supports that can be used by all learners while in class.

Feedback & Assessment

Grading policies are the exclusive responsibility of local districts, but educators should take into account the following when assessing the progress of Multilingual Learners in content knowledge as well as language development.

Students' home and community language practices are a natural and essential part of how they make meaning and are thus an important vehicle to demonstrate learning and knowledge.
- Validate and give credit for student work using a combination of English and the home language(s);
- When possible, assess language development in both English and the student's home language; and
- Invite students to develop bilingual products, projects, or performances as summative assessments.

Distinguish between assessment of academic language development and assessment of content knowledge (in all of the students' languages):
- Use two different assessment tools for a single student work product – one to examine demonstration of content and another to give feedback and support on language use;
- Separate language from content objectives in rubrics; and
- Use content assessment methods differentiated for students' English proficiency levels that give students the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge.

Develop digital and/or non-digital student portfolios to document content and language development over time.
- Students and caregivers can collect/self-select writing samples, recordings of themselves speaking and explaining an idea in home language and/or English, as well as photos of artistic projects, science projects, posters, and diagrams.

Develop teacher-student and individual learning goals.
- Provide opportunities for teachers and students to check in to set goals and action steps for a particular timeframe, then continue these individual meetings via phone, email, online platform, and/or text in times of remote or blended learning.

Use assessment practices that promote engagement and allow students to show what they know, understand, and can do:

- Create bilingual books, family interviews, journaling, learning logs, and identity text creation;
- Develop a consistent process for giving feedback and assessing student learning/progress; and
- Offer students multiple modalities and means for expressing/demonstrating learning.

Establish community among staff and between staff, students/families, and peer-to-peer groups with the emphasis on documenting and processing learning, reflection, and self-assessment.
- Teachers can guide and collaborate on rubrics or criteria and offer feedback.

**It should be noted that the 2020 ACCESS scores <u>can</u> be used for English Learner placement because the ACCESS testing was completed prior to the implementation of remote learning.

Blended Learning

Planning
Engaging and effective blended learning for Multilingual Learners in all programs (TBE, TPI, dual, etc.) includes a combination of appropriate activities from both in-person and remote learning. When planning for Multilingual Learners, particular attention should be made to incorporate opportunities for oracy and literacy development within thematically designed units of study. Building upon in-person thematic instruction allows students to continue learning when they are at home in a more cohesive manner. Offering ample opportunities for language development, incorporating educational games and play, as well as other tech and non-tech engaging ways for students to explore academic content, can make the blended learning experience more successful.

Delivery
School districts may create their own blended learning format in consultation with their local public health department and based on their capacity for 1:1 student device distribution, internet connectivity in student homes and community, and other factors that may prove relevant in their abilities to reach all of their Multilingual Learners during the remote component of blended learning in all programs (TBE, TPI, dual, etc.).

School districts must also consider the disparity in resources that may exist within some communities where immigrant, refugee, and other multilingual families may live. A technology and materials survey of families/guardians may help plan for delivery of instruction during blended learning. In addition to improving access to school-distributed laptop computers and academic lessons online, high-quality hard copy materials (e.g., books, art materials, paper, pencils, pens, educational magazine subscriptions, apps) should be distributed to homes.

Assessment
Assessment practices for blended learning will be a combination of the assessment practices found in in-person and remote learning. Along with developing and delivering engaging, multidisciplinary units of study that include content, language, and literacy instruction,

assessment practices must follow suit. Teams should prioritize, model, and record (audio or video) assessment practices during in-person learning that will then support learners during the remote component of instruction. Assessment that is differentiated and reflective of the high-quality instructional strategies used during lessons will provide more accurate assessment information for teachers about what Multilingual Learners know and understand. Formats such as multiple choice or true/false may be easier to administer but will not provide reliable information on what students are learning. Further still, if any assessment is administered in English that is not differentiated, then the results will provide a picture of the students' English proficiency at that time but not of their knowledge and understanding of academic content.

A Note on ACCESS 2.0 for English Learners
Multilingual Learners are tested annually on the ACCESS 2.0 for English Learners. This tool scores students' English proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as their proficiency in social and academic English. The last administration of ACCESS 2.0 occurred in January of 2020, but English proficiency scores should still be used (by teachers) to guide instruction and assessment for Multilingual Learners in the coming school year. ACCESS 2.0 scores can provide valuable information to support the development of equitable assessment practices for students at a range of English proficiency levels.

Any Multilingual Learners who are new to Illinois schools for the 2020-21 academic year may be also subject to the [Provisional Identification & Placement Procedures](#) recently put forth by ISBE if normal language screening at intake is not feasible.

Remote Learning

Planning
Educators should always include appropriate scaffolds and supports when designing[8] instructional activities for Multilingual Learners. Regardless of domain, activities for online platforms always include deliberate and explicit instruction (August & Shanahan, 2006). Resources like video recording apps can help educators with these activities. Incorporating literacy activities can be an opportunity for the students to share stories, discoveries, and lived experiences in several languages. Free online libraries with books in many different languages are useful to support students at home to practice reading and writing. Designing activities around thematically based topics is recommended for Multilingual Learners. Encouraging students and families to use all of their linguistic abilities for learning is optimal (Goldenberg, 2008). Planning content-based projects and performance-based learning activities is more engaging for Multilingual Learners than planning to use materials that focus primarily on decontextualized skill work.

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[8] **https://voice21.org/oracy/**

Delivery

Oracy-based activities can be delivered using media resources like videos, audio files, or video games. Literacy instruction during remote learning is a good opportunity to teach students how to use word processors or any other writing program. Most of these programs include grammar and spelling checking that can be used to guide the students using different languages or English.

Make certain to provide students a reasonable timeframe to complete their work as well as multiple accessible avenues for them to ask questions and share their progress. Students should be encouraged to use their home language(s) and English for the activities. Teachers and administrators should ensure that any platforms or apps used are available and applicable in their students' language(s).

Using games to advance learning is another way to engage multilingual students in a remote learning setting. Games can be open-ended and universal enough to work for families who speak various languages other than English. "Gamifying" learning can lend an element of fun that may be helpful during these times. This includes word games in various languages, math games, science investigations, and the like. For instance, students who speak Spanish at home would benefit from games where cognates (words in other languages similar to English words) and Latin-based academic language are featured since those are words that are prevalent in academic English. Other activities with words, such as sorting and vocabulary investigations, can also elevate students' learning. This is a time when students can increase confidence in their ability to understand and use words in various contexts, especially in academic terms.

Assessment

Following the recommendations listed for in-person learning for multilingual students is important during remote learning. Additionally, teachers can create oracy-based assessments for students to submit bilingual videos or audio files. Capturing student learning, regardless of language, is most important during remote learning periods. The same is true for capturing students' literacy and biliteracy development. Invite students to show what they can do with literacy in as many modalities as possible. Keeping students engaged during remote learning periods is challenging, so it is important that educators focus on formative instructional assessment that is closely connected to instructional strategies they have seen before. Summative assessments can sometimes be delivered via online quizzes, surveys, inventories; however, as much as possible, direct Multilingual Learners to show what they know through projects, products, and performances that highlight content and language objectives.

Grading

Specific grading procedures are left to the discretion of the local districts. Report cards for English Learners should reflect students' progress in their language development as well as their learning of content. The report card must also indicate when the student achieves English proficiency and transitions out of the TBE/TPI program unless that information is provided

separately in writing to caregivers. Dual language programs also measure students' progress towards language proficiency in both languages of instruction.

Classroom Resources

Educators seeking additional resources and guidance for working with Multilingual Learners can access the following resources:

- https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Multilingual-Services.aspx
- https://irc.thecenterweb.org/resources
- https://www.isbe.net/keeplearning
- https://elhandbook.org/

Special Education & Related Services

General Recommendations

Planning
Students with special education needs are particularly vulnerable during times of disruption and change. To promote ongoing growth and progress, districts should focus their planning efforts on how to continue serving these students in all possible learning platforms, including in-person, blended, and remote learning and make certain all formats provide educational benefits to students with special education needs. All decisions regarding special education must comply with guidance from the [U.S. Department of Education](#).

The basic guidelines and options/opportunities are based on the following core beliefs:
- IEPs remain in place and should direct students' remote learning. Be mindful that a student's program may require commencing a team meeting (in-person or virtually).
- Students with IEPs may have other unique learning needs, such as twice or thrice exceptional (gifted or gifted and English Learners) that should be addressed appropriately through any learning platform.
- Adhere to local procedures and leverage local leadership.
- Emphasize structure, consistency, and cohesion for students with special needs.
- Students with special education needs benefit greatly from ongoing motivation and excel when relationships with adults and peers are strong.
- Resources should be viewed broadly and include leveraging local associations, professional organizations, government agencies, community support, and more.
- Affirm that all students can achieve growth in all capacities. Learning opportunities can occur in a multitude of settings and should be tracked, when applicable.
- Acknowledge, validate, and plan around social-emotional challenges faced by students prior to and as a result of current environmental factors.
- Provide caregivers with opportunities to give input into the structure/format of their children's education during this unprecedented period. The adults who care for our most vulnerable children have a unique and important perspective that must be considered when determining whether remote, blended, or in-person instruction is best for their child in fall 2020.

Additionally, as learning plans are developed, be aware that some students may struggle to re-acclimate to in-person learning experiences. Plan to incorporate appropriate re-introduction of ready-learner expectations and school/classroom structures.

Training, Development, and Supporting Staff
It is essential that training, development, and support continue for staff who serve students with IEPs and 504 Plans. Districts may want to consider the following when providing support to special education staff:
- Provide frequent opportunities and spaces (either virtual or in-person depending on the context) for collaboration among staff to develop learning activities aligned to the curriculum and IEP goals.
- Provide additional professional development related to best practices in blended and remote learning.

- Create and share inventories of what technology and educational material resources are available to students/caregivers with special needs.
- Identify what technology platforms will best serve the various needs of the special education population, including assessment of the platform's accessibility features.
- If available, utilize resources, such as those created by hospitals and professional organizations, to support the needs outlined in the student's IEP.

Additionally, districts may want to consider the following supports to assist caregivers:
- Systems and supports for technology problem solving;
- Training/ support on how to maximize student engagement especially during remote learning periods;
- Consultative support for caregivers especially during remote learning periods;
- Tutorials on how to use assigned or recommended technology tools. Tutorials should use clear, simple language, include visuals, and be available in families' home language(s); and
- Training/support to establish home structure, routines, and behavior expectations consistent with the in-person learning environment.

Communication Processes and Structures Needed to Support This Work
Educators should take care in planning their messaging and communication to ensure that it can be understood by all students. The standard methods of communication may include district webpages, district social media, automatic calls, utilizing community organizations groups/shelters, news media outlets, and internal school data platforms that can allow daily and weekly updates regarding academic progress. All efforts should be made to provide communication in language(s) that students and caregivers understand. Further explanations and recommendations may be needed to guarantee everyone responsible for the efficacy of the IEP is receiving correct and ongoing information. Scaffolding, communication, and dividing assignments into more manageable parts could be helpful in this regard. We encourage direct communication from trusted and known faculty members for delivery. The following are considerations for caregiver and student communication:
- Special education listserv-targeted emails and/or letters to caregivers of special needs students;
- Use of appropriate staff to overcome need and language barriers and provide access;
- Use of school-approved communication platforms; and
- Communication made available in both English and caregivers' home languages.

Accessibility

Communication
Regardless of setting or modality, it is important that students have appropriate access to instruction and services. Some students need support for communication access (both receptive and expressive), which is often required by the IEP.

Consider the following for students who require communication supports while accessing remote and/or blended learning:
- Use of remote interpreting;
- Use of remote captioning services and technologies;
- Provision of in-home audiological and tactile technologies; and
- Student and caregiver access to devices and quality internet connection.

When deciding which interpreting or captioning services you will provide, consider factors such as accuracy and quality; size of the student's screen; the ability to "pin" and maintain access to the interpreter during instruction; and regular access to technology, such as assistive listening devices and refreshable braille displays. Remote interpreting can be provided by district or school interpreting staff by integrating them into the blended and remote learning platform.

Additionally, students who use Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices or methods must have consistent access to such devices in all learning environments. AAC can be updated to include vocabulary for various learning environments, and new concepts introduced by current health and societal contexts and can be provided multilingually. Students and caregivers may need access to additional batteries, charging cords, sanitization materials, or other elements, as AAC may now travel more frequently between learning environments. Information or training may also need to be provided to caregivers on use of AAC in their home languages.

Assistive Technology
Assistive technology (AT) required by the student's IEP must be provided to the student in both in-person and at-home settings. Assistive technology includes "high" and "low" tech devices and tools the IEP team has determined the student needs to support learning. It may be necessary to revisit AT needs for a student if additional supports are needed in the blended or remote learning environment. AT for some students may also include assistive listening devices and related audiological technology. In the case of blended learning schedules, create plans with staff and caregivers regarding the safe transport of the devices to and from school as well as proper cleaning and sanitation routines. Schools and caregivers can reach out to the Illinois Assistive Technology Program at www.iltech.org for AT support. Information or training may need to be provided to caregivers on use of AT in their home languages.

Accessible Educational Materials
Some students, such as those with visual impairments or print disabilities, require instructional and assessment materials presented in accessible formats (e.g., braille, large print, etc.). Work with your school/district/entity to determine how accessible educational materials will be prepared and supplied to students, as needed. For more information on securing accessible materials, please visit https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-NIMAS-NIMAC-Information.aspx.

Transition Planning and Services
Coordinate with any outside agencies or organizations that provide transition or pre-employment services to students to ensure services are provided in a way that adheres to COVID-19 health and safety standards. Services like job coaching and in-person employment experience opportunities may need adjustment and careful planning with input from school staff, students, caregivers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, job coaches, and employers.

Twice-Exceptional Students
Special consideration should be given to students who are twice exceptional. Twice-exceptional students have the characteristics of gifted students with the potential for high achievement and

give evidence of one or more disabilities as defined by federal or state eligibility criteria.[9] Twice-exceptional children may struggle with executive functioning skills, such as organization, participation, frustration tolerance, and long-term planning in the school environment. These difficulties may be exacerbated by uncertainty and transitions to new learning formats (remote, blended, in-person), requiring extra support from the school, teachers, and caregivers. It is also important to keep in mind that anxiety and worry often surface when there are fewer intellectual pursuits available, so twice-exceptional students will benefit from having opportunities and resources to extend their learning and explore intellectual interests.

Delivery

Assisting students in accessing the curriculum during this flexible learning time should be a collaborative effort, just as it is in a typical school environment. Districts should share resources and ideas with each other as much as possible.

The focus of instruction should be individualized and based on students' IEPs, goals, modifications, and accommodations within the IEP. To ensure this differentiation occurs, there should be communication between special and general education teachers (including bilingual/ESL and dual language teachers), case coordinators, teacher assistants, itinerant teachers, visiting specialists, and clinicians to support students in accessibility and in meeting their IEP benchmarks and goals.

Districts and educators should also make certain that the curriculum is accessible and multi-sensory in its nature to support all learning styles and language proficiency levels for Multilingual Learners.

Any changes to programs or goals should be made conforming to state and federal regulations. See https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Special-Education-Required-Notice-and-Consent-Forms.aspx.

Social-emotional learning strategies are integral to students' learning and well-being. Many of our students have counseling or social work services and intense social-emotional needs documented in their IEPs. This pandemic can exacerbate some of those needs. Special educators should collaborate with the students' clinicians to work on activities that support students with stress/anxiety reduction and other social-emotional learning activities. Other social-emotional topics to consider include internet safety, online etiquette, self-advocacy or speaking up to make sure one's own needs are met, safe community involvement, and personal care routines.

Once plans for instruction have been created, communicated, and established, delivery of instruction should be clear and consistent. Educators, service providers, and paraprofessionals must work collaboratively so that the instruction provided matches the plan set forth by the school or district and key stakeholders are aware of said plan. As plans for learning are enacted, educators may identify hardships or challenges that cause the team to return to the planning phase and make changes as necessary.

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9 https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources-parents/twice-exceptional-students

Feedback & Assessment

All directives from the U.S. Department of Education for students with special education needs should be followed in relation to in-person, blended, and remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The IEP team must convene before any changes to students' IEP required assessments are made for the duration of the pandemic. It is important to note that districts have local control in guiding staff to meet the needs of their school community and students' IEP needs. When grading/assessing student work, the priority is to assess in a manner that supports motivation and participation in this flexible learning environment.

Every effort should be made for collaboration among case managers, service providers, caregivers, and general education staff when determining a summative grade that will include a range of both in-person and instructional experiences. Assessments should be as inclusive as possible and allow students multiple avenues to show what they know, understand, and can do. Suggestions for assessments and grading practices that most benefit students with special education needs include:

- Rubrics;
- Standards-based grading;
- IEP goals and objectives-based grading;
- Competency-based grading;
- Evidenced-based grading;
- Portfolio-based grading;
- Contract/negotiation-based grading (effort to improve current assignment to raise letter grade);
- Narrative feedback for video observations or caregiver anecdotal reports;
- Narrative feedback for written work or projects; and
- Pass/incomplete (although usually not recommended for students with special education needs, it may be appropriate during flexible learning).

When developing individualized grading/assessment practices for students with special education needs, the following factors should be considered:

- Student needs and present levels of performance;
- IEP goals and objectives;
- Required accommodations/modifications/services;
- Capacity of support in this flexible learning environment;
- Social-emotional response to the COVID-19 crisis;
- Self-advocacy and social justice;
- Access to needed resources to participate in learning;
- Student's past performance;
- Current grades and performance; and
- Transition and postsecondary goals.

In-Person Learning

Planning

When returning to a model of in-person learning following the period of remote learning during the 2019-20 school year, educators should be mindful of the barriers that may exist for students. Students, especially those with special education needs, have often gone several months without the typical structure and supports they were accustomed to prior to remote learning. Due to this, students were required to adjust to alternate schedules, activities, and expectations in relation to their education. The return to an in-person education will be another change in students' daily structure and should include practices that best support the transition. Students who may experience added stressors upon returning to in-person learning include:

- Students with physical limitations who rely on others for daily living activities;
- Students with sensory sensitivities who may reject personal protective equipment (PPE);
- Students who are deaf/hard of hearing who rely on reading lips and facial expressions, which may now be covered with PPE;
- Students who experience anxiety or other related disorders due to their disability; and
- Students with underlying health concerns that are more susceptible to infection.

Teachers and staff should refer to the recommendations outlined in the ISBE and IDPH joint [transition guidance](#) when considering the return to in-person learning. Instruction and physical classroom setup should be tailored to meet these requirements. If you are using barriers to create defined areas or for health and safety reasons in your classroom, be mindful of students who need sustained lines of sight to teachers and other support staff. If you are an itinerant teacher or service provider, coordinate with the teacher and school to establish a safe pull-out space, when needed. For services that include "hands-on" or close contact interventions (e.g.,. occupational therapy, physical therapy, orientation, and mobility), evaluate safety measures, alternate means of service delivery, and/or re-prioritization of skill areas.

This is a period in which building relationships with students is crucial for future success. It is inevitable that students have regressed some in academic, social, and emotional skills over this prolonged break from in-person learning; districts should be prepared to adjust curriculum and instruction to meet these needs. This becomes especially important for students with special education needs who already face a gap between performance level and grade level. Re-teaching of previously mastered skills may be necessary to make up for this regression. This includes academics as well as school/classroom expectations, personal boundaries, and self-advocacy.

Collaboration and feedback from the caregivers of students should always be considered when planning for in-person learning. Ongoing communication regarding the successes and challenges of in-person learning will be beneficial for reflection and future planning.

Delivery

In-person learning may include traditional practices that were used prior to the statewide school closures and may also include training for students on how to access online learning in the

event that a remote or blended learning format becomes necessary. ISBE recommends that schools prioritize in-person learning for students with special education needs to the greatest extent possible.

Teachers may consider the use of technology within the classroom to provide instruction and support while maintaining social distancing guidelines as much as possible.

In addition to academic and social-emotional instruction, guidelines regarding social distancing, proper sanitation, and use of PPE should be communicated and practiced with students during in-person learning. Possible modes of teaching these concepts include social stories, modeling (video and in-person), role playing, task analyses, and accessible visual or tactile aids. Students should be offered opportunities to generalize these skills within the school setting.

Feedback & Assessment

During in-person learning time, it is important to take advantage of the strong relationship between educators and students to gather as much instructional and social-emotional assessment information as possible. In-person feedback is very important for students, especially as they have been isolated from this type of interaction during remote learning in spring 2020. Providing examples and practice for students using different assessments, such as student interviews, well-being self-assessments, reading and writing conferences, and development of projects, performances, and products, can be started during in-person learning and continued during blended and remote learning times. Take the time during in-person learning to explain and practice the process for any assessment that will occur when students are not in the school building.

Using in-person time to model exemplars with accompanying rubrics for what students will be assessed on helps clarify expectations and reduce stress. Giving students this preview and practice will allow them to self-assess as they work on their own projects, as well as guide all professionals and caregivers who support each student.

Blended Learning

Planning

Blended learning plans must address the unique needs of the students eligible for special education services.

Blended learning in conjunction with technology and in-person learning allows students with special education needs to control the time, pace, and place of their learning. When in-person learning and/or collaboration are not possible, continuity of learning can still be encouraged when students are working independently by:
- Ensuring that directions are presented so students can understand without assistance;
- Using visuals, video modeling, headings, bullet points, appropriate text size, boldness, and color to create a clear workflow for students to follow;
- Utilizing virtual platforms for grouping purposes;
- Considering the following questions:

1. How will a student know where / how to start?
2. How will a student know what to do next?
3. How will a student know when the work is completed?
4. How will I know when a student has completed an activity?
- Establishing a consistent schedule for how and when students will receive and return work for a range of access to connectivity and in all learning platforms; and
- Preparing instructional materials in other formats (flash drives, project packets, etc.).

Delivery

The incorporation of activities that help familiarize students with the technology, devices, and programs they will be utilizing both during direct instruction and remote learning times is critical. Suggestions for instruction include:
- Provide specific instruction and mini-deadlines/ benchmarks for assignments, especially those with multiple tasks;
- Create opportunities for students to demonstrate progress and receive feedback related to assignments and IEP goals;
- Use student interest profiles to inform lessons and activities;
- Provide alternative options for participating in virtual class discussions;
- Create video modeling of how you expect something to be done or what has been successful;
- Provide pre-recorded instruction for students to access; and
- Make certain students with limited connectivity have sufficient and adequate resources to complete assignments in other formats.

Feedback & Assessment

Consistency and cohesion should guide assessment practices in blended learning. Thematic units of study that incorporate project and performance-based instruction also can provide some of the needed cohesion in assessment. Practitioners should take full advantage of the in-person learning time to prioritize assessment of IEP goals in an authentic and meaningful way.

Remote Learning

During remote learning, school teams, administrators, and educators can build on the relationships, practices, and infrastructure created during in-person and blended learning to support students with special education needs. The following section addresses considerations and recommendations that should be taken into account in planning, delivery, and assessment for learners with special education needs during times they may be away from school, teachers, and peers. Keeping these considerations and recommendations in mind before, during, and after planning -- as opposed to retrofitting already-planned instruction -- will maximize the effectiveness of remote learning for students with special education needs.

Planning
- Identify realistic, individualized time frames for task completion. Be mindful of extended time accommodations outlined in IEPs.

- Provide specific instruction and mini-deadlines/benchmarks for assignments, especially those with multiple-tasks.
- Use technology resources to provide comprehensible instructions to students. Provide two-three step directions, record (audio or visual) yourself reading directions, and either link to or embed the recording in your lesson.
- Create opportunities for students to demonstrate progress and receive feedback related to assignments and IEP goals.
- Use student interest profiles to inform lessons and activities.
- When possible, use technology tools that allow for students to communicate through multiple modalities. If that is not possible, plan alternative communication options for students.
    - Do not require students to show their video during video conferences and/or allow them to listen without the expectation of having to talk.
    - Use captions, when possible.
    - Offer the option of communicating through a different modality (e.g., using the chat box during a video call or posting a link to an audio or video response in a discussion board).
- Give students various ways to access information because students are more likely to remember information that is presented in various formats.
- Think about how movement, arts, nature, and social activities can be incorporated into instruction.
- Encourage caregivers to use high- and low-tech devices around the house to establish and maintain schedules and routines. Egg timers, microwave timers, alarm clocks, and cell phone timers are examples of supplies that can be used as auditory, visual, or tactile (vibration) alerts to keep students on task.
- Provide a sample schedule for caregivers to model how to move from task to task and take breaks.
- Provide or help caregivers create visual or tactile supports (e.g., schedules, cues) that are consistent with the school environment.
- Be prepared to support students as they continue to learn the social nuances of working remotely. Explicit instruction or scaffolded directions may be necessary to teach students how to use and interact with others on various technology platforms.
- Remote learning environments often require students to multitask and filter through layers of incoming sensory information. Be proactive in providing support for students to either direct or redirect their attention to the most salient aspects of instruction.
- Prepare and provide materials for students with visual impairments or print disabilities in braille or other formats required by the student's IEP.
- Consider the following for students who are deaf or hard of hearing or have visual impairments when planning for and engaging in online meetings:
    - Use a neutral background and use appropriate lighting.
    - Prepare for your and the student's use of assistive listening and/or braille technology.
    - Avoid eating or chewing gum.
    - Reduce background noise and mute participants, when appropriate.

- Speak at a normal pace and be mindful of remote interpreters and captioning.
- Announce who is speaking and pre-warn students if you are sharing your screen or content that causes your face to not be visible.
- Ensure any visuals are easily seen by using color contrast, manipulating text size, or sharing the visual with the student so they can manipulate the image, as needed.
- Prepare and supply materials or visuals in braille or tactile formats, when possible.
- Prepare notes to provide to students after the meeting or video.
- Check in with the students privately to determine their understanding.
- Be aware that students may be navigating multiple devices and assistive technology.

Delivery

To make remote learning as accessible as possible to students with special education needs, the following considerations may support educators and related professionals as well as students and caregivers:

- Have clear procedures and expectations for every technology tool or platform used with students.
- Maintain regular communication with students. Use school-approved messaging, discussion board, and videoconferencing tools to communicate regularly with students.
- Encourage social interaction among students by scheduling times for students to interact without the pressure of learning content at the same time. Have students talk about events in their lives, tell jokes, or share good news.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in content areas
- Incorporate arts into instruction to allow students to learn content and express information through various media.
- Create video modeling of how you expect something to be done or what has been successful in the school setting, such as hand-over-hand assistance in the classroom.
- Provide repetition of content using multiple modalities during and after instruction.
- Students with disabilities may not have the stamina, patience, or ability to attend to instruction or interact with others for long periods of time in a remote learning environment. Chunk information or interaction into smaller sections for students to process. For example:
  - Rather than giving students a 10-minute video to watch, break it into 2- or 3-minute sections so students can process what they have seen before moving on.
  - Instead of directing students to read an entire news article on a news website where the amount of text and visual noise may be overwhelming, copy and paste paragraphs onto a blank document so that the information is broken up into manageable sections free of distractions.
  - Allow a student to discuss a topic with one other partner in a video call rather than in a group of four so their attention can be better focused on the task at hand.

- Utilize technology resources to visually illustrate concepts for students. If you are recording yourself, show realia or use a small whiteboard or pieces of paper to draw and write. Search for images on the internet to illustrate key concepts. There are many online repositories of art, images, and videos from museums around the world. See ISBE's Continuing Education Resources page for links to these and other resources.
- Provide text at different levels. When looking for texts to share with students, try to use websites that provide leveled texts with audio and visual support. If that is not possible, create your own leveled text with audio and visual support. (See example.)
- Be aware of the impact that limited physical mobility, both gross and fine motor activity, might have on the student's ability to fully participate in remote instruction.
- If possible, provide questions or prompts to students before online group discussions if they need extra time to process the questions, formulate responses, or to relieve anxiety.
- Use built-in accessibility features in learning management systems, albeit on an individualized basis according to student need. For example:
  - Use heading styles that allow screen reading software to navigate from section to section.
  - Use font, size, and text formatting to distinguish between items or to navigate. Ensure no information is conveyed solely by color or sound.
  - Use Alt-Text to allow users with screen readers or with slow connection to identify your images, graphs, and charts.
  - Enable tooltips so that descriptions appear when users hover over images, graphs, and charts.
  - Enable captioning if accurate auto-captions are an option in the online platform
- Provide transcripts of any pre-recorded audio or video used with students. Use accurate closed captioning on videos.
- Use descriptive titles, headers, and captions to provide additional context and information for students.
- Use descriptive text in hyperlinks so students clearly know where the link will take them. Avoid phrases like "click here" or "read more" without additional descriptors.
- Allow for flexibility and extended time for students to process and respond to content.

Hands-On or Offline Options for Remote Learning
- Use non-digital resources of work. (Where possible, coordinate this effort with the case manager, school leadership team, and/or assistance of paraprofessionals.)
- Incorporate life skills essential for students with IEPs. This includes, but is not limited to, cooking, chores, cleaning, hygiene, social conversations, and problem-solving, etc.
- Have students track activities with photos, artistic or musical representation, or videos and submit to teachers.
- Keep meditation logs and provide links to meditation apps and online media.
- Encourage journaling.
- Utilize ground activities (e.g., choose five objects that are around you and describe them in detail).
- Utilize virtual museum tours and video demonstrations.

- Plan lessons around resources that are available to caregivers at home and in the community (e.g., public television, library, parks, community centers).
- Utilize games, toys, or household items to which the students and caregivers may have access.
- Provide a wide array of books that pertain to a student's particular interests (e.g., audio, apps, hard/soft cover books, educational science magazines, etc.).

Feedback & Assessment

Assessment practices that reflect the instructional activities and strategies used during remote and in-person learning are most effective for students with special needs and Multilingual Learners with special education needs. These practices are familiar and relevant to students, thus reducing their anxiety and allowing them to more readily show what they know and can do. Relying too much on decontextualized, multiple choice, true/false tests/quizzes, while easy to administer in the remote learning environment, puts too much emphasis on academic language and literacy required of the tests than on authentic assessment of students' content knowledge and skill levels.

Collective Responsibilities

As districts and schools navigate the change of instructional settings, it is imperative that ALL students, including those students who have a disability, are provided the opportunity to continue with learning that is consistent and as cohesive as possible. Instruction then becomes a culture of collective responsibility that creates an environment where students are engaged, supported, and thriving in learning. From district-level actions that will support learners at home and in a blended environment to related service professionals and paraprofessionals supporting and providing instruction of students with IEPs, individuals should be working in collaboration with other educators to meet the needs of all learners, including students with special education needs.

Collective Responsibilities	
District Leadership	Develop in-person, blended, and remote learning day plans.
School Leadership	Implement in-person, blended, or remote learning day plans for all learners.
Teaching Faculty	Provide a range of meaningful learning opportunities that meet the needs of all learners during the period of flexible learning environment.

Non-Teaching Faculty, Clinicians, Itinerant Staff, Related Services Providers	Provide all instruction and services per the students' IEP.
Paraprofessional	Participate in virtual/remote classrooms to better assist students during class times or online availability.
Student	Complete your assigned work by the due date.
Caregiver	Reserve a space for students to complete remote learning work.

Early Childhood (Birth through 2nd Grade)

General Recommendations for Early Childhood Educators

Collaboration between home and school is key whether children participate in in-person, blended, or remote learning. Building relationships should be the priority to support early learning students. Learning environments may fluctuate between in-person, blended, and remote learning during this pandemic, but districts must keep in the forefront that, whenever possible, the youngest learners (along with English Learners and students with IEPs) should be the first priority for in-person learning, when possible. At the same time, as educators, we must provide caregivers with opportunities to provide input into the structure/format of their children's education during this unprecedented period. Caregivers are critical collaborators for educating our youngest learners. They have a unique and important perspective that must be considered when determining whether remote, blended, or in-person instruction is best for each child. Educators should prepare to be flexible and responsive in support of the whole child and caregiver and seek to develop an effective partnership for learning no matter the learning format or environment.

Young children learn through everyday play, exploration, and consistency in a safe and stimulating environment. The child's relationships with educators, caregivers, and family members are key for their healthy development. Children learn best by having the freedom to actively engage with their environment. Children's play is a highly supportive context for development and learning. Children's learning and development are multidimensional, so a holistic approach to cover children's mind and body needs is best. This is a time for teachers to promote activities and ideas for students and their caregivers to make connections with their background knowledge and to support students' critical thinking skills. Technology use should be minimized/limited. Please see page 61 for more information regarding developmentally appropriate use of technology for young learners.

In planning for primary instruction, care should be taken to adjust the scope and sequence of the curriculum. Critical stages of instruction in reading, writing, and math have been disrupted; educators will need to adapt to meeting the needs of the students rather than implementing a prescribed curriculum. Planning for students who typically attend full-day programs needs to account for at least five hours of learning time per student per day and two hours for students who normally attend half-day programs (2.5 hours for PFA programs). School leaders need to provide educators time and guidance to carry out this shift in instruction.

An authentic, two-way process between caregivers and schools is more important than ever during this time of decreased physical contact within the school building and increased expectations on caregivers to support their children's learning at home. It is in the best interest of each and every student that those involved in their education, health, well-being, and social-emotional trajectory are in constant communication and aligning support so that students can reach their optimal development. The supports each student requires will vary per the needs of the student, but each should have equitable opportunities to access resources and a support

team. This support team includes district administration, educators, caregivers, and support staff.

Educators should develop all plans and procedures based on the [Department of Children and Family Services Restore Illinois Guidance for Child Care](#) and the [ISBE and IDPH Joint Guidance for Starting the 2020-21 School Year](#). Additional guidance for Early Childhood Block Grant (ECBG) programs can be found in [ISBE's ECBG Transition FAQ](#).

Collective Responsibility

District Administrators	• Ensure policies and practices are reviewed often to ensure each and every child is reflected in the current recommendations. • Encourage and open lines of communications between staff, caregivers, and students, using this feedback to continue to review and enhance current policies and practices.
Educators	• Provide feedback of the learned experiences and current work with administration to identify the opportunities for change, recognize strengths. • Open lines of communication and opportunities for engagement for all caregivers and their students is and continue to build partnerships to support the family unit, particularly the mental health of the student and their caregivers. • Use any in-person opportunities to proactively get to know each and every family in your classroom, because you may need their help to a greater extent than usual if remote learning is required again. • Provide caregivers clear guidance on how - and how often - to submit student work, and offer multiple, flexible pathways for this (e.g., email, Google Classroom, photos, texting, etc.).
Caregivers	• Engage with educators and administrators as time permits to communicate family strengths, needs, and changes to daily routines. • During times of remote learning, engage young children during the hours that are best for the family. • Review the suggested engagement activities for the day for their student and identify time in the day or week to best focus one-on-one time with their child to complete. • When possible, collect photos and video of their child's learning and the outcomes of their activities to share with educators via vetted and approved platforms. • Consider covering students' webcams unless they're actively using vetted/approved interactive online platforms. • Support their children in submitting weekly assignments, if applicable.

	• Maintain a schedule at home to provide children with a sense of safety and routine. • The most important consideration is to maintain a healthy state of mental stability for the family unit.
Students	● Communicate feelings and needs to the adults in their lives in order to better support their growth and development.

Communication

Teachers, related service providers, specialists, and paraprofessionals need to work together to communicate learning opportunities for caregivers that address the needs of all students. At the same time, it is critical that consistent messages are delivered to caregivers by each educator or staff member who encounters that family.

When working with caregivers with children ages birth to age 8, educators can provide suggestions and resources to help them support their children. Ideas for working with young children may include:

● Create a consistent, but responsive, daily routine and share it with children. Children learn best and are more adaptable to change when they know what to expect and have consistency in their daily life. This is not intended to advise caregivers to create a regimented daily schedule that mirrors the daily school schedule, but rather, a consistent flow of the day that fits into the family routine.

● Each family member should interact with children in their strongest language(s), even if that language is not English and even if that means their children may be hearing multiple languages each day. This is true for all families, whether or not the child is identified as an English Learner.

● Spend time with their children each day talking and/or drawing about how they are feeling; this is especially important in light of COVID-19 and social unrest.

● Spend time with their children each day playing games (invented or purchased), telling stories, and/or reading books in any language.

Flexible Communication

Caregivers play a significant role in the health and well-being of their children. They advocate, partner, and are engaged in working with the schools to promote the optimal development of their children. Both pre-pandemic and post-pandemic conversations have included the importance of engaging and empowering caregivers to connect and partner with their child's educator and school advocates.

One of the most common challenges in engaging caregivers is the school schedule does not often align with varied caregiver schedules. With regard to in-person and remote learning, districts should take steps to address policy and practice to include additional opportunities for caregivers to connect and engage beyond the "typical" school hours in order to partner with the

school. Flexible timing can include pre-recorded teacher videos for caregivers and students to view during the hours that best suit their schedules.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices and Technology in Early Childhood (Birth – 2nd Grade)

Young children learn best from live interactions with people (Anderson & Pempek, 2005). ISBE recommends prioritizing in-person learning for children age 13 and younger, as well as for English Learners and students with special education needs. Even when children are learning remotely, technology should only be used when it is the *best way* to support the child. Technology is one of many tools that educators and caregivers can use to support learning and connection. It is important to introduce media literacy concepts to young children and caregivers at this time. (For resources and tips, see Media Literacy in Early Childhood Report.)

It is important to provide opportunities for kindergarten through second-grade children to explore and engage with technology in the classroom, specifically the tools they may need to use if moved to remote learning. Include practice sessions with synchronous video experiences and support media literacy for young children and caregivers.

If technology is going to be used, please see the following tips and recommendations for how to best use it with young children:
- Technology should be intentionally selected based on its developmental appropriateness and the role it will play in supporting the child.
  - Minimize digital technology use with young children (especially children under age 2).
  - See sources like Common Sense Education and Common Sense Media for recommendations about age appropriateness of developed media content.
  - Slow-paced, repetitive, predictable content is best for young children (Anderson & Pempek, 2005; Anderson, et. al., 2000; Crawley et. al, 2002; Barr et. al, 2007).
  - Find opportunities for children to expand what they learned in class, to create content to share with peers (books, videos, podcasts), or to provide children with a window into the world that they cannot experience elsewhere (e.g., virtual tour of the Great Barrier Reef).
  - Connect technology use to in-person learning activities (e.g., provide a clip of your students playing or completing a task during the school day and ask the children to tell the rest of the story or act out what would happen next or provide recorded videos of you or your students playing with toys, exploring the world, or other activities you would have done during your in-person learning).
- Encourage the use of microphone or voice recording tools instead of typing, which could lead to frustration. Children can use the microphone to engage in shared language experiences, such as interactive or shared writing. When using interactive technology (touchscreens), be sure that the learning objective is the focus of the game, not tangential.
- Consider using interactive, people-focused experiences like video chat to build and maintain teacher and peer relationships. However, be aware that even communicating on video chat can be confusing and challenging for young children.
  - Video chat experiences should be consistent and predictable.
  - Examples of activities to do via video chat include:
    - I Spy

- ■ BINGO
- ■ Show and tell
- ■ Encourage physical movement, if possible, through finger and hand movements during songs
  - o Use only for short periods.
  - o Consider the social-emotional skills and struggles of your students and only use interactive experiences like video chat as appropriate.

- For first- and second-grade students:
  - o If developmentally appropriate, show children certain concepts via video, such as addition and subtraction, but keep in mind that children may struggle to do their own work while watching you on a screen.
  - o Encourage students to communicate, connect, and create with technology. For example, children can create videos, digital books, or audio recordings or take pictures and provide audio descriptions to dictate their thoughts about something they are experiencing.

Birth to Age 3

We recognize that the family is the child's first teacher. Young children learn through everyday play, exploration, and consistency in a safe and stimulating environment. Children's relationships with you, caregivers, and family members are key for their healthy development. Children learn best by having the freedom to actively engage with their environment. Children's play is a highly supportive context for development and learning. Children's learning and development are multidimensional, so we need to use a holistic approach to cover children's mind and body needs. Teachers should provide students and their caregivers with ideas to construct an understanding of the world around them, especially supporting and encouraging their communication and social-emotional skills.

Birth to 3 home visiting programs should follow their program model recommendations. Refer to *Restore Illinois Recommendations and Guidance for Home Visiting, Doula, and Coordinated Intake Programs.*

Providers should also use the Illinois Early Learning Guidelines for children from birth to 3 years and the Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards when designing their program.

In-Person Learning

Planning
Be sure to consult the ISBE/IDPH Joint Guidance as a final check on your plan for use of classroom materials, outdoor play, and interest centers. The ideas below are illustrations of how that guidance might be put into practice. As you are planning, you should also be mindful of the developmental age of the child as infants and toddlers vary widely in their strengths and capabilities.

Arrival and Departure Procedures

- Develop an arrival/departure procedure plan, create a visual of routines, and share plan with caregivers.

Classroom Materials

- Individual use of students' materials such as; markers, glue sticks, etc.
- Remove all soft plush toys that cannot be readily cleaned.
- Clean and disinfect areas, used materials, and toys at the end of the day.
- No toys should be permitted into the classroom from students' homes.
- The use of individual toy bins is highly recommended.
- Cloth sensory items, such as weighted vest, must be laundered between individual use.
- Hand-held manipulatives must be cleaned and disinfected between individual use.
- Theraputty, chew tubes, etc. must be restricted to individual student use and kept in students' cubbies.

Outdoor Play

- Assign playground toys (trikes and balls) to individual classrooms and follow guidance on shared objects in the ISBE and IDPH joint [transition guidance.](#)
- Wash hands before and after playground play.

Interest Centers/Desks/Tables

- Arrange room for fewer students at each center to allow physical distancing.
- Use visuals to assist students and staff with understanding spatial awareness while in centers.

Snack Area

- Leverage individualized packages for snacks and drinks.

Nap/Quiet Time

- All soft materials (blankets) should be stored separately for each individual student and laundered weekly.
- Any cots, mats, cribs, or other equipment should be cleaned and disinfected daily.

Delivery

Children ages birth to 3 years of age have unique learning characteristics, such as:

- Learning best in small blocks of time with repetitive activities.
- Observing things, watching faces.
- Listening to sounds and voices.
- Touching textures.
- Experimenting with objects.
- Stimulating all the senses.
- Tummy time, as applicable.
- Moving their bodies around, as applicable (stretching arms "So Big", etc.).
- Serving and returning communication.

- Narrative talk (describing what the infant or toddler or parent and child are doing).

Social-Emotional Development

Establishing and maintaining nurturing relationships with the student in conjunction with responsive caregiving is key to support the social-emotional development at this age level. Assist students with identifying basic emotions. Expect that even infants may feel and behave somewhat differently due to the pandemic by absorbing the dynamics in their families and their classrooms when they return. Maximal advantage should be taken during in-person, blended, and remote learning by promoting safety and connection above all else. Increase the use of singing and exaggerated hand gestures to compensate for the "cue reduction" that may result from wearing face coverings.

Feedback & Assessment

Assessments for young children need to be conducted in an authentic format, taking into account the individual variation of learners at this age and allowing children to demonstrate their competence in different ways. Assessments for all birth through age 3 children need to include a process for the reflection of the student's learning and the next steps for the student in the learning progression.

Developmentally appropriate assessments from birth through age 3 consist of authentic play-based observations. Assessment is ongoing and embedded into the moment-to-moment interactions with children to guide the learning.

Blended Learning

Planning
- Create individualized packages of books, games, and learning manipulatives that mirror or expand on the learning activities taking place in the classroom.
- Suggest an easy-to-follow schedule for caregivers that incorporates caregivers' daily routines, such as grocery-shopping, bill paying, etc., with at-home learning activities, including visual instructions for caregivers, whenever possible.

Delivery
- Pre-record the songs that are normally sang during class for children to listen to and sing/hum along with while at home.
- Pre-record videos of finger-play songs normally sang during class, such as "pat-a-cake" for children to watch and interact with while at home, aligned to age-appropriate screen time limitations.

Feedback & Assessment
- Regularly send home the instructor's observations of the child's in-class developmental behaviors and milestones.

Remote Learning

Planning
- Incorporate and stress the importance of caregiver/child relationships.
- Support caregivers' efforts to find resources and activities to enhance their relationship with their children.
- Stress the continued importance of talk, play, and touch as the foundation for all learning.

Delivery
- Provide home-based activities to promote and support parent/child relationships.
- Provide learning materials to support caregiver and child interaction.
- Share a variety of techniques for encouraging emergent literacy, including sharing books, singing songs, nursery rhymes, etc.
- Recommend practice reciting numbers and play with blocks or other toys. Possible activities include counting out loud and counting objects in the home, identifying colors and sorting games. Children could also hunt for objects in a room.
- Encourage caregivers to provide explorative activities and allow children to test and push limits while questioning what is and what can be.
- Encourage families to share family stories, talk about the structure of their specific type of family, explore culturally specific foods, clothing, music, dance, etc.
- Be sure to provide a variety of activities that cover all developmental domains including; social/emotional development, physical development and health, language development, communication and literacy, and cognitive development, as defined in the [Illinois Early Learning Guidelines](#) for children birth to age 3.

Feedback & Assessment
Assessment data will be collected when there is sufficient in-person learning to support the evidence of learning for birth to age 3 students. Continuous communication with caregivers on student progress on the learning progression is the goal. Caregivers can be provided with developmental sequences of learning during remote learning.

Pre-K & Kindergarten

Prekindergarten- and kindergarten-age children are inquisitive, curious, and eager to learn. More than ever, educators should be aware of the importance of life experiences, world views, family influences, linguistic background, and cultural traditions as valid sources of children's knowledge and learning. This is vital knowledge for educators to make stronger home/school connections and incorporate relevant learning experiences. The development of positive and caring relationships with adults and other children is of utmost importance.

We recommended the use of methods and strategies that support a strength-based approach and encourages students to learn and grow in all developmental domains through joyful, hands-on, and engaged learning.

In-Person Learning

Planning

Develop strategies to prepare and orient this group of learners to the newly established routines, schedules, and patterns of their school environment.

- Young students may struggle more with understanding safety and health requirements, such as wearing face coverings and maintaining social distance (e.g., why they cannot hug their teachers or touch their friends). Recommendations to assist students with understanding and compliance include the following:
    - Develop social stories for the expectations, routines, and procedures. Read the social stories daily.
    - Role play the routines and expectations in small groups.
    - Develop a visual tool and explicitly teach how to show and notice emotions and feelings while wearing a face covering, such as thumbs up/down, hands clenched, eyebrows scrunched, hands on hips, excited wave in the air, etc.
    - Develop visuals for identifying emotions and feelings on smaller cards and for each area of the classroom.
- Plan for outside instruction to help with social distancing requirements.
- Arrange developmentally appropriate activities for small group activities.
- Allow students to create their own physically distanced learning and play spaces using yarn, masking tape, or other materials to help provide them a sense of control of their environment.

Delivery

- Create a classroom environment that promotes positive teacher and student relationships that support student social-emotional well-being and self-esteem.
    - Be prepared for added interruptions and increased disengagement due to stress and trauma. Teachers will likely gain back more instructional minutes if short breaks are used as needed to reconnect with children's hearts and minds and help them reorient to learning.
    - Focus on repair rather than perfection when stressful exchanges arise between the children and/or teacher. Use breakdowns or upsets as learning moments and opportunities to come together as a community, dealing with stress and uncertainty together.
    - Promote empathy through conversations about other people's feelings and perspectives.
    - Explicitly teach how to show and notice emotions and feelings while having on a face covering such as thumbs up/down, hands clenched, eyebrows scrunched, hands on hips, excited wave in the air, etc.
- Establish a predictable routine and share it with students everyday using a visual schedule to help children feel safe and in-control. Refer to the visual schedule after each activity to increase their feeling of safety.
- Provide learning in small blocks of time with learning targets presented in multiple ways, in a variety of contexts/settings, and with a range of materials. Per the ISBE and IDPH joint [transition guidance,](#) students should handle materials individually or use their own set, when possible. Students who share materials should use hand-sanitizer after the activity. Continue to check the updated public health guidance for sharing of materials.

- Engage in active exploration and playful learning in child-initiated activities with social distancing, as much as possible.
- Engage in teacher/adult initiated activities in small learning groups with social distancing, as much as possible.
- Provide choices based on student interest.
- Explicitly teach strategies to support students in the calming of their bodies and minds, such as mindful movement, deep breathing, stretching, singing, bubble-blowing, and drawing.
- Maximize the use of language during in-person learning by using a lot of self-talk and parallel talk to map words to actions.

Feedback & Assessment

To intentionally align curriculum and learning targets to students' needs and abilities, it is recommended pre-K and kindergarten students be assessed upon return to school. Assessments may be embedded into the day-to-day learning activities to avoid assessment fatigue. Assessments for young children need to be conducted in an authentic format, take into account the individual variation of learners at this age, and allow children to demonstrate their competence in different ways. Assessments for all prekindergarten children should include a process for the reflection of the student's learning and the next steps for that student in the learning progression.

Developmentally appropriate assessments consist of authentic play-based observations. Assessment is ongoing and embedded into the moment-to-moment interactions with children to guide the learning.

Developmentally appropriate assessments for prekindergarten and kindergarten students that demonstrate continuation of learning may include:
- Photos of artifacts: Parent/caregiver or student submits a photo of student work and/or it becomes a step in the hands-on activity for learning and the teacher provides specific feedback.
- One-on-one conferring: Mimicking a reading or writing conference that is typically done in the classroom – the teacher interacts with the child to assess identified skills/tasks.
- Video of student learning: Parent/caregiver takes video of the student completing tasks, reading aloud, etc. and shares with the teacher utilizing a district-approved platform.
- Student self-reflection of skills: Examples include student matching his/her completed task to samples on a learning progression or rubric, student sharing with the teacher what he/she is most proud of and what he/she is still working on, and student and teacher jointly determining goals for the next step of learning for the student.

Developmentally appropriate assessments for prekindergarten and kindergarten students that demonstrate continuation of learning may include:
- Collected physical artifacts;
- District-supported web-based programs; and
- Writing/drawing samples and on-demand writing for composition of book-making.

Blended Learning

Planning
- Blended learning may incorporate recommendations from both the in-person and remote learning sections, as well as the following:
  - Create a recommended remote learning schedule that aligns to the in-person schedule. Share this with caregivers.
  - Create videos of content for children to watch repeatedly (e.g., reading a book based on the publishing company guidelines, songs with hand movements, puppets, learning activities) while they are at home.
    - Provide caregivers with multiple opportunities and methods to download and practice playing video content while at the school in case they do not have adequate internet access to view them at home.
  - Create choice boards of activities that extend the learning and objectives from in-person learning. Choices should include suggestions in each of the developmental domains.

Delivery
- Blended learning may incorporate recommendations from both the in-person and remote learning sections, as well as the following:
- Provide caregivers with learning kits of materials/supplies and suggestions of activities to extend the learning standards and the investigation/study that is being delivered in the classroom.

Feedback & Assessment
Blended learning may incorporate recommendations from both the in-person and remote learning sections above, as well as the following:

- Use in-person time to monitor children's progress to plan for remote learning.

Remote Learning

Planning
- Create learning kits of materials and supplies to incorporate classroom learning standards and learning experiences, such as investigations or studies.
- Create videos of content for children to watch repeatedly (e.g., reading a book based on the publishing company guidelines, songs with hand movements, puppets, learning activities). Send home through the method accessible to caregivers.
- Create choice boards of activities that may be completed on a flexible schedule over one week period of time. Choices should include suggestions in each of the developmental domains -- social/emotional, social studies, arts, science, fine/gross motor, literacy, mathematics, language development.
  - Choices should include hands-on, exploration opportunities;
  - Include choices for students with IEPs and/or English Learners that address the student's goals; and
  - Send the choice boards home through the method accessible to caregivers.
- Prioritize developmentally appropriate skills based on the level of the child.
- Attend to gross motor skill development as gross motor skills increase development in other areas.

To assist caregivers during remote learning, consider the following:
- Provide information in a variety of ways, such as tip sheets and video tutorials, to assist them with remote instruction.

Encourage caregivers to establish routines and a daily schedule (e.g., provide visuals for the caregivers to develop a visual schedule with their child). This is not intended to advise caregivers to create a regimented daily schedule that mirrors the daily school schedule, but rather a consistent flow of the day that fits into the family routine.
- Inform caregivers about any digital platforms used by the district and how to access information.

Engage with caregivers who do not have access to technology by providing paper packets and connecting via phone calls and applications that do not require an internet connection.
- Remind caregivers of the importance of play. Provide information that play is learning and encourage them to design intentional play activities with materials found in their home.
  - Consider holding weekly virtual support/planning gatherings for caregivers to provide additional information on supporting their children's learning, as well as strategies for behavior, social/emotional, and home routines.
- Create videos of content for children to watch repeatedly (e.g., reading a book based on the publishing company guidelines, songs with hand movements, puppets, learning activities). Send home through the method accessible to caregivers.
- Create choice boards of activities that may be completed on a flexible schedule over one week period of time. Choices should include suggestions in each of the developmental domains. Send home through the method accessible to caregivers.

Delivery

Provide caregivers with learning kits of materials/supplies and suggestions of activities that incorporate the Illinois Learning Standards and relate to the learning experiences, investigations, or studies.

Choice boards include activities in each of the domains: social/emotional, social studies, arts, science, fine/gross motor, literacy, mathematics, language development.

Choices should include hands-on, exploration opportunities.

Include choices for students with IEPs and/or English Language Learners that address the student's goals.
- Video chats for small group and whole class community building; use video chats for small group and whole class community building as opportunities to build relationships and connection among your classroom. Consider short videos that can be sent via text message to families that do not have regular internet access.
- Encourage caregivers to document, share, and communicate the learning, exploration, and play the child is doing at home via the district platform, phone call, text, email, etc.
- Hold weekly virtual support gatherings for caregivers to provide additional information on supporting their children's learning as well as strategies for behavior, social/emotional, and home routines.
- Make individual phone calls to connect one-on-one with caregivers.
- Provide ways to incorporate learning targets into household chores and daily activities.

Feedback & Assessment

Assessment data will be collected when there is sufficient in-person learning to support the evidence of learning for prekindergarten students. Continuous communication with caregivers on student progress on the learning progression is the goal. Caregivers can be provided with developmental sequences of learning during remote learning.

Grades 1 & 2

Children are constantly learning at home. They will return to school with new interests and knowledge. More than ever, educators should be aware of the importance of Funds of Knowledge since world events have brought homes, families, and communities into the sphere of schooling more explicitly. Life experiences, world views, family influences, and cultural traditions are all valid sources of children's knowledge and learning. This is vital knowledge for educators to make stronger home-school connections and make school relevant, especially in light of any degree of remote learning that will continue.

Rather than starting from the deficit view of what was not covered last year, think about projects and inquiry-based learning activities that allow children to enter at multiple points for both topic interest and skill level. Allow children to flexibly demonstrate growth in skills that are adjacent to and relevant for learning goals. We recommended the use of open-ended curricula, such as a workshop model, that take into account various levels of performance, rather than expecting to adhere strictly to the typical scope and sequence.

In-Person Learning

Planning

- Plan for the safe use of classroom materials, such as Individualized use of materials like markers, scissors, pencils, glue sticks, math manipulatives, books.
- Use designated individual cubby, hook, area for students' belongings.
- Carefully consider room and center arrangement based on the ISBE/IDPH Joint Guidance.
    - Have a plan for attending to students' social and emotional needs that includes opportunities for sharing feelings, needs, and thoughts through routines like morning meeting and closing meetings,
- Develop empathy through conversations about other people's feelings and perspectives, reflection and positive self-talk.

Delivery

Time and Days
- In-person learning should be prioritized for younger students (age 13 and younger), as well as for English Learners and students with special education needs.

- As children relearn school routines with new safety rules, their self-regulation and attentional capacities will max out even sooner than usual; thus, keeping learning segments shorter is especially critical.

Primary Routines
- To support social distancing, activities such as a morning meeting can happen around the perimeter of the room instead of on the rug.
- Activities normally done in a group might have to be done on an individual basis. For example, clay/Play Doh would be done at desks with each child having a bag with their own materials.
- Allow for as much choice as possible while still adhering to sanitization guidelines during individual activities.
- Plan for short mini-lessons with time for children to actively respond to the learning, observing level of engagement and adjusting instruction.

Social and Emotional Learning
- Prepare for some children to struggle with physical distancing and wearing face coverings. Support children through an educational approach to understand the importance of the new rules to protect themselves and their friends, neighbors, families, and teachers.
- Be prepared for more interruptions and disengagement due to stress and trauma. You will likely gain back more instructional minutes if you take breaks, as needed, to reconnect and refocus.
- Focus on repair rather than perfection when stressful exchanges arise between the children and/or teacher. Use breakdowns or upsets as learning moments and opportunities to come together as a community, dealing with stress and uncertainty together.
- Help children establish routines for, and build pride in, the care and keeping of their own materials

Small Group Guidance
- Capitalize on one-on-one conferences and groups of two-three children while others are engaged in choice or independent work.

Outside
- Consider utilizing outdoor areas for routines and learning, as much as possible.

Feedback & Assessment
Developmentally appropriate assessments for first- and second-grade students involve a continuation of learning and include relevant, timely, and specific feedback. Assessments need to be purposeful and embedded into authentic activities over time to avoid assessment fatigue.

Be selective about assessments.
- Use screening assessments, checklists, and rubrics based on Illinois Learning Standards.
- Use authentic experiences to assess children, such as observing during play, running records, open-ended projects, and anecdotal notes.

Blended Learning

Planning
- If choosing between staggering options, it may be better to opt for shorter days every day to allow students to have consistent daily routines. For example, Group A attends for two hours Monday - Friday, instead of two full days a week.
- Be strategic in considering in-person and remote learning activities.
- Assuming that a regular routine of alternating between in-person and at-home learning is taking place, the teaching of new content introduction should occur as much as possible during the in-person sessions, and practice/mastery/personal modification/extensions should occur when skills are practiced at home.

Delivery
- Practice online routines and technology in school so children and caregivers are better prepared for the remote sessions.
- Whenever possible, plan for hands-on remote learning tasks. Just as homework is not always digital, online modalities are not necessary for at-home learning or projects.
- Be mindful of friendships and work to develop and connect children together in-person.
- Use in-person time for instruction by the teacher and limit technology during these sessions.
- Prepare students for the possibility of returning to fully remote instruction.

Feedback & Assessment
Developmentally appropriate assessments for first- and second-grade students demonstrate a continuation of learning and include relevant, timely, and specific feedback.
- As much care as possible needs to be taken to get to know the children so feedback can be individualized and actionable.
- Take time to recognize, value, and discuss with children work that was done at home.
- Use in-person time to monitor children's progress to plan for remote learning.

Remote Learning

Planning
- Survey caregivers to gather information about schedules, materials, and technology.
- Be mindful of caregivers' schedules for live sessions.
- Commit to a small and limited number of online tools for your delivery of activities and instructions (to avoid caregivers having to learn to navigate multiple systems) and allow caregivers to submit their child's work through any channel that works for them.
- Plan for whole and small group meetings across the week with consistent times.
  - Provide for differentiation in small group learning sessions.
- Communicate with caregivers about the upcoming learning focus so children have needed materials on hand and know what to expect.
- Plan for a mixture of live and video instruction. When using video instruction, it may be helpful for young children to see videos that feature the classroom teacher or other known adults.
- Plan for any lessons taught online to have a paper version for caregivers with limited internet access with suggestions of hands-on learning activities.

Delivery

- Establish connections with children through community-building activities.
- Have an intentional purpose for live sessions and suggested materials that are clear for caregivers and children.
- Communicate the remote learning plan and expectations for student work with caregivers.
- Have a mixture of live and video instruction.
  - Record the sessions and provide download opportunities for caregivers with limited access to the internet.
- Think about videos with content other than instruction, such as a video with feedback about work, specifically recognizing individual children and the work they did.
- Ask children to show artifacts from home and community that are important to them and help connect "lessons learned" to academic content (which should include social-emotional learning).

Feedback & Assessment

Developmentally appropriate assessments for first through second grade demonstrate a continuation of learning and include relevant, timely, and specific feedback.

- Ask caregivers to support assessment (e.g., use parent inventories or caregivers videotaping children reading).
- Maintain online or computer-based records of student progress.
- Use real-time responses to evaluate students' learning (e.g., holding up mini white boards with written responses).
- Communicate with caregivers about what work will be evaluated.
- Consider one-on-one conferring (mimicking a reading or writing conference that is typically done in the classroom), in which the teacher interacts with the child to assess identified skills/tasks.
- Create opportunities for student self-reflection on their skills(e.g., a student can match his/her completed task to samples on a learning progression or rubric, a student shares with the teacher what he/she is most proud of and what he/she is still working on, or a student and teacher jointly determine goals for the next step of learning for the student).

Elementary School (3rd-5th Grade)

General Recommendations for Elementary Educators

Planning

Teachers are encouraged to plan and create academic and social engagement activities with a focus on the whole child. Teachers should target the essential standards and core competencies that were not addressed in the previous year, competencies that may have been addressed but did not achieve adequate levels of student mastery, and those that need to be addressed in the current year. Elementary school teachers should determine any gaps in student learning and understanding and plan accordingly to support student acquisition of these skills upon returning to school. Planning should account for at least five hours of learning time for each student each day. Assessment strategies (e.g., pre-test, benchmark, etc.) should be mindful of a student's readiness to demonstrate learning. Place a focus on the most essential standards when selecting content to cover with your students while planning and collaborating with grade-level teams and content-specific teachers to ensure students' academic and social-emotional needs are addressed.

Keep in mind that family circumstances vary widely and ensure that caregivers have opportunities to provide input into what learning format is best for their children in fall 2020. Also remember the factors that may play into these preferences -- health risks, limited internet connectivity, access to devices, etc.   Therefore, a flexible, responsive approach to instruction should be a primary focus.

We encourage cross-curricular activities that include multiple subject areas, when appropriate, to optimize learning during a crisis. Activities and assignments should be provided that focus on continuity of learning and clearly align to the district's curriculum. Activities and assignments should also be designed to allow students to work independently or with limited help from others when in a remote setting. Instruction may be pre-recorded or directly provided by the teacher. It should include supplemental materials carefully selected by the teacher and include resources from outside the school system that are directly aligned to the district curriculum.

Teachers are encouraged to incorporate movement whenever possible, such as with brain breaks, academic movement, mindfulness, and yoga, which may help students transition to and from in-person, blended, or remote learning. Regular intervals of physical activity help students manage their emotions and achieve daily physical activity.

All possible efforts should be made in planning and preparation to provide an equitable academic learning experience for all students. Keep in mind that even under your locally developed plan there may be students who are physically present more frequently (e.g., students with IEPs) or less frequently (e.g., students who have medical conditions that make them higher risk or who had been exposed to the coronavirus) and your instructional plan must be adjusted to meet the needs of these students.

Delivery

The delivery of instruction and the use of any digital learning platform should aim to maximize face-to-face instruction – if the science and data continues to support in-person learning – and allow for a fluid transition between in-person, blended, and remote instruction, regardless of internet connectivity. Teachers are encouraged to think about planning for learning activities that can be effective across all scenarios while best utilizing the setting available to them.

Delivery recommendations include:
- Maximize face-to-face instruction opportunities.
- Differentiate lesson plans and delivery to accommodate students' academic and social emotional needs, as well as setting (e.g., IEP, EL).
- Establish multiple avenues for students to receive one-on-one help or feedback (e.g., phone calls, videos, texts, digital app messages, facetime, etc.).
- Have availability/check-ins that are flexible.
- Communicate with students first with the tools teachers are already utilizing and familiar with at this time. Consistently use common platforms (suggested or already in use) across a district (within grade levels and aligned with other grade levels) to alleviate any confusion for caregivers and students.
- Due dates should be used primarily for the purpose of informing past and future instruction and should not be used to penalize students for compliance.
- Create learning opportunities for remote and blended learning that resemble classroom content using familiar wording.
- Create cross-curricular work when possible to maximize efficiency. Read a science or history article or use English language arts-based questions for comprehension, discussion, and/or writing.
- Clearly define the responsibilities of students, teachers, and caregivers in lesson plans and communication, as outlined in the overarching recommendations.
- Review procedures for accessing all instructional and communication platforms to transition from one learning environment to another.
- Notify caregivers of ongoing classroom activities and lessons to enable a smooth transition between learning environments.

Feedback & Assessment

Assessment is what teachers do to collect evidence about student learning to help provide them with feedback and inform instructional design. Grading is the reporting of a student's proficiency. It is important to keep in mind that students can learn without grades; they cannot learn without formative assessment and feedback. In other words, assessment and instruction are inseparable. Grading, on the other hand, may have different forms (e.g., traditional letter grades, pass/incomplete, competency-based grading).

Grades and assessments should reflect student learning and growth. This includes using normed, local, and/or teacher-generated assessments upon return to school as well as during the remote learning period, if possible and practical. Establish connections and relationships with students prior to engaging in any form of testing or assessment schedule. Student social-

emotional well-being is the priority as students re-enter school following the remote learning period. Assessment strategies (e.g., pre-test, benchmark, commenting on students' work) should be mindful of a student's readiness to demonstrate learning.

In-Person Learning

Planning
- Plan academic and social engagement activities with a focus on the critical standards not addressed in the previous year and those that need to be addressed in the current year (i.e., follow a process of reteach, review, introduce new standards). Some standards not addressed in the previous year can be embedded into current instruction via project-based learning.
- Consider the needs of the whole child and schedule fine arts, wellness, and other ancillary (e.g., noncore, electives, encore, specials) classes, whenever possible.
- Familiarize students with any learning management systems used to prepare for a potential transition to a blended or remote learning environment (e.g., login, navigation and use, troubleshooting).
- When planning stations, include at least one online station to better prepare elementary school students for the transition to blended or remote instruction.

Delivery
- Dedicate time to relationship-building and trust before beginning academic coursework (e.g., icebreakers, pair and share, positive classroom culture).
- Place a large focus on the social-emotional well-being of students (e.g., morning meetings, peace circles, and art work and journals for expression).
- Promote student engagement and interaction with adults and their peers (Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs before all -- *you can't touch their minds until you touch their hearts*).
- Incorporate learning journals, project-based learning, flip the classroom, etc. by using learning management systems that students and teachers have experience with (e.g., Google Platform, Schoology, Canvas, other local platforms).

Feedback & Assessment
- Utilize teacher observations, projects, and notes from classroom discussions to assess elementary school students' progress and provide consistent, ongoing feedback to students and caregivers.
- Develop student-friendly rubrics to facilitate seamless peer- and self-assessment.
- Use a variety of assessment methods, including reports, projects, peer-reviews, self-assessments, presentations, and portfolios.

Blended Learning

Planning
- Provide clear expectations on how to interact in the face-to-face setting, virtual setting, and transition between varied settings.
- Provide clear directions and practice for submitting classwork, such as turning in assignments, project-based learning, and journals, for both virtual and traditional classroom settings (e.g., electronic submission, pick up and drop off, mail in)
- Take into account the needs of the whole child and schedule fine arts, wellness, and other ancillary (e.g., noncore, electives, encore, specials) classes, when possible. Consider the amount of time students are physically present in school and the ability to adhere to health and safety standards.

Delivery
- Dedicate time to relationship-building and trust before beginning academic coursework (e.g., virtual games, hangouts).
- Face-to-face instruction, when applicable, should place a large focus on student engagement and interaction with adults and their peers. Screen time should be primarily reserved for remote contexts and should be limited when students are physically present in the classrooms.
- Incorporate learning journals, project-based learning, flipped classroom activities, etc. by leveraging district approved learning management systems familiar to students and teachers.

Feedback & Assessment
- Provide daily feedback to students to help them gauge their progress.
- Incorporate self-assessments for students to complete at home.
- Emphasize students' progress and individual growth toward grade-level competencies/proficiencies.

Remote Learning

Planning
- Plan for instruction that is relevant, consistent, and tailored to student and caregiver needs. Interaction between students and teachers should occur – whether live or recorded – on a frequent basis (e.g., daily, multiple times per week).
- Plan academic and social engagement activities with a focus on the critical standards across the core competencies that were not addressed in the previous year and those that need to be addressed in the current year (i.e., through a process of reteach, review, and introduce new standards). Keep in mind that some standards that were not addressed in the previous year may be embedded into instruction provided in the current grade level.
- Provide clear expectations on how to interact (student-to-student, student-to-teacher, student-to-content) in a virtual setting and how to transition between varied settings.
- Provide clear directions for submitting classwork, such as turning in assignments, project-based learning, and journals, in a virtual classroom setting (e.g., electronic submission, pick up and drop off, mail in).

Delivery

- Dedicate time to relationship-building and trust throughout the entire remote learning experience, such as through phone calls, one-on-one visits with social distancing, ice breakers, virtual games, and hangouts. Every attempt should be made to create regular interaction and face-to-face connections between teachers and students.

Feedback & Assessment

- Provide multiple opportunities for students to show mastery/proficiency.
- Emphasize student progress, learning, and individual growth over assignment completion and due dates.

Communication

Communication is key! Building a cadence for frequent communication with third- through fifth-grade students and their caregivers is necessary to keep students actively engaged, provide structure, and alleviate stress and uncertainty. Provide critical communication in languages representative of student and caregiver populations. Establish a local philosophy and approach for communicating with all caregivers that is consistent with local policies and procedures and use platforms that are familiar to students and caregivers. Examples include:

- Letters, newsletters, grade-level and/or department communication
- Phone call and automated calls
- District website
- Local news and cable channels
- Email, text message, cell phone application
- Social media and other web-based programs
- Video conferences
- Feedback on student work (e.g., progress reports, projects, assignments, assessments, video conference)

Middle School (6th - 8th Grade)

General Recommendations for Middle School Educators

Planning

- To the greatest extent possible, districts should establish time for teachers to plan and discuss critical content and essential skill sets across subjects/grade levels, as well as prioritize the most essential standards. These meetings may be virtual or in-person.
- To the greatest extent possible, districts should establish planning time for cross-curricular collaboration, including the incorporation of core and non-core elements (e.g., fine arts, physical and health education, social-emotional learning, elective courses) into single assignments.
- These revised flexible learning guidelines should and will allow teachers to introduce, incorporate, and assess new content, keeping in mind appropriate scaffolding and vertical cohesion of skills.
- If the school is utilizing a Learning Management System, account and login information should be provided to students and caregivers prior to the start of the school year. Technical support may need to be offered in an ongoing capacity.
- Roles and relationships can be especially tricky for young adolescents and their caregivers (Hamburg, 1974), so educators should clarify student and caregiver responsibilities that are reflective of family and community needs.
- Provide caregivers with opportunities to provide input into the structure/format of their children's education in fall 2020.
- Planning should account for at least five hours of learning time for each student each day and teachers should continue to coordinate so as to not overlap schedules for students. Teachers should attempt to ensure they can create a schedule that is consistent and easy for students to follow.

Delivery

- All students should have access to new content and materials relative to the affective and differentiated needs of middle school students. Differentiated needs can include special education, social-emotional, multilingual, and accelerated and gifted. See the Special Education and Multilingual sections for more information.
- New content should align with the Essential Illinois State Learning Standards as determined by the state and local districts, taking into account material that may not have been covered the previous year.
- When learning is delivered online, an offline alternative should be available that is educationally comparable and replicates the online version as closely as possible.
- Schools must make an effort to support caregivers with resources that help to facilitate flexible learning.
- Districts and schools should consolidate/prioritize information to caregivers and include resources, directions, and learning expectations for both students and caregivers.

A user-friendly, centralized communication tool may support this effort.

Feedback & Assessment
- Student work should be meaningfully assessed using varied formats and methods to consider differing student needs and situations.
- Personalized, meaningful, clear, and timely feedback are an important part of the education process and can help increase student learning, motivation, and growth, as well as the development of an academic identity in young adolescents (Miller & Wang, 2019).
- Feedback should be consistent, ongoing, incremental, and formative, as a means of keeping middle school students engaged in activities using multiple modes of representation.
- Educators should be able to provide a means (i.e., rubric) of how students will be assessed on the assignment(s) they are receiving. Assignment(s) should be accompanied with an explanation of the goals and objectives.
- Along with clear criteria (e.g., rubrics, checklists), educators should use compassion and their best professional judgement, keeping in mind the challenges of flexible learning for students when assessing and grading student work.

In-Person Learning

Planning
The future of education in Illinois points to the possible necessity of varied and differentiated delivery models of instruction. Some may be planned, but other learning opportunities may arise based on other factors, such as students' progression of learning or moments of instructional opportunity. When planning for in-person learning, educators should be aware of and prepared for a swift transition to either a remote or a blended remote delivery model of instruction for one, many, or all students at any time. Plans should allow for effective instruction across various modes of instructional delivery.

- Districts, schools, and teachers should utilize the Illinois Learning Standards to prioritize and focus their curriculum for the year.
- Scope and sequence of instruction needs to be considered, while allowing for adequate time for collaboration among grade-level and content-area team members.
- All classes, including fine arts, physical and health education, and electives, are critical components of a well-rounded education and should be incorporated into any learning plan. Interdisciplinary collaboration is highly encouraged.

Delivery
- To the extent possible, pacing of instruction between subject areas should be consistent and should strategically increase as students' progress through the middle school grades.
- Collaboration within and between teams and departments is encouraged.
- Students' academic and social-emotional needs should be considered when scheduling and delivering multiple tiers of supports, including interventions and acceleration. Students' progress should be monitored in order to assess the level of supports that are required.
- Even during in-person learning, educators should consider practicing occasional remote learning type activities with their students as part of their classroom expectations to help students be prepared for a possible shift to remote or blended learning.

Blended & Remote Learning

Planning

Depending upon local blended or remote learning model, daily instructional task(s) for those students not in the classroom should include fine arts, physical and health education, and elective courses in addition to the core academic content areas. Consider holistic, relevant, interdisciplinary instruction to keep middle school students engaged.

Delivery

Districts should do their best to ensure internet connectivity and devices for all students. If internet connectivity for all students cannot be ensured, districts should ensure that delivery of content during remote learning is equitable between students with internet access and those without.

Options for content delivery can include, but are not limited to:
- Online learning platforms (as long as non-internet options are also provided);
- Multimedia platforms and applications;
- Books, articles, newspapers, and periodicals;
- Meaningful graphic organizers, puzzles, or worksheets; and
- Inquiry-based projects, including interdisciplinary projects that may earn students credit for multiple classes.

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High School (9th - 12th Grade)

Planning for the delivery of high school instruction for fall 2020 requires thoughtful consideration of instructors' and students' access to technology, students' home and work contexts, the social-emotional and mental health of all stakeholders, caregiver needs and preferences, possible learning loss as a result of the sudden shift from face-to-face learning to remote learning in spring 2020, and planning and preparation for postsecondary opportunities. When planning and delivering instruction and assessing student learning for high school students, educators should keep in mind the myriad academic and social pressures and home and work responsibilities high school students may grapple with daily.

Additionally, high school students are deeply aware of and may have even personally experienced the societal injustices currently and historically impacting our country. Incorporating those current events within the classroom can help students safely process difficult and unsettling realities and information. Within this section, our collective goal is to ensure that, no matter the instructional setting, family context, or connectivity status, equitable access to highly engaging and rigorous content that results in college and career readiness and compelling postsecondary options and plans is available to all Illinois high school students.

General Recommendations for High School Educators

Planning
Teachers should consider developing an individual classroom transition plan in the event that remote learning is necessary for periods of time. Teachers should encourage remote learning opportunities for their students -- frequent or occasional -- as part of their classroom expectations. These sessions will serve as "dress rehearsals" in the event of a school campus closure and offer a stronger level of preparedness. Provide students and caregivers with clear protocols, student expectations for remote and blended learning, information on what materials should be brought home (e.g., workbooks, novels, textbooks, supplies), and teacher availability.

To support planning and preparation for teachers, it is recommended that teachers within the same course team, subject area, and/or grade level collaborate to create shared in-person, blended, and remote versions of instructional plans. Planning should account for at least five hours of learning time for each student each day.

Delivery
When possible, teachers should embed remote/blended learning practices as part of their in-person classroom routines. This may include:
- Assigning paper-based week-long projects;
- Utilizing features of the school's Learning Management System during in-person learning;
- Recording mini-lessons for students to view from phones, tablets, or laptop devices;

- Requesting that students submit work electronically, such as scans, photographs, video, and audio recordings of work and projects;
- Making in-person classroom materials available online or remotely;
- Modeling protocols for online classroom discussions in the physical learning space; and
- Creating a consistent schedule for assigned work.

In accordance with district policies, the recording of in-person classroom instruction may provide a strategy for teacher-student engagement either synchronously or asynchronously as students may log in during live instruction or access a recording at a later date. Teachers may also consider utilizing a flipped classroom in order to simultaneously meet the needs of students participating either in-person or remotely.

Feedback & Assessment

Teachers are encouraged, when possible, to utilize feedback and assessment mechanisms that would be used in a remote or blended learning environment so that students will not have to make an adjustment if remote learning becomes necessary for some or all students. This includes utilizing online assessment platforms and providing virtual feedback through a Learning Management System, web-based word processing platforms (such as Office 365 or Google Docs), audio/video recorded feedback, or other online communication that has been vetted and approved so as not to disclose personally identifiable student information. It is recommended that feedback is provided through a consistent platform so that students and caregivers can easily access all information, regardless of whether the students are in an in-person, blended, or remote learning environment.

In-Person Learning

It is important that educators use in-person learning time to build relationships with students and develop classroom norms and routines *under the assumption* that a transition into blended or remote learning may become necessary during the school year. All efforts should be made to provide students with digital and non-digital options so that internet access and connectivity are not barriers in accessing learning.

Planning

As part of the classroom orientation, the following guidance is recommended:
- Teachers communicate the schedule for assigned work with caregivers.
- Instructions are provided for accessing digital and non-digital materials.
- Guidance is provided for the different ways in which students can submit work and on the different ways they will receive feedback through both electronic and non-electronic means.
- Training is provided on the use of devices, software, and online platforms, apps, and tools.
- If the school is utilizing a Learning Management System, account and login information should be provided to students and caregivers at orientation or with back-to-school communication prior to the start of the school year.

Teachers developing in-person learning plans should consider opportunities for students to receive a comparable experience remotely as some students (e.g., those who are at higher risk of severe illness) may need to continue remote learning while classmates are in-person. Suggestions are outlined in the General Recommendations for High School Educators section on page 83, as well as the Blended Learning section on page 27.

It is recommended that course teams review the Illinois Learning Standards and adjust typical pacing for the school year. Course teams should consider adopting uniform pacing in order to facilitate collaboration and shared instructional plans in flexible learning settings.

Delivery

Teachers are encouraged to utilize in-person opportunities to facilitate the development of relationships with students and among students, as well as independent learning habits and endurance. This will become especially important if a transition to blended or remote learning becomes necessary during the school year.

Recommendations include:
- Utilize cooperative learning strategies and protocols to promote relationships between students:
  - Think-pair-share
  - "Three Levels of Text" protocol
  - Carousel/gallery walks
  - Group problem solving
- Emphasize the importance of and adherence to routines and schedules.
- Promote self-advocacy by:
  - Utilizing self-assessments to help students understand their individual learning styles, strengths, and needs (e.g., limited distractions, dedicated space for learning, preference for printed materials);
  - Encouraging questions and communicating needs; and
  - Communicating available resources and supports with students and families.

Feedback & Assessment

Feedback and assessment recommendations applicable to in-person learning are provided in the General Recommendations for High School Educators section on page 83 above. During in-person learning, teachers are encouraged to develop a common classroom understanding of assessments as defined in the Overarching Recommendations for Grading on page. Assessment is what teachers do to collect evidence about student learning to help provide them with feedback and inform instructional design.

Teachers are encouraged to provide students with opportunities to self-monitor their own progress and utilize feedback to advance in achieving their learning goals. Recommendations include:
- Developing individual student self-monitoring plans;

- Utilizing goal-setting forms;
- Discussing and/or creating assignment rubrics with students;
- Providing students with opportunities to describe their own progress toward learning objectives;
- Creating opportunities for students to provide feedback aligned to expectations to one another; and
- Modeling examples of high-quality student work aligned to rubrics and levels of achievement.

Blended Learning

Planning

It is imperative that school districts appreciate the need for collaborative planning time at the high school level. It cannot be underestimated how critical it is to recognize the importance of time to the intersectionality of course planning, instruction, and assessment. For high school teachers to effectively design, deliver, and assess high-quality blended learning, districts should consider the following:

- Embed planning time in a weekly/daily schedule. Deferring planning to four or five days within the school year will not be efficient or sufficient. Ongoing non-instructional planning time is preferred so that teachers can make adjustments in their course design and delivery. The point here is that just as in a fully in-person classroom, planning time for blended learning is tightly tethered to instruction. High school level instruction also lends itself to being able to respond to contemporary issues underscoring the value of regular course modifications.
- Course planning should be done with other course teams, department, and or grade-level teachers. Collaborative planning time is essential. Think of planning less as an individual function and more as a discipline-oriented task done by a team.
- Allow regular opportunities for high school students to provide feedback about course design and delivery. Teachers will need to know how the blended model is working for each student. High school students are capable of providing insight as to how they are experiencing the blended instruction. A brief two-item survey after every lesson or period of instruction can be used to provide important feedback that will be helpful to teachers in future planning.

Delivery

- Recognize that the time for direct teacher-student interaction will be reduced from a full in-person classroom. It's also true that high school students are more capable of working for periods without direct teacher engagement. Therefore, in delivering the course, teachers should ask themselves, "What is the most important thing in the lesson that students need direct engagement with me on?"
- Decide where direct teacher-student engagement is most needed. Work backward from that point to determine the preferred modality to deliver the instruction.

- Particularly at the high school level, teacher-guided in-person sessions should focus on, for example, problem solving, creative project development, analyzing options/conditions, judging the effectiveness of action, and proposing alternative ways to approach a situation.
- Teacher presence is important. Typically, presence starts with just walking into the classroom. But in a blended learning model, presence requires intentional creation and constant management.
- The teacher's persona will be especially important to high school students (Roorda, et. al, 2011), so be cautious that transitioning from in-person to remote learning and back again does not "flatten" your presence by using consistent tone and "teacher voice."
- When school students work independently, it should be for the purpose of contributing something new of value to a group project or class lesson. In other words, students should not think or feel as if they are "teaching themselves."
- High school students also have the social capacity to intensify their social engagement with their peers. Blended learning can go beyond the ability of one modality to provide students with the opportunity to work within teams, deepen their appreciation for diversity, and enhance an awareness of the different ways to understand and form communities.
- Student engagement should be maximized. Provide students with the opportunity to act in small groups or pairs either in-person or remotely. If remotely, synchronous learning is preferred so students have an opportunity to ask questions in real time.
- Provide clear directions to students on how to participate in remote discussions/projects, including requirements for length, content expectations, norms, and timeliness. Use the in-person session to set expectations for student participation, engagement, and activity in the course for both modalities.
- Videos are effective tools. However, if they are online instructional lectures (as opposed to providing other source material), it is best that the student's teacher deliver them to ensure relevance and continuity of vocabulary, etc.
- Teachers should be given the opportunity within their discipline or grade level to design, either in-person or remotely, instruction in a collaborative fashion. For example, one teacher produces the video (if remote), one develops supportive activities, and one creates assessments.

Feedback & Assessment
- For summative purposes and with a focus on being college- and career-ready, it is important to identify the key essential skills and/or content that students will need.
- Pair down the summative assessment rubric so that it is targeted to develop core skills that will advance students to the next level.
- Grading should be less about creating a granular, stratified way to distinguish an A+ from an A, for example, and instead be about evaluating evidence of the student's demonstration of learning standards.

Remote Learning

Remote instruction offers many learning possibilities, but student engagement can be easily compromised by the lack of face-to-face interaction. We learned in the spring that the relationships that we built prior to remote learning were vital for all student success. Please keep this in mind throughout the whole process. These recommendations specifically focus on prioritizing student learning needs, including social-emotional ones. Learning opportunities should offer diverse opportunities to help students stay engaged in learning and socially connected to their peers and instructors. The focus should be on the continuity of learning and creating learning environments that are engaging for and inclusive of all learners. Careful consideration must be given to avoid amplifying existing inequities in communities we serve.

Planning

Continuity requires consistency and collaborative interactions among all stakeholders, including students, instructors, education support professionals, caregivers, family liaisons, and administrators. A clear and consistent communication plan should be created to ensure understanding and continuity.

When implementing remote learning, existing resources should be taken into account:
- Consider what resources can be leveraged or repurposed for a less expensive and more efficient transition to remote learning. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Media center resources/hardware
  - Internet availability
  - Licensing agreements
  - Group/classroom instructional and learning management platforms, software, applications/apps and electronic media (e.g., readings in digital format, videos)
- Using available resources, such as:
  - Textbooks and workbooks
  - Newspapers, hard copies of readings, and handouts
  - Supplemental materials that have been used on a regular basis within the class

Remote learning also necessitates careful planning related to high school students' learning needs:
- The lack of in-person learning impacts the ability to build and maintain learning communities and the social interactions that are fundamentally important to adolescent learning. Careful consideration should be given to maintaining learning communities, to the extent possible, via synchronous meetings through online meeting technologies. Additionally, instructional practices that promote student interaction and discourse should be prioritized in planning and implementing lessons for high school students.
- Consider maintaining consistency in planning, delivery, and feedback that allows for flexible transition between platforms.
- Utilize districtwide common technologies that are flexible enough to support a variety of purposes, such as document creation, internet research, and online virtual meetings.
- Decide on common platforms for learning and virtual meetings within the district.

- Provide hard copy, non-technology-dependent resources to students, as needed or as requested, taking into account students' learning preferences and styles.
- Consider collaboration with team members, education support professionals, and administration to provide consistent instruction that is flexible and can fluidly transition from remote learning to other blended or in-person learning formats, while meeting the diverse learning styles, language proficiency levels, and social-emotional needs of students.
- Working hours for the instructor(s) should be clearly communicated to students and caregivers prior to the beginning of any switch to remote or blended learning.

Delivery
- Materials should be available both online and offline to ensure equity. Online and offline materials and activities should be consistent to the fullest extent possible.
- Consider the use of both real-time and pre-recorded class instruction. Instructors should use their judgment as to which format is more appropriate for particular content, learning needs, and class make-up.
- Leverage opportunities to co-plan and/or co-teach with team members, co-teachers, and teaching assistants in developing and delivering virtual lessons/discussions or breakout sessions.
- Translations of materials or multilingual resources should be provided to English Learners, especially to support frontloading/previewing of concepts and content. See the overarching section on Multilingual Learners on page 32 for more information.
- Internet bandwidth may vary depending on the time of day and the number of people streaming video and audio. This may affect streaming quality in live video classes and the ability to view or upload large files (including videos) for pre-recorded classes.

Feedback & Assessment
- Feedback should be used to encourage and motivate high school students to access content and engage in suggested activities, such as live discussions, discussion boards/posts, reflections, and short essays.
- Meaningful, clear, and timely feedback is an important part of the education process and can help increase student learning, motivation, and growth.
- Feedback should be informative and tailored to the assignment(s) given.
- Instructors should give personalized feedback on content materials. This practice should be observed even in instances when assignments are not submitted in a timely manner.
- Teachers should communicate lesson, activity, and assignment learning goals and objectives to students.
- Instructors should communicate assessment criteria (e.g., via a rubric) to students related to how they will be assessed on course assignments.
- Feedback should be consistent, ongoing, incremental, and formative as a means of keeping students engaged and informed on the progress of their learning.
- Along with clear criteria (e.g., rubrics, checklists, etc.), instructors should use compassion and their best professional judgement when assessing students' learning and grading their work, keeping in mind the challenges of remote learning for students.

- Flexibility, empathy, and understanding of students' varying personal situations should be taken into account beyond what might be typical during more typical (i.e., non-remote) learning situations. For example, during adverse and challenging times, high school students may have to take on additional family obligations, such as serving as caregivers and/or having to work outside the home.

Collective Responsibilities

The responsibilities of education fall on all invested parties -- instructors, students, caregivers, school administrators, professionals, and support personnel. All parties will need to consistently work together to maximize student learning as we navigate unprecedented situations. Throughout this process, it is essential to take into consideration high school students' non-academic responsibilities that may impact their participation in learning environments and activities (e.g., caring for younger siblings, working after-school jobs, aiding a sick family member). With this in mind, we suggest an added consideration of students' mental and physical health. Below is a non-exhaustive outline of recommended responsibilities for each stakeholder, acknowledging that local labor agreements must take precedence.

Instructor Responsibilities
- **Communication**
  - Consider ways to focus on relationships and connections with students and caregivers via various approved and vetted means, which may include phone conversations and electronic correspondence via various authorized platforms.
  - Clarify what supplies, books, and materials are needed if/when remote learning occurs.
  - Ensure students understand their responsibilities and expectations within the classroom and how these may evolve with changing circumstances.
  - Discuss expectations for students with caregivers and ask how caregivers feel they can best support their student's success.
  - Keep in regular contact with students, checking on student physical and social/emotional wellness. Report concerns accordingly.
- **Classroom and Instruction**
  - Create a strong and safe learning culture that encourages discussion, collaboration, and feedback.
  - Where possible, reorder the delivery of curricula that will better fit the model of remote learning.
  - Create daily schedules and routines, including setting specific times/methods for communicating with students and caregivers, monitoring, and supporting student participation.
  - Provide varied resources for student learning and engagement, as well as multiple pathways to assess student learning and create authentic assessments.
  - Be willing and prepared to offer assignments in various formats, depending on technology and resources available for students.
  - Provide supports/breakout time for students struggling with content as part of a student's "educational day."
  - Provide timely feedback on work completed to students and caregivers.
  - Archive lessons and other instructional activities for students to access later.

- **Social-Emotional**
  - Be flexible and empathetic with regard to social-emotional needs and learning or situation.
  - Maintain your personal physical, mental, and emotional wellness.
  - Connect caregivers with educational and social-emotional supports from school and within the community.

Student Responsibilities
- **Academic**
  - Commit to and engage in this reimagined educational environment. Approach it with a willingness to develop new habits and techniques for studying material.
  - Maintain the quality of work that is expected and produced in traditional classroom settings.
  - Complete assignments and assessments in a timely fashion.
  - Complete assignments with integrity and academic honesty.
- **Behavioral**
  - Be on time and mentally present for live remote sessions. Do not leave class early or engage in non-academic activities while in class.
  - Interact with instructors and peers appropriately, as if you are in school.
  - Continue taking safety measures to protect the health of fellow students and staff.
  - Upperclassmen can support and encourage new students who may be struggling to adjust to the school community while not being in a physical school setting.
- **Social-Emotional**
  - Be flexible and understanding as instructors navigate this new territory. Practice this understanding with your peers as well and recognize struggles they may be facing during this time.
  - Understand that your voice is valuable in this process and that you should share your feedback. Reach out to instructors with questions or concerns.
  - Monitor your personal screen time, exercise and eating habits, and sleep schedule to maintain your physical health.

Caregiver Responsibilities
- **Academic**
  - Keep open communication with instructors and students.
  - Encourage or expect your student to engage with instructors and the school daily.
  - Check in with your student daily for school updates.
  - Develop a routine and expectations for your student regarding sleep habits, work space, and work time.
- **Social-Emotional**
  - Encourage your student to advocate for himself/herself.
  - Stay aware of your student's workload, participation, and academic responsibilities. Be mindful of your student's mental, physical, and emotional wellness, and share concerns with the school/instructor.
  - Monitor your student's job/work hours and encourage healthy working habits and balance.

Non-Teaching Faculty Responsibilities
- Assist in communications with caregivers and students who temporarily disengage.
- Assist teachers with their schedule for delivering pre-recorded or real-time instruction.
- Assist teachers in "breakout groups" for students with unique or special needs.
- Assist teachers/school in contacting students, checking on student physical and social-emotional wellness. Report concerns accordingly.
- Provide special needs assistance for students as required by an IEP or 504 Plan.
- Provide resources for teachers, students, and families in need of social-emotional assistance.

Recommendations Specific to Career and Technical Education,(CTE), Dual Credit, and Advanced Placement (AP)

CTE

When weighing content decisions for CTE students, essential skills/knowledge must be considered along with what is required for students to earn industry credentials and meet standards of employers/certifying bodies.

When possible, students should be given every opportunity to meet in person, even if on an alternating schedule, block of time once a week, or staggered schedule. The importance of hands-on skill development is paramount to skill completion and industry credentials.

There are several opportunities to support skill attainment, knowledge growth, and industry credentialing in blended or remote contexts:
- Teachers may utilize webinar features for student learning. The students would problem solve and critically think through the task and direct the teacher through the task step by step.
- Allow students to complete tasks in industry or at home, where safe and appropriate. For example, a cosmetology student completes a makeup application and documents the process, then submits it for feedback.
- Supplies that would be consumed/utilized in the classroom may be sent to the students' home for task completion. For example, in a culinary class, ingredients are ordered on a regular basis and shipped to students' homes.
- Students may gain fundamental knowledge through virtual and mixed reality websites or applications. Many of the websites or applications allow for use or completion of a task with or without a virtual reality headset.
- Contact members of your advisory committee and teachers of common content areas to collaborate with community/industry support for task completion.

Teachers may choose to use various delivery methods for materials and evaluation of knowledge. Presentation may include, but not be limited to, video, self-guided activities, posting materials with discussion and questioning, reading of texts, essay writing, and sequential process flow. The time spent developing quality tasks and learning goals will support all

students in both in-person and remote learning contexts. The opportunity to build and strengthen relationships with industry partners will support the classroom in remote, blended, or in-person learning.

Dual Credit

The Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, and ISBE developed the following recommendations to advise secondary and postsecondary institutions in Illinois on supporting and accommodating students who are enrolled in dual credit courses as schools move to in-person, blended, or remote learning.

Dual Credit Courses Taught by a High School Instructor
Dual credit courses are taught by high school instructors and may fulfill students' high school graduation requirements, but they are college courses. As such, postsecondary institutions have decision-making authority in regard to course implementation. In order to complete and earn college credit for the dual credit course, students must meet the standards and expectations established by the postsecondary institution. The in-person, blended, or remote instruction that takes place must also meet the standards for college credit as set by the postsecondary institution. Both students and dual credit instructors should adhere to these standards.

Proactive, frequent, and clear communication between the postsecondary institutions and their high school partners is key to ensuring that dual credit students are allowed the opportunity to successfully complete their dual credit course and earn college credit. Postsecondary institutions and partner high schools should collaborate in preparing for in-person, blended, and remote learning possibilities so that each platform maintains the standards for college credit. No matter the instructional setting, clear protocols for transitioning between delivery platforms should be developed. Every attempt should be made to communicate course expectations, intended delivery platform, etc., **before** the start of the academic year.

Each high school should seek guidance from individual colleges and universities that are offering dual credit course work to their students. High schools should share with the postsecondary institutions their intended platform for instruction prior to the start of the academic year while providing evidence that the course can continue to meet the standards set by the postsecondary institution. Any changes made to the high school delivery method should be clearly and quickly articulated to the college or university. Every attempt should be made to allow students to continue in the dual credit course, following the standards and expectations set by the postsecondary institution.

In the event that previous measures for determining student eligibility (SAT scores, ALEKS, etc.) are not currently available, the postsecondary institution and the high school should consider alternate means to ensure that the students meet the course prerequisites.

Postsecondary institutions should clearly communicate with instructors and students their policy for students withdrawing from a dual credit course, moving to a pass-fail option, or requesting an "incomplete." This communication should include the academic implications for each of these options. If the postsecondary institution modifies these policies for their "on-campus" students, these same modifications should be afforded to their dual credit students.

Postsecondary institutions should share information and resources that they have developed for their on-campus courses that will support the dual credit instructors in the delivery of their dual credit course, whether in-person, blended, or remote.

Postsecondary institutions should ensure that dual credit students are aware of college and university resources and supports that are available to them.

Dual Credit Courses Taught by a College Instructor
The postsecondary institution should work with the high school to transition those students to online, remote, or alternative delivery options, consistent with the direction of both systems.

CTE Dual Credit Courses
When weighing decisions for implementing dual credit CTE courses, essential skills/knowledge must be considered along with what is required for students to earn industry credentials and meet standards of employers/certifying bodies.

In the event that students are able to resume in-person learning at the high school or postsecondary campus and complete the hands-on competencies as a part of the course, the high school and postsecondary institution should ensure that instructors and students are exercising social distancing practices and shared use of materials, as much as possible, following IDPH requirements.

If the college were to resume in-person learning but the high school did not, opportunities to bring students on campus to complete the hands-on competencies as a part of the course should be considered. Follow transportation safety guidelines. If the high school were to resume in-person learning but the institution of higher education did not, students should be allowed the opportunity to complete the course and/or the hands-on competencies as a part of the course at the high school. Institutions of higher education and high schools should work together to finalize these plans. Whenever possible, postsecondary institutions should assist the dual credit instructors to develop alternative measures for hands-on experience that meet accreditation and industry standards.

AP
For support and information regarding AP instruction and exams, please refer to College Board.

Course Considerations for Physical Education (PE) & Elective Classes

Content Areas	Options
CTE (Technology and Engineering Education, Business, Family & Consumer Science, Health Science, and Agriculture)	- Online videos developed by the instructor, student, or industry. - Discussion boards could be traditional or could be a video discussion. The opportunity to leave video questions/answer/feedback creates connection. Allow students to support each other and drive the conversation. - Article critiques are a great way to get the students reading but also an opportunity to connect with your English language arts teachers. - Performance tasks to demonstrate skill proficiency can be completed when appropriate at home, work, college, or industry within the community. - Manipulative materials/handouts. - Career exploration research: Connect with your school-to-work program, Regional Office of Education, or career counselors. Allow students to connect with one another to discuss career opportunities. - Self-assessments or peer-to-peer assessments. - Flipped classroom.

Fine Arts (Music, Art, Media)	- If possible, provide musical instruments that students can use at home. - Make instrument consumables (reeds, slide oil, etc.) available to students. - Provide sheet music and the ability to interact with students (e.g., QR codes embedded, smart music software, or teacher demonstration/exemplar and student playback). - Offer students small group virtual lessons and, if possible, allow students to lead the group. - Utilize composers through virtual classroom/webinar visits. - Virtual ensembles. - Flipped classroom. - Encourage structured activities that are physical and focused on social-emotional engagement. - Provide students with examples of how music, art, and drama can be integrated into instruction (e.g., visual note-taking, diagrams, and illustrations to introduce concepts, simulations). - Assessment (student-created audio and video recordings, graphic representations, concept webs, content raps, etc.) will invite more students to show what they have learned. - Supply students with art supplies that they can keep at home. - Identify digital programs that can be utilized at home for video and photography editing, and animation. - Prepare a travel kit for students one for 2D, 3D, digital, photography materials. This will be important for remote, blended, or in-person learning. - Ensure the size/scale of projects assigned is considerate of space at home and/or transportation between home and school. - When possible, advanced fine arts courses should have more frequent access to individualized equipment and materials to meet student needs.
World Languages	Most resources for core courses also work for World Languages. Recorded lectures offer verbal enrichment as do online recording options, websites, movies, and videos in and about the language and related cultures.
Health & PE	- Embed Illinois Learning Standards for SEL and other relevant areas into all lessons. - Include social-emotional learning topics and checks in PE and health classes. - Explain the benefits of physical activity and its effect on mental, physical, and social health. - Collaboration between occupational therapist, physical therapist, PE, and health teachers optimizes physical and mental well-being for all learners and staff.

	- Consider each student's home environment when creating lessons (e.g., availability to personal exercise or weight equipment, ample space, and uninterrupted opportunities to train or work out). - Students should be able to practice and implement knowledge, skills, and procedures in the non-classroom setting that they will be asked to demonstrate in the classroom. - Provide learning opportunities that maximize student participation and create physically literate students. - See the resources section on page 100 for more information and ideas
Driver Education	- The classroom portion of a driver education program may be completed through remote or blended learning. - In order to provide behind-the-wheel training to students in driver's education, schools must be in compliance with all Secretary of State and IDPH safety requirements. See the ISBE and IDPH Joint Guidance for Starting the 2020-21 School Year.

Grading

We understand that resources vary for high school students to fully engage in a remote or blended learning environment and that current events may be distressing to high school students who may miss out on some important social and developmental milestones. However, students' opportunities for learning are improved from the spring 2020 semester. To encourage meaningful student learning while still understanding the added difficulties of flexible instruction, we believe:

- Effective feedback, grading, and evaluation can provide an important contribution to a healthy social-emotional state.
- When grading, teachers should use the scale that is adopted in their district or school while also being understanding of their students' individual situations.
- During this time, high school students may experience positive learning gains in a way that may not happen in the traditional school setting.
- Local districts are encouraged to issue an incomplete to students who are unable to complete the instructional remote or blended learning activities due to factors beyond their control.

Grading Practices to Help Meet the Needs of High School Students

Local districts should consider the following as they account for flexible instruction while maintaining best practices for grading:

- Flexibility, empathy, and an understanding of students' varying personal situations should be taken further into account than on a typical in-person day. For example, high school students may face additional family obligations, such as serving as caregivers and/or having to work outside the home.
- Meaningful, clear, and timely feedback is an important part of the education process and can help increase student learning, motivation, and growth.
- Students should be provided with multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning, growth, and mastery of content.
- Summative assessments, formative assessments, and/or other assignments may be offered for retakes to demonstrate this growth and may prompt students to learn the course material. However, retakes may not be necessary for all assignments or assessments.
- Local districts should develop a repository of resources to help instructors develop alternate methods of assessment, including methodologies for linguistically diverse learners and opportunities for student choice where possible and appropriate. (See the Multilingual and Special Education sections starting on page 24 of this document for more information.)
- When determining a standard for grades, make sure to take into account that students are receiving different and often reduced levels of support than they are accustomed to and that they may need time and help to adjust to remote and blended systems of support.
- Provide multiple methods of work submission for students to demonstrate learning (electronic, hard copy, digital portfolio, mail, picture/video, etc.).

Community Service

It is recommended that local districts with a graduation requirement related to community service understand the added difficulty for students to complete this requirement. Districts should consider modifying the number of hours necessary for completion or waiving it altogether. In addition, local districts are encouraged to find ways for their students to complete their community service hours remotely through online or virtual service work and action, such as offering tutoring service to young students or taking part in virtual community advocacy efforts.

High School Resources

Physical Education and Health Resources
https://www.shapeamerica.org/advocacy/K-12_School_Re-entry_Considerations
https://www.shapeamerica.org/publications/resources/teachingtools/teachertoolbox/Teachers_Toolbox.aspx
https://iahperd.org/
https://sites.google.com/view/ishaorg/home
https://www.gophersport.com/resources/physical-education-site-resources

Blended Teaching Resources

"7 Things You Should Know About Flipped"
Classroomshttps://library.educause.edu/resources/2012/2/7-things-you-should-know-about-flipped-classrooms

"8 Tips For Getting The Right Blend In Blended Learning" *https://elearningindustry.com/8-tips-right-blend-in-blended-learning*

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