

# A Framework and Resources for Measuring Student Needs and Development During Remote and Blended Learning

November 2020



Illinois  
**P-20**  
COUNCIL  
*Data, Assessment, and  
Accountability Committee*

  
**Education Systems Center**  
NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY



The Illinois P-20 Council was [established by the legislature](#) in 2009 to foster collaboration among state agencies, education institutions, local schools, community groups, employers, taxpayers, and families, and to collectively identify needed reforms to develop a seamless and sustainable statewide system of quality education and support. The “P” in our name represents Preschool and “20” stands for grade 20, education after college. We meet quarterly as a Council, and more frequently in committees, to develop a framework to improve the alignment of all our education systems, so that a child’s path is smooth from early learning to kindergarten, through high school, and on to career education or college.

**The Data, Assessment, and Accountability Committee**

serves the P-20 Council by exploring current and future promising practices in large-scale student assessment and reporting. After studying the best practices of other states and countries, perusing relevant research, and consulting with experts in the field, the Committee will make recommendations to the Council regarding:

- Principles and processes for improving the student assessment system;
- Principles and processes for improving the reporting of assessment data;
- Promising practices and trends in student assessment and assessment reporting that will improve both teaching and learning.



**Education Systems Center** (EdSystems) shapes and strengthens education and workforce systems that prepare more young people for productive careers and lives in a global economy. EdSystems leads and manages the Illinois P-20 Council’s College and Career Readiness Committee, which recently drove the development and adoption of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act ([pwract.org](#)). Learn more about EdSystems at [edsystemsniu.org](#).

## Table of Contents

GUIDING PRINCIPLES.....	5
PROCESS.....	5
ENGAGEMENT.....	7
Device and Broadband Access.....	8-9
Student/Teacher Interaction.....	10-11
Attendance.....	12-13
Technology Support.....	14-15
Family Engagement.....	16-17
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL NEEDS.....	19
Student Wellbeing.....	20-21
School Climate.....	22-23
Acute Trauma.....	24-25
ACADEMIC PROGRESS.....	27
Instruction.....	28-29
Assessment.....	30-31
Intensive Academic Support.....	32-33



## Overview

The abrupt shift to remote learning in the spring of 2020 coupled with existing systemic inequities and varied access to technology led to inconsistent, and in some cases nonexistent, contact between students and schools. As a result, many schools had a limited understanding of the needs and development of individual students, and districts and the State had an incomplete picture of the conditions of their constituencies. As Illinois moves forward through the crisis over the course of the 2020 – 2021 school year, educators and system leaders have the opportunity to design stronger information gathering systems for measuring engagement, social-emotional and physical needs, and academic progress to adapt to the new contexts of remote and blended learning so that they are better able to make informed decisions to support student needs.

Representatives from Illinois schools and districts indicated that it would be helpful to have a tool to guide the development of their information gathering systems in remote and blended learning and to reference successful models and useful research. This framework organizes the types of information pertaining to student needs and development into three overarching categories:

- Engagement
- Social-Emotional and Physical Needs
- Academic Progress

Each category includes a number of subcategories where we describe (i) teacher and administrator insights relating to remote learning and information collection; (ii) promising practices from across Illinois and the nation; and (iii) exemplars, resources, and research from national and state sources to

inform strategies for information collection. (Note: The resources were identified through EdSystems' research and recommendations from teachers and administrators. Their inclusion in this framework should not be viewed as an endorsement by the P-20 Council or the State.) In some areas, recommendations for additional projects or State-level resources are identified.

The framework's organization of categories and subcategories can help districts and schools to self-assess their information collection and reporting approaches as continued shifts between in-person and remote instruction are necessary over the course of this school year. The promising practices and resources can help to guide action as part of a continuous improvement process.

Since COVID-19 and school disruptions exacerbated long-standing inequities, information gathering systems should capture differences in need and development by race/ethnicity, income level, English learner status, and diverse learner status so that resources can be directed appropriately. Sharing applicable information with families and communities will provide transparency and promote the trust and collaboration which will be necessary to provide each child with a quality educational experience during the unprecedented nature of this school year, and also can serve to strengthen communication into future years. While information is crucial to capture the magnitude of the impact of the crisis for resource allocation and policymaking, any reporting should make clear that areas of need or deficiencies caused by the pandemic-related school disruption should not be attributed to a single cause.

## Guiding Principles

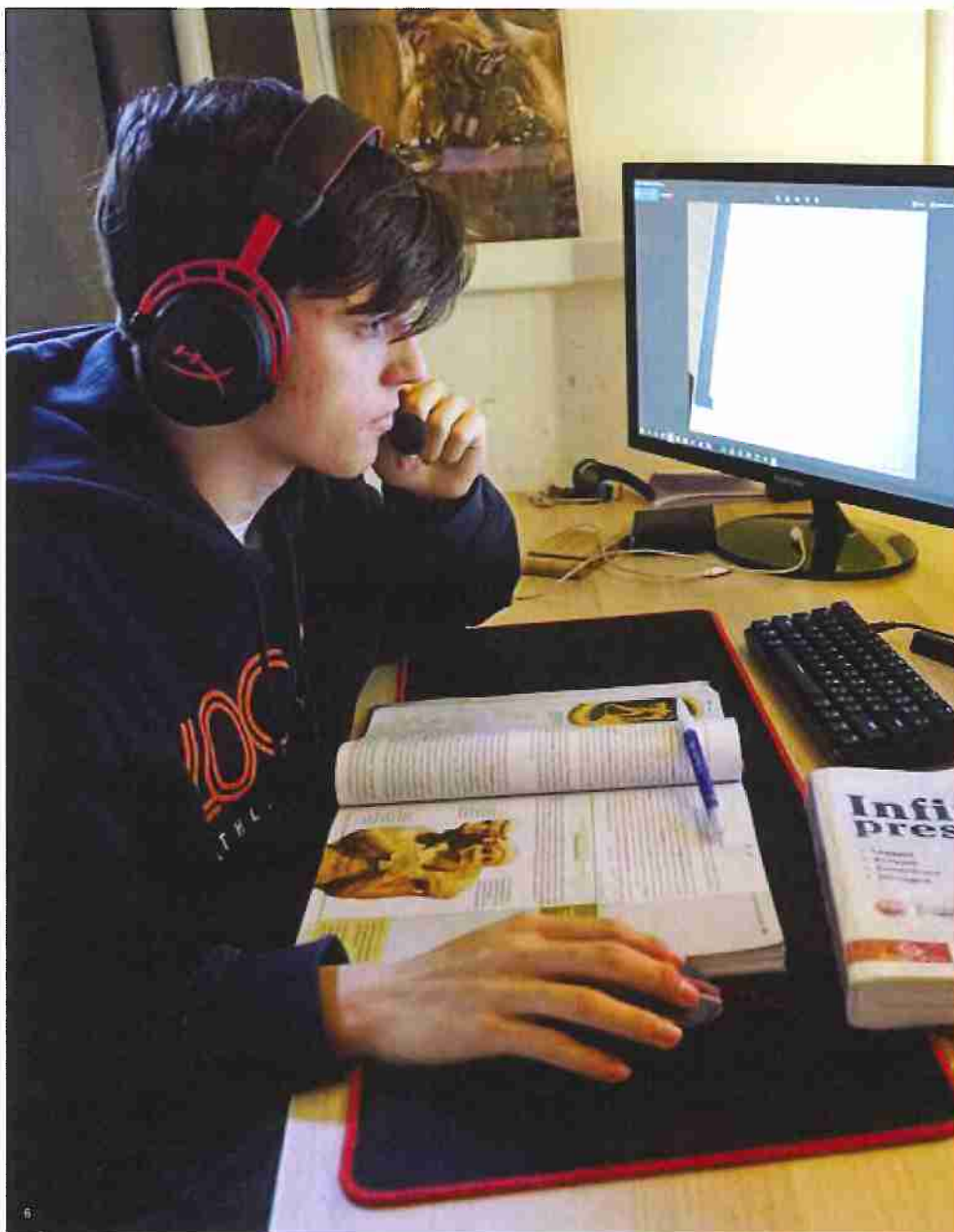
- ✓ Information gathering systems have the opportunity to adapt to the new contexts of remote and blended learning to support student needs.
- ✓ Information and data collection can help us to understand the disparate impact of COVID-19 school disruptions on student populations by race/ethnicity, income level, English learner status, and diverse learner status.
- ✓ Resource allocation and support are best guided by accurate and thoughtfully-collected information and data.
- ✓ We aim to create a series of recommendations for information gathering, and to identify ways to support classrooms, schools, and districts in targeting resources based on that information.
- ✓ Not all information will be useful or appropriate for every constituency<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For example, formative assessment results are helpful to a teacher to guide instruction but are not useful for policymaking at the district level.

## Process

This framework and associated resources were developed over the course of several weeks as the 2020-2021 school year in Illinois began, with districts in a variety of modes including all in-person instruction, all remote instruction, hybrid models, and various combinations of all three. Education Systems Center at NIU (EdSystems) facilitated meetings of a working group of the Illinois P-20 Data, Assessment, and Accountability Committee to define the project and refine the categories of inquiry. Concurrently, EdSystems reviewed available research, expert recommendations, best practices, and current requirements from Illinois and across the country regarding data and information collection and instructional models in the context of previous and ongoing school disruptions, with particular attention to issues of equity. After a succession of focus groups and roundtables with teachers and administrators with diverse experiences from a variety of settings, draft findings were brought before the full Data, Assessment, and Accountability Committee for input and thought partnership. A draft framework was presented to the working group for further refinement and finalization.





## Engagement

From keeping track of which students are logging in to which digital platforms to monitoring how students and teachers are interacting to tracking if families are in communication with their children's schools, understanding engagement has become a high-priority necessity as districts navigate hybrid and remote environments. It is a first-order need since providing social-emotional and academic supports relies on connections which can no longer reliably happen in school buildings. Below are some aspects of engagement that educators can pay attention to as they strive to provide a quality educational experience for all students, along with a set of promising practices and resources from around the state and around the country.



### Device and Broadband Access

Which students have or lack access to a reliable device and high-speed internet connection appropriate for remote learning?



### Student/Teacher Interaction

How often and in what ways are students and teachers interacting?



### Attendance

Which students participated in learning opportunities?



### Technology Support

Is support for technology difficulties available at times and in languages convenient for students and caregivers?



### Family Engagement

Which teachers and administrators are in regular contact with which caregivers regarding student engagement, social-emotional and physical wellbeing, and academic progress as well as school and district policy changes?

“ We are still working with families who need access to internet. We purchased hot spots for families who live in rural areas with no internet access.  
 – Large District Administrator ”

## Device and Broadband Access

To participate in remote instruction fully, each student needs access to a reliable device appropriate for remote instruction and a broadband connection that can serve all who need to use it without disruption.

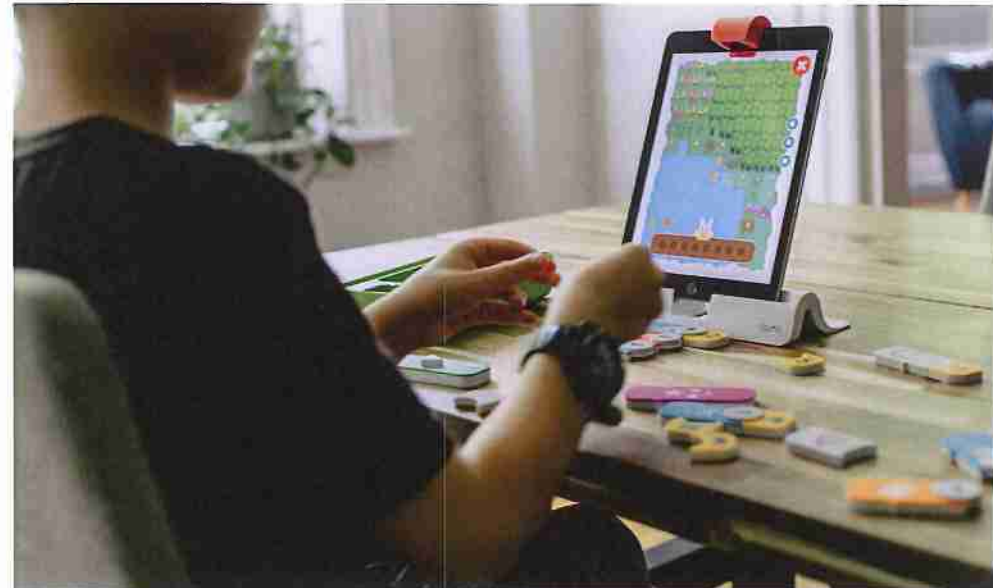
### Teacher and Administrator Insights

- **Limited Rural Broadband:** Some rural areas have only limited access to broadband so special programs or discounted rates are not sufficient to overcome barriers to access.
- **Internet Packages with Insufficient Bandwidth:** Sponsored or discounted internet subscriptions don't always offer enough bandwidth to allow multiple students at the same location to stream at the same time.
- **Schools with Insufficient Bandwidth:** Some schools do not have enough bandwidth for all teachers to stream at the same time.
- **Accessibility for Diverse Learners:** Students with disabilities can have more difficulty using devices and their caregivers often need additional help supporting students.

### Promising Practices

- **Process for Outreach and Requesting Assistance:** Since devices can fail and internet service can be interrupted, districts have a system for frequent, regular outreach to caregivers for information on device and internet access. Schools or districts also provide a phone number and a web address that caregivers can use in real time to let administrators know that students do not have sufficient access.
- **Tips for Maximizing Speed:** Schools or districts provide tips in languages commonly spoken by the school community and caregivers for maximizing internet speed such as not streaming additional media and turning off cellphones.

- **Prioritize Underserved Students:** In distributing available devices, schools and districts prioritize underserved and vulnerable students and connect students without adequate broadband access to district or community hubs.
- **Assistive Technology Support for Diverse Learners:** Districts ensure diverse learners have access to the assistive technology and devices they need to participate in remote learning.
- **Consider English Learners and Families New to the U.S.:**
  - Districts ensure survey questions, instructions, and real-time supports are available in languages commonly spoken by the school community and caregivers.
  - District staff and trusted community leaders work with families to explain what, if any, costs and obligations are associated with district- and internet provider-offered devices and broadband subscriptions.
  - Districts do not require government-issued identification to receive equipment.
- **Use Access Data for Additional Resources:** Districts use district- and community-specific, timely data to appeal to community and government organizations and leaders for assistance in securing devices and broadband access for all students.
- **Set a Minimum Broadband Speed:** District leaders work with broadband providers to establish a minimum level of bandwidth associated with sponsored or low-cost internet service programs to ensure all students at a location are able to access synchronous instruction simultaneously.



### Exemplars, Resources, and Research

- [Interactive Drive-Up Wi-Fi Map](#) of Illinois public hot spots for remote learning.
- [How States Are Expanding Broadband Access:](#) New research identifies tactics for connecting underserved communities from The PEW Charitable Trusts. This report explores promising practices for expanding broadband access through progressive regulation and leveraging of public and private funding streams through examples in nine states.
- [Chicago Connected](#) provides free, high-speed internet service to up to 100,000 students.
- [Knowing How Students and Teachers Use Tech Is Vital](#) from *Education Week*. In the Little Rock School District, low login rates revealed that English learner families who responded to a survey that they had device and internet access were often referring to a smartphone rather than a computer and broadband.

## A Future Project?

Availability of resources to do remote, hybrid, and in-person instruction well during the pandemic varies considerably across the state. To guide resource allocation, it would be useful to understand what is available to districts versus what is necessary to follow ISBE guidance in areas like access to broadband, devices, nurses, and personal protective equipment. This gap analysis of district resources versus the recommended resource levels in ISBE guidance can help to target investments resulting from any future federal or state recovery funds.

“ Nothing has been very successful if it changes from day to day. I just try to private text/video chat students using Microsoft Teams.  
 – Suburban High School Teacher ”

## Student/Teacher Interaction

Because the crisis is impacting students in communities across the state so differently, and because some students are more equipped to participate in online learning than others, keeping track of which students are engaging in school has taken on a new level of importance. Remote and blended learning environments mean a variety of teacher interactions with students beyond in-person contact including whole-class remote synchronous instruction, synchronous small-group work, one-on-one video calls, and asynchronous communication.

### Teacher and Administrator Insights

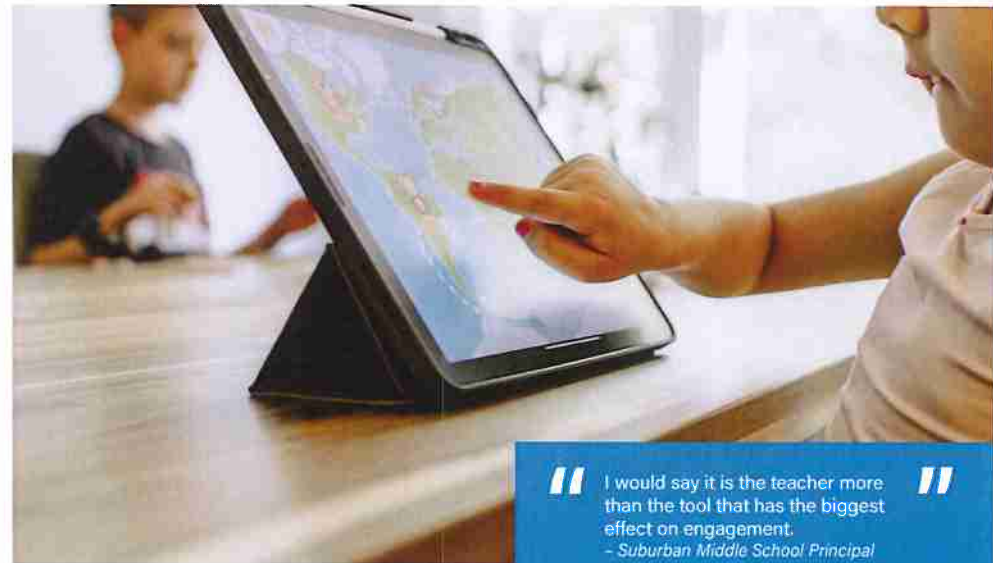
- **Expectations for Interaction Vary:** Expectations for interaction vary across the state from many synchronous interactions each day — including monitoring which students are online, when, and which websites they are visiting — to no specific expectation for synchronous interaction at all.
- **Educator Responsibilities Differ:** Much of the variation in levels of student/teacher interaction is due to differences in teacher responsibilities — some teachers are teaching full, in-person classes in addition to a subset of remote learners, some are on a hybrid schedule, and some are teaching only remote learners.
- **Some Are Interacting Semi-Synchronously:** One technique some teachers are using to adapt to the online environment is asking students to work on their own, keeping their cameras and screens on, while teachers answer specific student questions and work with individual students who need additional support.
- **Variable Access to Monitoring Tools:** Access to monitoring tools for keeping track of student/teacher interactions varies across the state from districts and schools that provide several tools

which log many different types of interactions to districts that do not provide any specific tools.

- **Difficulties Keeping Track:** Teachers are struggling to keep track of everything in real time.

### Promising Practices

- **Maximize Platform Capacity:** Districts use platforms that allow for easy, automated collection of data on student/teacher interaction including how many hours per week each student and teacher participated in whole-class remote synchronous instruction, how often individual teachers met with individual students, how often students participated in student-group work, and how much asynchronous interaction occurred between individual students and teachers.
- **Monitor Student Engagement:** Districts provide tools such as dashboards for teachers and administrators to easily monitor student engagement in synchronous instruction, asynchronous interactions, online activity, and lesson completion. The tools flag students who fall below a threshold for individual outreach.
- **Dedicate Resources:** Districts establish a process for and dedicate additional resources to following up with students who are not adequately engaged.
- **Maximize Teacher Skills:** Districts place teachers with exceptional skills such as online presenting or one-on-one student mentoring in roles that allow them to maximize their potential to increase student engagement and achievement.
- **Understand Teacher Needs:** Schools monitor teacher digital platform use to understand specific teacher professional development needs and increase efficiency by cancelling subscriptions to digital services that are not utilized.



“ I would say it is the teacher more than the tool that has the biggest effect on engagement.  
 – Suburban Middle School Principal ”

- **Caution about Privacy:** Student privacy can be a concern since cameras show inside living spaces and platforms collect student-level data. Districts establish privacy policies for remote learning and support teachers in following it.

### Exemplars, Resources, and Research

- **Exemplar:** [Pana Junior High School](#) 6th Graders made a [website](#) that is a one-stop shop for remote learners including schedules, assignments, and tips, and has resources for parents as well.
- **Exemplar:** [River Bend School District](#) reserves 1 p.m. to 3 p.m., after synchronous instruction, for struggling students to meet with teachers in person. Students who aren't engaged or successfully completing work must be onsite for one-on-one or small group assistance until their issues are resolved. Families can request the onsite time with teachers and students can volunteer themselves.
- **10 Drivers of Engagement You Can Use Right Now** from KnowledgeWorks. As schools shift between in-person, hybrid and remote schooling, leaders and educators should use authentic measures of engagement that reflect the kinds of fluid learning

environments students are experiencing. This document provides an overview of the research on engagement alongside actionable practices that are appropriate, effective, and equitable.

- **7 Ways to Maintain Relationships During Your School Closure:** In this article, leaders at Edutopia identify seven strategies that teachers are currently experimenting with to maintain student-teacher relationships that drive engagement and learning during COVID-19.
- **Knowing How Students and Teachers Use Tech Is Vital** from *Education Week* contains a story about how Roxbury, NJ discontinued use of a streaming service with low usage rates and provided professional development for a technology product that wasn't being used because teachers did not know about it.
- **Protecting Students' Privacy and Advancing Digital Equity** from the Center for Democracy and Technology. To better understand the complexities of responsible data use and privacy protection so they can be addressed, CDT commissioned research on the views of parents, teachers, and students.

“ The access needs to precede the definition [of attendance]. We have defined something and we are trying to backfill access and devices and connectivity. It's inherently problematic from an access and equity lens.  
 – Large Suburban District Assistant Superintendent ”

## Attendance

While by now most schools have established a process for collecting attendance under the current circumstances, it is not clear yet how best to measure and record a day's attendance in synchronous and asynchronous remote environments. Clock hours are not as relevant for hybrid and remote instruction as they are for in-person instruction, and schedules vary widely across the state from no direct student/teacher connection to all-day synchronous classes.

Attendance is important. [Studies](#) in a regular school environment show that by 9th grade, students' chances of graduating from high school drop by 20 percentage points for every week of school they miss. This is why chronic absenteeism is a part of the State's accountability system. However, unlike a regular in-person school day, the [Illinois School Code](#) does not specify what counts as attendance in remote learning and schedules vary widely across the state. Requirements for remote attendance also vary widely, from merely tracking if assigned work has been completed, to requiring a once-daily check-in, to monitoring if students are logged in to each synchronous session and throughout the day.

The Illinois State Board of Education mandates that students are provided [5 hours of instruction and schoolwork](#) and recommends at least [2.5 hours of synchronous instruction](#), but that is not always possible. Basing attendance on participation in synchronous instruction can have a disparate impact on vulnerable students and the existing designation of chronic absenteeism fails to capture barriers to student participation in the current context. For example, students without a device or online access cannot attend a video conference, students working to support their families during the pandemic may not be able to attend synchronous classes, and young students and students with disabilities may not be capable of participating in extended online instruction.

### Teacher and Administrator Insights

- **Ensure Access First:** Educators emphasized that it is important to ensure each student has adequate access to a device and internet connectivity before basing attendance in remote learning on logging in.
- **Focus on Engagement:** Several participants suggested transitioning from paying attention to attendance to paying attention to engagement (as addressed in the previous section) or on learning outcomes.
- **Know Who Is Engaged:** It is helpful to have detailed information about student attendance as a step to understanding who is and isn't engaged.
- **Concerns about Engagement:** Some parents and students are signing in for once-daily attendance but not engaging in learning.
- **Concerns about Attendance Metric Use:** Many administrators mentioned concerns about including attendance on the Illinois Report Card or using attendance data for assignment of accountability designations this year.

### Promising Practices

- **Monitor and Follow Up:** Schools internally document attendance at each synchronous learning session (e.g., class period) and engagement in each asynchronous activity and establish a process to follow up immediately with absent students to get them reengaged.
- **Use a Multi-Tiered System of Supports:** Schools implement successively more intensive outreach and support for absent students based on individual needs.

- **Streamline Recordkeeping:** Districts establish an automated internal system for recording synchronous attendance and asynchronous participation which does not require additional teacher effort.
- **Involve Caregivers:** Districts provide daily student attendance information to caregivers who may not have the ability to closely monitor student engagement.
- **Engage the Community:** Districts provide school-level attendance data to communities on a regular basis to promote transparency and to solicit community assistance such as additional learning spaces, if necessary.

### Exemplars, Resources, and Research

- **Exemplar:** [Kankakee School District 111's Learning Anywhere, Anytime Model](#) uses learning rather than time and space as the constant. Asynchronous learning provides teachers the flexibility to address the diverse needs of students driven by needs and learning outcomes. Learning can occur anywhere: The entire community including school buildings, homes, employers, libraries, and park districts provide learning spaces. Learning can also occur anytime: Buildings are open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. to support students and families.
- **Exemplar:** [Prescott Elementary School](#) in Chicago established an internal system for teachers to record absences at the beginning of each class throughout the day. The system prompts office staff to follow up immediately with a phone call to absent students' families. With a good deal of work at the beginning of the school year, they now have consistent class attendance of around 99%.
- **Exemplar:** [Vienna HSD 13-3](#) uses a competency-based system and considers both participation in scheduled learning activities and assignment completion for attendance. If students are not engaged teachers mark them absent, which triggers a system of interventions for reengagement.
- **What Schools and Districts Should Do if They Are Unable to Make Contact with a Student for Over a Week** from DCFS and ISBE
- **An Attendance Playbook: Smart Solutions for Reducing Chronic Absenteeism in the Covid Era** from FutureEd. FutureEd and Attendance

Works have expanded their [Attendance Playbook](#) to reflect schools' realities during and after the pandemic. It offers ideas for how to encourage and track attendance during distance learning, and it includes effective and readily scalable approaches to reducing chronic student absenteeism in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak.

- [Strategies for Connecting with Students and Families](#) from Attendance Works provides options to help locate students and families who have not been in touch with your school or district during the coronavirus pandemic.
- [Monitoring Attendance in Distance Learning](#) from Attendance Works. A new data framework for monitoring attendance whether school is virtual or blended. This page is a work in progress and offers the latest version of this evolving framework.

“ As for defining attendance, I think that gets challenging in the remote environment. I would focus more on engagement.  
 – Suburban Middle School Principal ”

- [The Effects of Absenteeism on Cognitive and Social-Emotional Outcomes: Lessons for COVID-19](#) from the Annenberg Institute at Brown University. This paper uses administrative panel data from California to approximate the impact of the pandemic by analyzing how absenteeism affects student outcomes. It shows wide variation in absenteeism impacts on academic and social-emotional outcomes by grade and subgroup, as well as the cumulative effect of different degrees of absence. Student outcomes generally suffer more from absenteeism in mathematics than in ELA. Negative effects are larger in middle school. Absences negatively affect social-emotional development, particularly in middle school, with slight differences across constructs. Absences negatively affect social-emotional development, particularly in middle school, with slight differences across constructs.

“ If students have technology needs, there is a tech support number they can call, however, they are still so overloaded that families are waiting hours to get through. We are working on creating an instructional technology site for families explaining how to use all of the tools provided, including basic ‘how to’ documents.”  
 — Large District Administrator

## Technology Support

Remote and hybrid learning require unprecedented levels of engagement with technology and districts have had to ramp up their technology assistance to meet demand. Systemic barriers and generational differences in familiarity with technology mean some families are less equipped to navigate the new systems. Keeping track of who needs what kinds of support and when they need it allows districts to distribute existing support resources more effectively and to find ways to reach more users more efficiently.

### Teacher and Administrator Insights

- **Vulnerable Families:** Many of the most vulnerable families have little experience with the kinds of technology we are asking them to use.
- **Instructions in English:** Instructions for setting up devices and connecting to the internet are often only provided in English.
- **Need for Multi-Lingual Tech Support:** District support staff can't always communicate with families in languages they can understand.

### Promising Practices

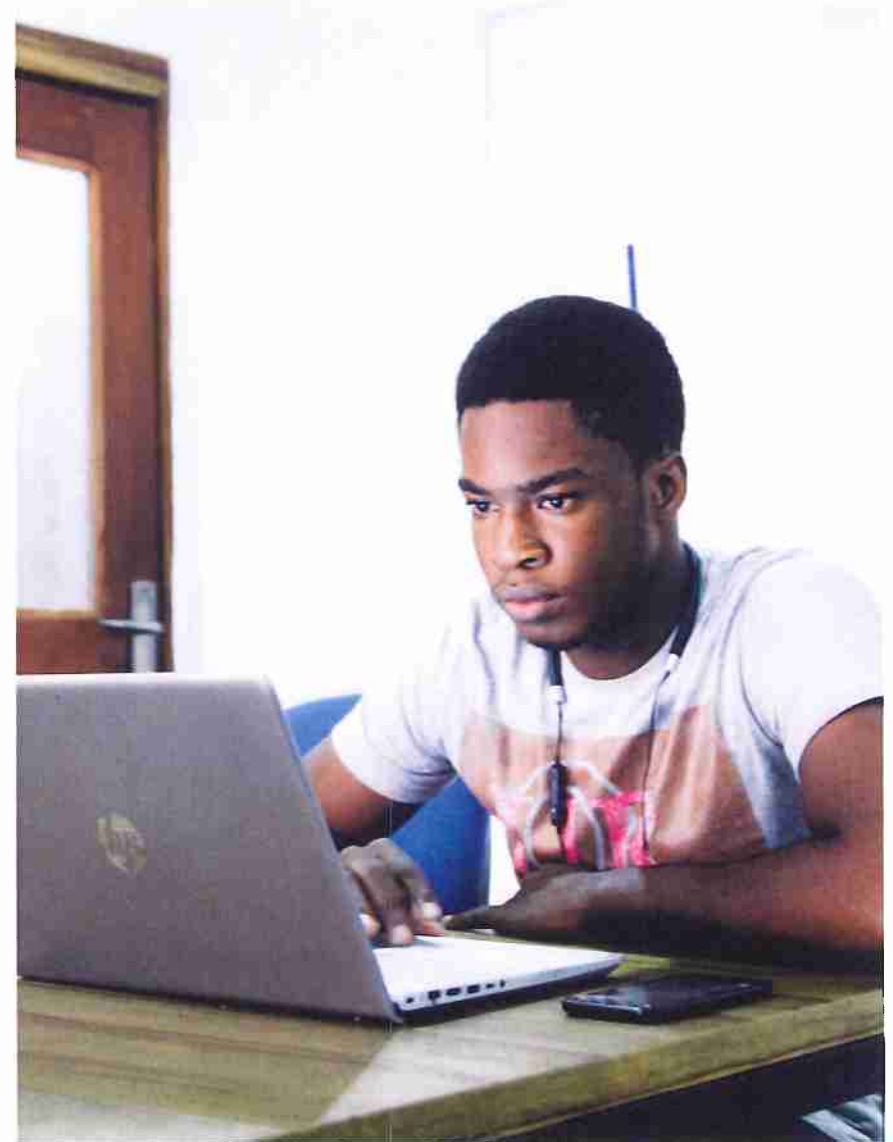
- **Monitor for Widespread Difficulties:** Technology support staff log if requested support is related to hardware difficulties or malfunctions, software difficulties or malfunctions, or platform difficulties or malfunctions so districts can flag systemic problems such as software platform failures and address common questions through mass outreach such as video tutorials.
- **Ensure Support Availability:** Technology support staff log wait times to access support, if the issue was solved, and how long it took to solve

it, and districts adjust to ensure adequate staff is available at the right times.

- **Ensure Support Expertise:** Districts ensure technology support staff is able to assist with devices designed for diverse learners.
- **Support in Home Languages:** Districts ensure technology support staff is able to communicate in students' home languages.
- **Publicize Support Availability:** Districts include technology support availability and usage statistics in regular newsletters to families and caregivers to remind them the support is available and to give confidence that the district is responding to needs.

### Exemplars, Resources, and Research

- **Exemplar:** Chicago Public Schools offers [recorded versions of live training sessions](#) as well as other helpful training videos on all the Google Education Suite which it uses for remote learning. The [Parent Tech Support Help Center](#) allows for browsing of resources and contacting support to make a request or report a problem. These resources may be useful to other districts as well.
- [Knowing How Students and Teachers Use Tech Is Vital](#) from *Education Week*. Technology, curriculum, and media specialists from the Brighton School District in Michigan put together resource guides for families to use Google Meet and then sent usage statistics so families could understand the role tech is playing and give confidence that the district is refining its offerings.





“ This is the most engaged I have ever seen parents with my class.  
 – Rural High School Fine Arts Teacher ”

## Family Engagement

Because families and caregivers play such an important role in ensuring students are successful in online learning, and because this crisis is affecting many students' social-emotional wellbeing, communicating with families and caregivers has taken on a new level of urgency and frequency.

### Teacher and Administrator Insights

- **A Multitude of Mediums:** Teachers are using a multitude of mediums to engage with caregivers including texts, emails, taped videos, video chats, surveys, and calls often using their own phones.
- **A Variety of Approaches:** Keeping track of communications varies widely, from no records at all to notes on a legal pad to a school intranet that can capture all outreach and interactions.
- **A Range of Expectations:** Expectations for family engagement vary widely from a single weekly email or blurb pushed out to families to platforms that push out homework progress and attendance reports and allow caregivers to customize alerts.

### Promising Practices

- **Minimize Different Platforms:** Districts communicate with families using the same or similar district-wide platforms to reduce duplicate messages to families with multiple school-age children and the need for families to learn new software.
- **Set Clear Expectations:** Schools set clear expectations for the frequency and content of teacher interaction with caregivers about student progress and have a process for follow up if caregivers are not responsive.
- **Provide Communication Channels:** Districts have a system for frequent, regular outreach to caregivers for status on student and family needs, a mechanism for caregivers to ask for assistance, and a process for directing caregivers to district resources.

- **Use Existing Relationships:** Schools identify which staff have existing relationships with which caregivers to coordinate outreach to disengaged families.
- **Enlist Community Leaders:** Districts enlist the help of community leaders to connect with parents and caregivers, particularly those who have disengaged.
- **Use a Parent Portal:** Parents have access to a portal that allows them to see real-time information about the district, their students' schools, and each of their students. It is easy to navigate and understand and allows parents to receive alerts about student attendance and progress.
- **Distribute Instructional Materials:** Districts distribute instructional materials (i.e. manipulatives for younger children, books for book clubs) for use at home.
- **Communicate the “Why”:** In communicating decisions and next steps, districts include a rationale so families understand the “why.”

### Resources and Research

- [Engaging Parents and Families to Support the Recovery of Districts and Schools](#) from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. This brief discusses how schools and districts can support families in their diverse contexts and build practical trust to support student learning.
- [Education Leaders Must Not Be Data Gatekeepers: Parent Portals are a Key Covid-19 Recovery Strategy](#) from Data Quality Campaign. Parents deserve the same information that teachers have about their children, especially in a time when they are functioning as de facto educators. Regardless of the pandemic response a district chooses to implement, parent portals are key to ensuring good communications and



parent supports. This link includes examples from a Houston charter network, Rhode Island's Providence Public Schools, and the Georgia State Department of Education.

- [Back to School Planning: Checklists to Guide Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers](#) from the CDC. Includes checklists and list of actions for parents to take for in-person, hybrid, and remote learning to keep students physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy.
- [Back-to-School Surveys](#) from the for-profit Panorama Education. Open-source, downloadable surveys to understand what families and children need as the school year begins including feedback from caregivers on the learning environment, health procedures, basic needs, and school cultural responsiveness.
- [Family Engagement Resources](#) from Learning Heroes. Resources for parents and teachers to help build strong home/school partnerships.
- [Stay Home, Stay Connected: Maintaining Relationships in a Time of Social Distancing](#) from Parent Teacher Home Visits includes tools, resources, and inspiration for home visit practitioners as they navigate the “new normal” of state and local stay-at-home orders.
- [A Guide for School Districts: Exploring Alternative Measures of Student Learning and Wellness](#) from Bellwether Education Partners. With unfamiliar school configurations and unknown impacts on student outcomes, districts can adapt how they measure school quality to better understand how schools are operating and how students are learning. This guide contains key questions for assessing student and family engagement and wellbeing.
- [Parents 2020: COVID-19 Closures: A Redefining Moment for Students, Parents & Schools:](#) Learning Heroes investigated parent experiences with remote learning and found that they prefer texts and phone calls from teachers over email.
- Illinois Public School COVID-19 Focus Group Summary from Advance Illinois reports feedback from students, families, and caregivers on their experiences with school during the Covid-19 disruption. (More information and link forthcoming)

## A Future Project?

Teachers around the state are using dozens of different platforms, tools, and applications to interact with students and families, and each allows for some interaction with other platforms, tools, and applications. It would be useful to have a resource which lays out the capabilities of each product along with which other platforms, tools, and applications it can interact with, including applications for English learners. It also would be helpful to have a repository of teacher reviews and tips.



## Social-Emotional and Physical Needs

Addressing student and staff social-emotional and physical needs is critical as we face the layered impact of school closures, the pandemic, widespread economic hardships, and racial inequities amplified by nationwide mobilization. It is essential to learning and the overall long-term success of students and schools. Collecting information about student and staff needs and publicizing school-, district-, and state-level data will help to keep these issues at the forefront and help guide distribution of resources. Metrics will help us to understand the long-term consequences of this crisis and to make the case that investing in social-emotional wellbeing and mental health supports for students and educators is a valuable use of limited resources. We also need frequent feedback from students, teachers, and staff to get better at what works in remote and hybrid environments.



### Student Wellbeing and Mental Health

Can students function at a satisfactory level and are they able to enjoy life?



### School Climate

What is the quality and character of school life based on patterns of students', parents', and school personnel's experience?



### Supports for Students Experiencing Acute Trauma

Are supports available for students experiencing temporary living conditions, food insecurity, severe family illness, and other acute trauma?

“ I had a remote student come in to work with me, one-on-one. While there, he got choked up and said he wanted to come back. His parents won't let him. He was so upset. He doesn't talk to his friends like he used to. Without this chance to work with him, in person, I wouldn't have found this out.  
– Rural Middle School Teacher

## Student Wellbeing and Mental Health

Data on student wellbeing and mental health can help us to understand the magnitude of the effects of the crisis and the disparate impacts it is having on diverse populations. Correlated with other metrics such as instructional models and engagement in school, it may help us to understand how best to support different populations of students.

### Teacher and Administrator Insights

- **Evaluation is Difficult in Remote Settings:** Evaluating students' social-emotional health is much harder in remote settings, as educators have less access to the non-verbal cues and body language that can indicate student disengagement or distress, especially if student cameras are off.
- **Increased Focus on Mental Health:** Most teachers are spending more time paying attention to student mental health this year than ever before.
- **Informal Check-Ins:** To get an understanding of their students' mindsets and emotions, many teachers prefer informal check-ins such as “fist to five” and verbal greetings to formal surveys, though many also use a Google form, journaling, or other writing prompts.
- **Multi-Tiered System of Supports:** Most schools are continuing with the multi-tiered system of supports they had in place before the crisis.
- **Culturally-Responsive Practices:** Some families may not feel it is appropriate to share social-emotional or mental health needs.

### Promising Practices

- **Expanded Health Screening Form:** Districts incorporate an optional SEL question into the daily health symptom certification.

- **Frequent, Short Surveys:** Districts distribute frequent, short social-emotional health surveys in students' home languages or in very simple English to respond immediately to needs, and they track aggregated data to respond to trends at the school or district level. Surveys provide opportunities for students to note if they are dealing with additional challenges such as functioning as the family interpreter or working to help support the family.
- **Culturally-Responsive Practices:** Schools and districts recognize that some families may not be comfortable sharing social-emotional problems, and staff work with community leaders to identify student and family needs and target supports.
- **Use Data to Monitor:** Districts collect data on the number of students seeking counseling, referred to counselors, receiving teletherapy, missing classes, and disciplined for behavior, and then use the data to allocate resources to respond to student needs.
- **Employ a Virtual Table:** The school community including social workers, nurses, aids, etc. engages at a virtual table to identify and address individual student needs.
- **Train Staff:** Schools and districts provide training to staff to deal with social-emotional and mental health issues.
- **Coordinate with Local Organizations:** Schools and districts respond to major, widespread issues by coordinating wraparound services and aligning with local organizations such as CBOs, churches, and non-profits.

### Exemplars, Resources, and Research

- **Exemplar:** [Benito Juarez Community Academy](#) is addressing the collective trauma of the school

community by implementing [a unit](#) that explores at least one of the following questions: How have our individual and collective lives (present and future) been impacted by the global pandemic? What does healing look like in the context of what's come up during the pandemic? What does it mean to survive vs. thrive during a global pandemic?

- **Exemplar:** [Chicago Public Schools competency-based pilot schools](#) are integrating into their curriculum social-emotional learning as a lever for equity and social justice. [This presentation](#) outlines their objectives and strategies.
- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) provides a variety of timely resources including:
  - [CASEL COVID Resources](#) is designed to support educators, parents, and anyone who works with children, including guidance for keeping SEL at the forefront during the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - [Reunite, Renew, and Thrive: SEL Roadmap for Reopening School](#) is a roadmap to support the return to school with equity-focused SEL strategies centered on relationships and built on the existing strengths of a school community.
  - [CASEL CARES](#) connects the global community with experts to address how SEL can be most helpful in response to today's circumstances.
- ISBE has compiled a [list of resources](#) to support students' mental health 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The list includes the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, the Crisis Text Line, and Call4Calm.
- [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Pandemic Resources](#) from Turnaround for Children. A curated list of resources to keep students emotionally safe for parents and caregivers, teachers, educators and leaders, and students themselves.
- [What Works in Promoting Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Responding to Mental Health Problems in Schools?](#) From Katherine Weare and the Partnership for Well-Being and Mental Health in Schools. Advice for schools and a framework document.

- [Restorative Circles, Online Wellness Rooms and Grief Training: How schools are preparing for the Covid mental health crisis](#) from The Hechinger Report. Strategies several districts across the US are using to deal with student mental health issues.
- [Education Week](#) has published the following relevant articles:
  - [How to Teach Social/Emotional Learning When Kids Aren't in School](#) explores simple things teachers can do.
  - [Teaching the 'New' COVID-19 Social-Emotional Skills](#) provides recommendations for school and district leaders when planning social and emotional learning during the pandemic.
  - [6 Exercises for Teaching SEL This School Year](#) offers adaptable SEL teaching activities developed by the EASEL Lab at Harvard with in-school and at-home versions.
- [Back-to-School Surveys](#) from the for-profit Panorama Education. Open-source, downloadable surveys for distance, hybrid, or in-person learning to get feedback from students, families, and staff so that you can quickly respond to needs.
- [Diagnosing Needs](#) from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (forthcoming). What research tells us about how to collect Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) information to best support students and families.

“ Honestly, I just try to remember to take time to be human. Probably a lesson we can take with us beyond COVID. It's so easy to get wrapped up in everything we're supposed to do. Just need to take time to breathe sometimes and let the kids do the same.  
– Suburban Middle School Teacher

“ All systems currently in place were designed for the in-person environment... It would be helpful to have a tool to use to assess our current remote learning environment that our school teams could use to address present needs based on data (not just feeling).  
 – Large Urban High School Principal ”

## School Climate

For students in remote and hybrid learning environments, the experience of school is very different this year. From combinations of synchronous, asynchronous, and in-person instruction to learning to navigate online platforms and instructional tools, to wearing masks and social distancing, the school climate created by current conditions is completely new. Teachers and principals are looking for systematic ways to gain insight into how students are experiencing school so they can respond and adapt.

### Teacher and Administrator Insights

- **Disrupted Improvement Processes:** Summer is typically a time for school improvement planning but this year that time was devoted to the mechanics of how to reopen schools. Principals and administrators are struggling to adapt their improvement processes to remote learning.
- **Teachers Looking for Feedback:** Teachers are asking students for feedback through journals, forms, home visits, small group meetings, and one-on-one meetings. Student responses vary from almost nothing to open and honest feedback.
- **Educator Strain:** Many educators are feeling high levels of stress as they work to adapt instruction to new technologies, manage unfamiliar teaching schedules and new responsibilities, and try to build relationships with students online.
- **Need for a Tool:** Many administrators mentioned interest in a 5Essentials-like tool adapted for remote learning that could be used frequently to gain insight into the school climate.

### Promising Practices

- **Administer Frequent Surveys:** Schools administer frequent, short climate surveys and use results for professional development and planning.

- **Prioritize Staff Wellbeing:** Schools recognize the strain teachers and staff are experiencing and focus on developing and sustaining a supportive environment by building time into meetings for them to build relationships with each other and process their experiences together.

### Exemplars, Resources, and Research

- **Exemplar: Vienna High School** is finding success engaging its student council to monitor and improve school climate. As representatives of the student body, they meet with administrators weekly to provide feedback. They have developed various programs such as dress up days, fun photo days and ice cream days to build climate and culture.
- **Exemplar:** Nonprofits who work with education stakeholders gathered after the first six weeks of remote learning in Chicago to share what they had been hearing about what had and hadn't been working; [Mikva Challenge](#), which works with students; [Kids First Chicago](#), which works with parents; [Educators for Excellence Chicago](#), [Teach Plus Illinois](#), and [Teachers Supporting Teachers](#), which work with teachers; and [New Leaders](#), which works with school leaders, were able to surface both best practices and challenges by breaking down the silos between the stakeholders. With a growth mindset that didn't assign blame, they worked together with the aim of finding solutions to challenges and shared their results with Chicago Public Schools.

### Surveys

- **ED School Climate Surveys** from the US Department of Education National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. A suite of school climate surveys for middle and high school students, instructional staff, non-instructional staff,

and parents/guardians with documented evidence of validity and reliability. Student and parent surveys can be completed either in English or Spanish. Staff surveys are available in English only. Surveys can be downloaded and administered for free, and the platform processes data and provides user-friendly reports in real-time.

- **Copilot-Elevate** from PERTS is a free online tool that allows educators to collect rapid, actionable insights remotely to understand students' learning experiences, better support students, and foster academic engagement, persistence, and success. It is based on cycles of inquiry that include surveys which lead to reports paired with relevant, evidence-based recommendations.
- **Back-to-School Surveys** from for-profit Panorama Education. Open-source, downloadable surveys for grade levels 3-5 and 6-12 gather information from students on the learning environment, class engagement, relationships, academic needs, school health measures, how teachers and staff are feeling about the learning environment, school health procedures, professional needs, student needs, and school cultural responsiveness.

### Guides and Strategies

- **Bringing Evidence-Based Decision-Making to School Safety** from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. This brief explores how schools can create contexts that foster safety and prosocial behaviors in the wake of COVID-19 and the ongoing state of increased unrest over racial justice.
- **Coming Back to Climate: How Principals Can Use School Climate Data to Lead Improvement** from The Aspen Institute Education and Society Program. The added stressors of physical distancing due to COVID-19 and striving against institutionalized racism make it imperative to increase support for students and families. Climate data are a window into their experiences, to cultivate care and belonging for students as conditions for academic achievement.
- **Wellness Resource** from the Illinois Principals Association. Suggested questions for school leader's self-check and staff self-check along with mental and physical health resources.
- **Reflecting on Teacher Wellbeing During the COVID-19 Pandemic** from REL Pacific. We now have an opportunity to reflect on how to foster teacher wellbeing practices that encourage

teachers to build and strengthen caring relationships with one another and with their students and prioritize designing and sustaining classrooms where everyone feels emotionally and physically safe and supported.

- **School Climate During Distance Learning** from the Minnesota Department of Education. Resources for building a supportive school climate during distance learning.
- **Back-to-School Blueprint: Rebuilding Community** from the Rennie Center. After months away from school, students and teachers have returned eager for connection. This guide offers strategies for teachers and school leaders to work together to create a positive, welcoming environment for every member of the school community.
- **Sustaining a Sense of Success: The Importance of Teacher Working Conditions During the Covid-19 Pandemic** from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. Using data from pre-post and retrospective surveys, this study finds that the pandemic and pivot to emergency remote teaching resulted in a sudden, large drop in teachers' sense of success. It also outlines how supportive working conditions in schools played a critical role in helping teachers to sustain their sense of success.

## A Future Project?

Principals and Administrators are struggling to adapt their improvement processes to remote learning. Some have surveyed teachers, staff, parents, and students; others are planning a survey for the near future. They are looking for strategies to gauge and improve school climate. Many participants mentioned interest in a research-based, 5E-like tool adapted for remote learning with frequent, short surveys for students and staff for rapid insights into school climate throughout the year.

“ The home visit has been an eye-opening experience. I don't know that it has helped with engagement as much as we hoped, but at least the students know that someone cares and will follow up with them. It is more of a well-fare check in many of our situations.  
 – Rural Middle School Principal ”

## Supports for Students Experiencing Acute Trauma

In this time of crisis, record numbers of children are experiencing housing instability, food insecurity, economic insecurity, family illness and death, and other forms of acute trauma. Knowing which students need assistance allows teachers and schools to respond, and aggregating that information allows districts and the State to distribute resources effectively and advocate for additional resources if necessary.

### Promising Practices

- **Identify Often:** Since student and family situations are constantly evolving, schools and districts implement a system for frequent assessment of need and trauma.
- **Predictable Structures and Routines:** Teachers help students gain a sense of control by establishing reliable schedules and routines.
- **Develop Connections Online:** Teachers build time into schedules for sharing stories of solidarity or moments of mindfulness.
- **Build Relationships:** Schools and districts build relationships through regular communication with student-identified networks of trusted adults which allows supports and resources to be tailored in ways that meet individual needs.
- **Collaborate with Community Agencies:** Schools and districts collaborate and share data with community providers to improve identification of students experiencing homelessness and other trauma and to mobilize supports for families.
- **Learning Pods for Youth Experiencing Housing Insecurity:** Districts provide supervised spaces for students experiencing housing insecurity to participate in online learning.

- **Train Staff:** Schools and districts provide training to staff to recognize signs of trauma in virtual environments.

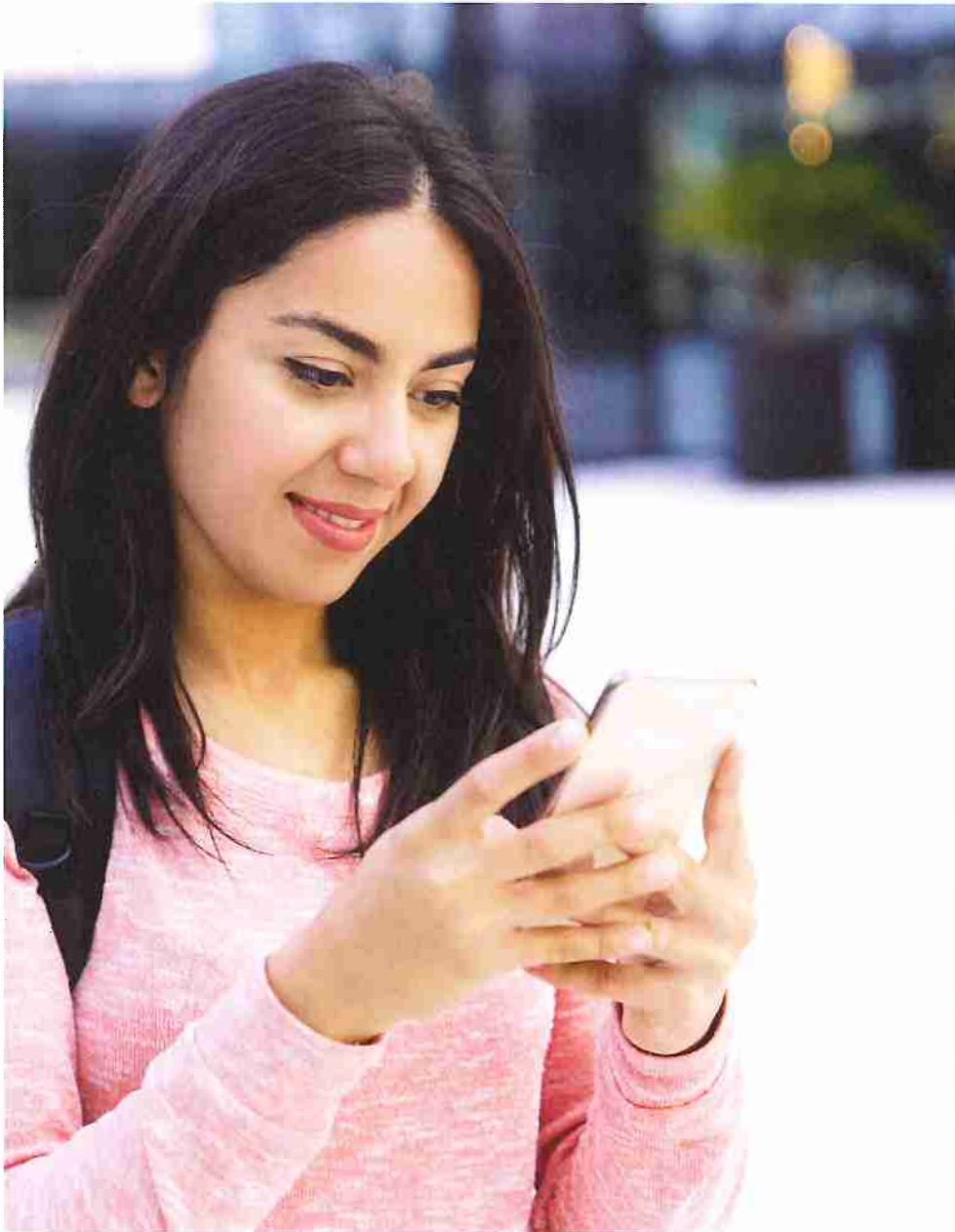
### Exemplars, Resources, and Research

- **Exemplar: Indianapolis Public Schools created free virtual learning pods. It took a 'herculean effort!'** From Chalkbeat Indiana. As learning pods for the privileged sprout up amid the coronavirus pandemic, school leaders like Indianapolis Public Schools' Superintendent Aleesia Johnson are finding ways to educate their neediest students. With the district starting the year entirely online, Johnson created four learning pods for students who are homeless or who have special needs. The learning pods offer small groups of students a place to do schoolwork while supervised by an adult in the room.
- **Exemplar: The Illinois 60 by 2025 Network** hosted [a discussion on trauma-informed practices](#) at the high school level. Representatives from East St. Louis School District 189 and Township High School District 214 in the Northwest suburbs of Chicago shared how they have implemented trauma-informed practices in their districts in partnership with the Illinois Federation of Teachers and community partners. Hear about the strategies and resources they are using to support the needs of students and community members as they deal with challenges related to COVID-19, racial unrest, and adjusting to remote learning.
- **Identifying and Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness** from EdResearch for Recovery provides key insights into what schools can do to best support students experiencing homelessness given the added vulnerability they have faced due to the pandemic.

- [Covid-19 and Homelessness: Strategies for Schools, Early Learning Programs, and Higher Education Institutions](#) from SchoolHouse Connection. As COVID-19 disrupts education, services, and life across the country, children and youth experiencing homelessness are exceptionally vulnerable. This page offers resources to help meet their needs as we respond to this global crisis.
- [Adverse Childhood Experiences \(ACEs\) Information](#) from the CDC including facts, statistics, prevention strategies, and resources for dealing with adverse childhood experiences.
- [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#) from Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, a Collaboration of Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School, includes resources for building trauma-sensitive schools.
- [Yes, You Can Do Trauma-Informed Teaching Remotely: Education Week](#) opinion piece with practical suggestions for teachers for how to support students' social-emotional health and help them process these unprecedented events during remote learning.
- [Psychological First Aid for Schools Field Operations Guide](#) from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Provides guidance on responding to disaster, violence, or terrorism events using the Psychological First Aid intervention. This version gives school administrators, educators, and staff practical assistance to meet immediate needs and concerns, reduce distress, and foster adaptive coping in the wake of a disaster.
- [Back-to-School Blueprint: Helping Students Heal from Trauma](#) from the Rennie Center. Many children are grappling with the emotional toll of the crisis. This guide helps schools address trauma and anxiety through an equity lens.

- [Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package](#) from the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. Resources included in the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* component of the Training Package introduce all school staff to the concept of trauma sensitivity and provide examples of trauma-sensitive practices that can be adopted in the classroom and schoolwide.
- [Using the Secondary Traumatic Stress Core Competencies in Trauma-Informed Supervision](#) from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. This report discusses the importance of quality supervision that organizations can provide to staff members at risk for secondary traumatic stress. It identifies the core competencies for supervisors providing formal support to workers who are exposed to secondary trauma and is intended to be a developmental assessment for supervisors to help identify areas of need and to guide the user to resources to strengthen those areas of competency.
- [Triaging for Trauma During COVID-19](#) from *Education Week*. Four ways schools can address student trauma in simple language with examples.
- [Preparing Educators for the Challenge Ahead](#) from ASCD Education Updates. Drawing from an open-access course on trauma-responsive educational practices, the situations explored in this article help educators know what to expect and how to respond to student trauma as a result of COVID-19.
- [Trauma-informed Practice and Teacher-Student Relationships](#) from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University (forthcoming). Explains what research tells us about how to prepare teachers to promote trauma-responsive educational practices.





## Academic Progress

The logistics of school during Covid-19 are constantly changing and teachers are working to understand what it takes to do remote and hybrid learning well. Schools and districts need information about how and what teachers are teaching to help identify what is and isn't working in these new environments, and educators and parents need data to understand student progress so that they can provide adequate supports.



### Instruction

What is the purposeful direction of the learning process?



### Assessment

What methods or tools are being used to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, and educational needs of students?



### Intensive Academic Support

What are the additional, targeted learning supports for the subset of students with significant learning needs?

“ We have grade-level teams who meet once a week to discuss student progress and reach out to students who are struggling.  
 – Rural High School Principal ”

## Instruction

Teachers are transforming the way they teach in real time, learning and improving their practices as they go. Remote and blended learning environments necessitate more than just adapting familiar lessons for use with a screen. They require entirely new ways of engaging with students, and there are no playbooks for doing it at the scale we are experiencing.

### Teacher and Administrator Insights

- **Allowing for Flexibility:** Many teachers are allowing more flexibility in completing assignments and tests.
- **Lack of Interaction with Peers:** Students are not getting as much time to interact with peers online.
- **Insufficient Structures:** School improvement structures such as the frequency and length of staff meetings are not conducive to a rapid and iterative improvement process.
- **Delayed Screening:** In-person English language proficiency screening is delayed if students must quarantine (if they are new arrivals from another country, for example) which delays placement.

### Promising Practices

- **Use Priority Standards:** Since remote environments and distancing protocols may limit instructional time, teachers use grade-level [Illinois Priority Learning Standards](#) to engage in deep and meaningful learning and help students recover from unfinished learning from Spring 2020.
- **Prioritize Direct Interaction:** Teachers prioritize direct peer and teacher interaction during synchronous time.
- **Protect Peer-to-Peer Time:** Teachers include time for students to interact with peers online.
- **Use Grade-Appropriate Instruction:** Teachers use [grade-appropriate instruction](#) and supports

to avoid trapping students in remediation and perpetuating inequities.

- **Engage Students:** To engage students, teachers include student-driven inquiry-based lessons, project-based learning, and performance assessments.
- **Discuss What’s Working:** Teachers build time into team meetings for discussions about what is and isn’t working and schools schedule shorter, more frequent staff meetings and focus on sharing best practices.
- **Survey Students and Parents:** Schools survey students and parents for insight into successful instructional practices.

### Exemplars, Resources, and Research

- **Exemplar: Belvidere School District** is highlighted in [Personalized Learning: Same Subject, Same Teacher, 3 Different Student Experiences](#) from *Education Week*. Teacher Tricia Proffitt outlines what her teaching looks like for three students with very different learning needs in her dual-language English classes at Belvidere Central Middle School in Illinois. Proffitt has been developing personalized teaching approaches for years and has continued to do so during the pandemic.
- **Exemplar: Disney II Magnet School** and is highlighted in [6 Lessons Learned About Better Teaching During the Pandemic](#) from *Education Week*. Educators working in schools where personalized learning is the centerpiece of instruction say students are getting more opportunities to work independently and at their own pace—and in the process, they are becoming better problem-solvers. The shift to remote and hybrid instruction has given these educators an opportunity to deepen their commitment to learner-centered approaches and build new
- strategies that will continue to be applied once all students are able to return to school buildings at full capacity.
- **Exemplar: Miami-Dade County Public Schools** is a pioneer of distance and blended learning. At this site you can find information about their program along with tools, tips, and resources.
- **Exemplar: Students Lost Time and Learning in the Pandemic. What ‘Acceleration’ Can Do to Help** from *Education Week*. An overview of the theory and models of acceleration academies from [Lawrence, MA](#) and [Springfield, MA](#).
- **Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of Covid and Beyond** from the Learning Policy Institute. This report provides an overarching framework that focuses on how policymakers as well as educators can support equitable, effective teaching and learning regardless of the medium through which that takes place. It provides research, state and local examples, and policy recommendations to transform learning and to close opportunity and achievement gaps.
- **Improving the Quality of Distance and Blended Learning** from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. Evidence-based strategies to consider and strategies to avoid in distance and blended learning.
- **Back-to-School Blueprint: Accessing Grade-Level Content** from the Rennie Center. This action guide highlights the importance of grade-appropriate instruction. It provides strategies to diagnose unfinished learning, assess the strength of instructional materials, provide “just-in-time” scaffolds, and deliver effective professional learning that helps educators navigate a new set of instructional needs.
- **Learning Keeps Going.** To support educators and parents during extended school closures, ISTE and EdSurge have curated a list of free tools and resources for teaching online as well as an Educator Help Desk where experts will answer your online learning questions.
- **Building Equitable Learning Environments in This Period of Crisis – Covid-19 and Systemic Racism – To Restore Our Collective Future** from the Building Equitable Learning Environments Network. Educators, system leaders, and communities committed to transforming education systems can use this guide to increase student engagement

and agency, support adult development and practice, and ensure schools reliably produce equitable student experiences and outcomes.

- **What Students Truly Mean When They Say They’re Bored (And What to Do About It)** by Erin Westgate, a social psychologist and assistant professor of psychology at the University of Florida in *Education Week*. Suggestions for making lessons meaningful.
- **The Concurrent Classroom: Using Blended Learning Models to Teach Students In-person and Online Simultaneously** from Catlin Tucker. A review of three blended learning models and an explanation of how to use them to teach a class with students attending both online and in person.

“ Our teachers have had to make some adjustments due to students having less time in class with teachers and or being fully remote.  
 – Rural High School Superintendent ”

- **How to Choose Words That Motivate Students During Online Learning** from Edutopia. Framing assignments in student-centric rather than teacher-centric ways can encourage engagement and persistence in learning.
- **How Using a Little Sign Language Can Improve Online Classes** from Edutopia. Nonverbal communication such as American Sign Language can help students and educators in every grade feel more connected.
- **The Do’s & Don’ts of Hybrid Teaching** from *Education Week*. Suggestions from the learned experiences of three teachers in hybrid mode.
- **Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies** from the US Department of Education

“ The role of assessment in this moment is not to capture and catalogue “learning loss” that spurs a remedial approach. Its purpose is to provide teachers, students, and families with actionable information that helps all students access grade-level standards and curriculum content.  
 — Large Urban District Administrator ”

## Assessment

Whether in-person or remote, assessment data help educators gauge students’ understanding and inform next steps. These data also help grade-level and school-level teams make real-time adjustments to curricula, instructional models, and approaches as they learn what is working and what needs to be improved. End-of-course and end-of-year assessments provide important aggregate information on the depth of learning disruption students and subgroups of students are experiencing, and can help direct and inform future policies, programs, and resources. Adapting assessments and the routines we administer and use assessment data in real time is a critical piece of learning to do remote instruction well.

### Teacher and Administrator Insights

- **Using the Same Assessments:** Most schools and districts have not changed much about the ways they are monitoring academic progress.
- **A Few New Platforms:** A few districts have implemented new platforms for formative assessments.
- **Difficulty Measuring Growth of Diverse Learners:** Since there has been less summative assessment than usual, it is difficult to find present levels of performance to create thoughtful goals to measure academic growth and proficiency over time for diverse learners.

### Promising Practices

- **Prioritize Formative Assessment:** Teachers prioritize pre-assessments and formative assessments.
- **Quick Knowledge Assessments:** Teachers check frequently for understanding using online tools such as end-of-module quizzes.
- **Review Data:** Grade-level and instructional leadership teams review online assessment data

to understand what about the model of instruction is working and what may need to be adjusted in general and for individual students.

- **Communicate Results:** To facilitate partnership in remote learning, teachers regularly communicate with families and caregivers about assessment results and the strategies they are using to meet students’ needs.
- **Share Aggregated Results:** Districts share aggregated diagnostic assessment results with the community to provide transparency about student learning and promote collaboration with community organizations.

### Exemplars, Resources, and Research

- **Exemplar:** [Ridgewood High School’s competency-based system](#) allows students to advance at their own pace, using competency rubrics to assess skills or concepts in multiple contexts in multiple ways. Performance assessments linked to competencies are given throughout the semester.
- **A Guide for School Districts: Exploring Alternative Measures of Student Learning and Wellness** from Bellwether Education Partners. Today — with unfamiliar school configurations and unknown impacts on student outcomes — districts can adapt how they measure school quality to better understand how schools are operating and how students are learning. This guide contains key questions for assessing student progress and student achievement.
- **Learning as We Go: Principals for Effective Assessment During the COVID-19 Pandemic** from CRPE. This paper summarizes the findings from a panel of assessment experts on diagnostic assessments and their role in helping educators and parents support student learning. The panel is part of the Evidence Project, an effort to close

the gap between research and policy in K–12 responses to COVID-19.

- **3 Principles for Assessments during Instructional Recovery and Beyond from Achievement Network.** These three guiding principles are applicable across instructional delivery scenarios: from long-distance learning to schools opening as they historically have, for leaders just getting started in planning, and for those beginning to implement instructional recovery plans.
- **Blueprint for Testing: How Schools Should Assess Students During the Covid Crisis** from FutureEd. This guide outlines how and when states, school districts, and schools should use assessments in this unprecedented period: to gauge student learning, help accelerate students to grade-level

performance, and provide systems-level insights into educational recovery.

- **Frequently Asked Questions on Collecting Progress Monitoring Data Virtually** from National Center on Intensive Intervention. With the closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, educators and administrators need to rethink how they collect and analyze progress monitoring data in a virtual setting.
- The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has developed [guidance to support school districts with spring 2021 assessment administration](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please be advised that this guidance is not final. ISBE will continue to update the guidance based on the direction from the U.S. Department of Education.





“ We have continued to follow our existing RTI model in order to identify the need for these intensive supports. With a few changes to an existing and robust RTI program we have had great results for students.  
– Rural High School Superintendent ”

## Do Intensive Academic Support

Concern about learning loss from pandemic-related school disruption is widespread, and research from past disasters suggests that some students will fall significantly behind relative to grade-level standards and will need intensive support. Collecting information to document the magnitude of the problem will allow schools and districts to dedicate adequate resources and help to justify additional support if necessary.

### Teacher and Administrator Insights

- **Using Established Support Model:** Most districts are using an adaptation of their established support model to help struggling students.
- **Additional Supports Necessary:** Districts have needed to provide additional support to families of students who require a high level of structure to be successful, including visual schedules and assistance with structuring spaces for learning.

### Promising Practices

- **Tie Tutoring to Class Content:** Schools accelerate learning in math and reading and help students succeed in their coursework by tying high-dose tutoring (one-on-one or very small group tutoring outside of regular instruction time at least three times per week) to grade-level classroom content.
- **Acceleration Academies:** Interventions with extended learning time such as acceleration academies — where struggling students are provided with targeted, small-group instruction in a single subject, delivered by select teachers over week-long vacation breaks — can help students catch up.

### Resources and Research

- [School Practices to Address Student Learning Loss](#) from EdResearch for Recovery. This research addresses which areas schools should prioritize for intensive academic intervention and what strategies are most effective.
- [Overcoming Covid-19 Learning Loss](#). *Education Week* interviewed two dozen researchers, teachers, and principals, and reviewed empirical studies and planning documents to identify interventions that are well supported by research as well as other approaches that are unlikely to move the needle.
- [High-Dosage Tutoring Is Effective, But Expensive. Ideas for Making It Work](#) from *Education Week*. Includes a downloadable [Guide for Helping Students Catch Up](#).
- [Getting tutoring right to reduce COVID-19 learning loss](#) from Brown Center Chalkboard. For tutoring programs to make a difference for kids, policymakers and school systems will have to avoid a range of pitfalls that have made most large-scale tutoring programs ineffectual.
- [Academic Supports for Students with Disabilities](#) from Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University. Evidence-based strategies for how schools can intervene to reduce learning gaps between students with disabilities and their peers which have likely widened during school closures.
- [Webinar: Intensifying Instruction & Monitoring Progress for Virtual/Distance Tier 2 & Tier 3 Support](#) from The Florida Problem Solving/Response to Intervention Project.

