Continuous Learning

Toolkit
2022

DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION
louisiana Believes

PURPOSE
During the 2020 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature, Senate Concurrent Resolution 63 was enrolled to create a continuous learning task force to assist the Louisiana Department of Education (LDOE) in developing guidance for Louisiana educators to meet the immediate need of supporting learning outside of normal practices.

In accordance with BESE policy, school systems shall have a written continuous learning plan for modified operations during school closures, reviewed by stakeholders and posted to the LEA website, and annually updated by June 30, including but not limited to:
a.   technology and connectivity;
b.   student and staff responsibilities;
c.   attendance;
d.   family strategic communication, engagement, and support; and
e.   instructional quality.

The task force determined four focus areas for continuous learning: school and system planning, technology, instructional quality, and family engagement and support.

The safety of students and staff is of utmost priority to the LDOE. School systems must provide access to continuous learning to limit unfinished learning while maintaining access to instructional programming during modified operations. The LDOE is committed to providing guidance and support to school systems to ensure that systems are prepared for continuous learning.

This toolkit is intended to support systems in developing a continuous learning plan for when school closures may occur that require modified operations on a short-, medium-, or long-term basis.
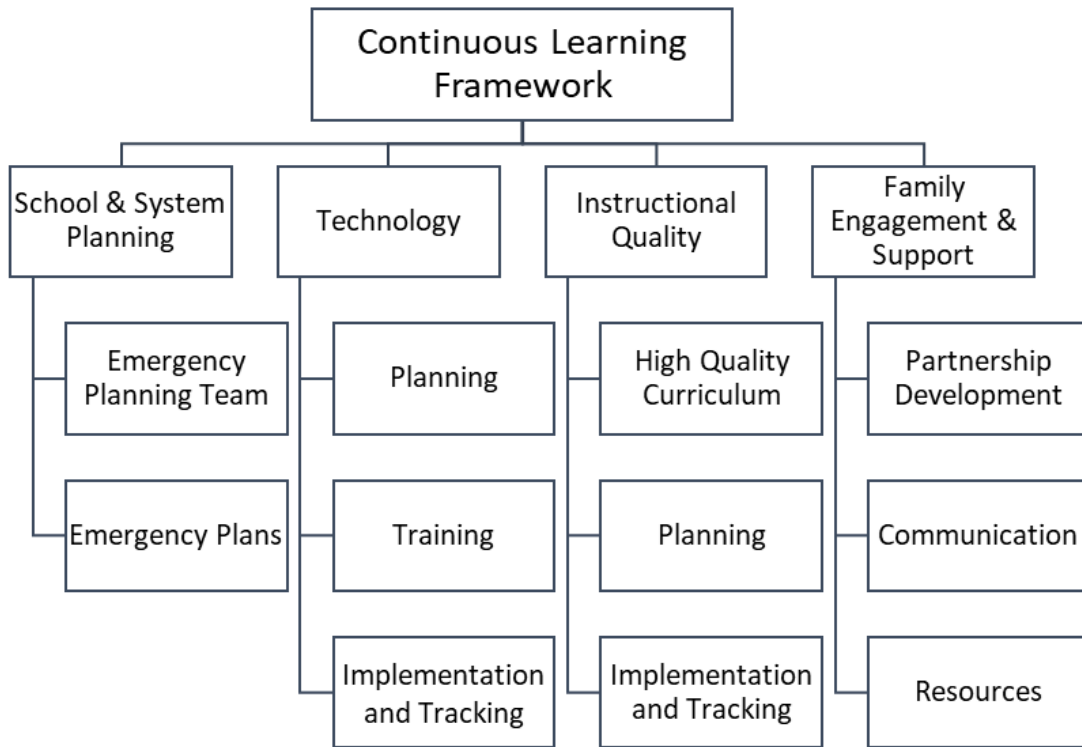
DEFINITIONS
Short-term modified operations: A significant portion of the students/staff are not able to be on campus for 1-2 days for face-to face, direct instruction. Continuous learning expectations may be limited or smaller in scope depending on resource availability (e.g. community is without electricity for two days).

Medium-term modified operations: A significant portion of the students/staff are not able to be on campus for 3-10 days for face-to face, direct instruction.

Long-Term Modified Operations: A significant portion of the students/staff are not able to be on campus for more than 10 days for face-to face, direct instruction. Operations should have more consistency and expectations of routines and instruction.

FRAMEWORK

A comprehensive approach to continuous learning includes four key focus areas: school and system planning, technology, instructional quality, and family engagement and support. The figure below details how these focus areas form the continuous learning framework presented in this toolkit.

```
                        Continuous Learning
                             Framework
  ┌──────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┐
School & System   Technology    Instructional      Family
   Planning                        Quality      Engagement &
                                                   Support

  Emergency        Planning      High Quality    Partnership
Planning Team                     Curriculum    Development

Emergency Plans    Training        Planning      Communication

              Implementation   Implementation
               and Tracking     and Tracking      Resources
```

ESSENTIAL TASKS AND GUIDING QUESTIONS

The essential tasks and guiding questions are checklists of actions to support the development of a continuous learning plan.

*Note: The continuous learning outline can be located at the end of the toolkit.

FOCUS AREA 1 SUMMARY: SCHOOL AND SYSTEM PLANNING

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR SCHOOL AND SYSTEM PLANNING

- Assemble a collaborative, representative planning team
- Draft a detailed emergency plan that includes continuous learning strategies for short-, medium-, and long-term modified operation scenarios
- Review and update plan annually

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is the state of your current school/system planning for extended school closures?
- What roles and partners should be represented on the planning team?
- What would activate the need for continuous learning (e.g., percent of students impacted, impact on operations or facilities)?
- How will all services (e.g., special education, English learner, student well-being) continue?
- What will continuous learning look like in short-term modified operations?
  - Example scenario: Storms cause power outages to large portions of the community for 2-3 days
  - Example scenario: School is unable to operate due to no running water from a winter freeze 2 days
- What will continuous learning look like in medium-term modified operations?
  - Example scenario: Large hurricane causes flooding, power outages, and other public safety risks for 5-7 days
  - Example scenario: Medium sized tornado causes significant community damage and impedes transportation for 8-10 days
- What will continuous learning look like in long term modified operations?
  - Example scenario: A fire destroys the majority of school building
  - Example scenario: A public health crisis requires isolation and quarantine procedures for 14-21 days

FOCUS AREA 2 SUMMARY: TECHNOLOGY

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR TECHNOLOGY

- ● Proactively ensure connectivity for all students
- ● Develop system-wide technology policies and procedures to ensure all technology is in place to meet continuous learning needs
- ● Provide appropriate training to staff, students, and family to access the technology required for continuous learning

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ● How many students do not have access to the Internet and/or a device?
- ● What resources are available to proactively increase or improve connectivity for families in your community?
- ● What policies and procedures exist related to types of technology devices provided to students and maintaining a 1:1 student to device ratio?
- ● What are the inventory control, issuance, and replacement policies?
- ● What are the defined technology roles and responsibilities for staff, students, and families?
- ● What is the plan to offer technical support to families and educators?
- ● How will the system manage technology funding, sustainability, and procurement?
- ● What professional development is offered to teachers on using technology in continuous learning settings? What digital literacy trainings are offered?
- ● What guidance will be given to teachers to prepare for using technology in continuous learning settings?
- ● How often are students, teachers, and families exposed to the technology required for continuous learning?

FOCUS AREA 3 SUMMARY: INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

- Determine the instructional approach using your high-quality instructional materials. Adapt to the new structures and schedules.
- Determine digital tools needed for interfacing with students, delivering instruction, and collecting and assessing student work.
- Plan how physical learning materials (e.g., manipulatives, printed material) will be distributed to and accessed by students.
- Implement the instructional plan and make adjustments as needed based on student needs.
- Refer to the OSERS guidance letter to ensure support for diverse learners and students with disabilities are in place. Ensure English learners and students with disabilities have access to instruction and appropriate support.
- Ensure that strong communication routines are in place. Establish and share instructional norms with students and parents.
- Establish a clear process for students to receive and respond to feedback in a timely manner.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is your instructional approach? Does it vary by grade level, content, and or length of modified operations?
- How, and in what scenarios, will you use synchronous and asynchronous instruction?
- How will pacing be adjusted in short-, medium-, and long-term modified operations?
- How are you ensuring the use of high quality instructional materials?
- What digital tools are essential for continuous learning to be successful?
- How will physical learning materials be distributed when necessary?
- What support will be in place for all learners?
- What is your communications plan to maintain connections with students?

FOCUS AREA 4 SUMMARY: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

- Develop partnerships with families, including technology training and mentorship opportunities
- Create a communication strategy to engage families before, during, and after continuous learning
- Create a parent portal for families to use during continuous learning

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How are you proactively developing partnerships with families? How will these partnerships function in a continuous learning setting?
- What is your communication strategy to engage families if continuous learning is needed?
- What is your family communication strategy while continuous learning is activated?
- What professional development is offered to families on using technology in continuous learning settings? What digital literacy trainings are offered?
- What is your family communication strategy before, during, and after continuous learning?
- What platform will be used for parents to access information and training around continuous learning?

FOCUS AREA 1: SCHOOL AND SYSTEM PLANNING

SCHOOL SYSTEM PLANNING

School systems should prepare a written plan for extended school closures that is annually updated and reviewed by stakeholders. In the event of an extended school closure, this ensures every student, teacher, and school employee is prepared to respond. Systems may build upon their Strong Start plan by adding in additional details to address the four continuous learning focus areas.

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

There are several key principles to consider when developing and/or reviewing plans for extended school closures.

Planning:
1. must be supported by leadership.
2. uses assessment to customize plans to the building level.
3. considers all threats and hazards.
4. provides for the access and functional needs of the whole school community.
5. considers all settings and all times.

For example, systems must consider supplemental support needs when extended building closures are unavoidable, such as providing transportation and nutrition services.

PLANNING PROCESS

FORM A COLLABORATIVE PLANNING TEAM

The right group of representative stakeholders will be responsible for drafting and/or updating emergency plans. Systems and schools are encouraged to leverage existing workgroups, and advisory councils when possible, to minimize the stakeholder workload. Key steps include:
- identifying a core planning team with representation from various stakeholder groups such as administrators; educators; school psychologists; nurses; facilities managers; transportation managers; food personnel; family services representatives; student and parent representatives; and individuals and organizations that serve and represent the interests of students, staff, and parents with disabilities.
- forming a structure or outline for the plan.
- defining and assigning roles and responsibilities.
- determining a regular meeting schedule.

UNDERSTAND THE SITUATION

After convening the team, it is important to understand the potential risks that could impact operations.
Key steps include:
- identifying threats and hazards.
- assessing the risk posed by the identified threats and hazards.
- prioritizing threats and hazards.

Each school and system may experience a wide variety of threats and hazards, so plans will significantly differ across the state.

DETERMINE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The planning team should develop at least three goals for addressing threats or hazards and objectives that detail specific, measurable actions that are necessary to achieve the goals. Goals should indicate the desired outcome for (1) before, (2) during, and (3) after the threat or hazard.

PLAN PREPARATION, REVIEW, AND APPROVAL

Consider how the plan should be formatted, so that it is structured and easy for users to access information when it is needed. Then write a plan and review it for adequacy, feasibility, acceptability, and completeness. Example plans can be found here. Finally, submit the plan for necessary approvals and share with all stakeholders and community partners who have a responsibility in the plan.

PLAN IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE

Once the plan is complete, educate stakeholders on the plan and their roles. Perform ongoing exercises to allow stakeholders to practice their roles and identify potential issues that might arise before an actual emergency. Then review, revise, and maintain the plan at least annually.

PLANNING RESOURCES

The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center (REMS TA Center) offers a comprehensive assortment of tools and resources to support all facets of planning that may require extended school closures. EOP Assist is a free software application designed to walk users through the planning process. There is also an interactive workbook available.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR SCHOOL AND SYSTEM PLANNING

- Assemble a collaborative, representative planning team
- Draft a detailed emergency plan that includes continuous learning strategies for short-, medium-, and long-term modified operation scenarios
- Review and update plan annually

GUIDING QUESTIONS
- What is the state of your current school/system planning for extended school closures?
- What roles and partners should be represented on the planning team?
- What would activate the need for continuous learning (e.g., percent of students impacted, impact on operations or facilities)?
- How will all services (e.g., special education, English learner, student well-being) continue?
- What will continuous learning look like in short-term modified operations?
  - Example scenario: Storms cause power outages to large portions of the community for 2-3 days
  - Example scenario: School is unable to operate due to no running water from a winter freeze 2 days
- What will continuous learning look like in medium-term modified operations?
  - Example scenario: Large hurricane causes flooding, power outages, and other public safety risks for 5-7 days
  - Example scenario: Medium sized tornado causes significant community damage and impedes transportation for 8-10 days
- What will continuous learning look like in long term modified operations?
  - Example scenario: A fire destroys the majority of school building

FOCUS AREA 2: TECHNOLOGY

Systems must be able to pivot from in-person instruction to continuous learning within an appropriate time frame in the event of an extended school closure, so that high quality teaching and learning is continued. Technology is a vital component of continuous learning strategies and depends on extensive planning and professional development to implement during extended school closures. The revised State Education Technology Plan supports the following guidance.

PLANNING

One of the most significant barriers to continuous learning utilizing technology is connectivity. School systems should proactively develop partnerships with the Louisiana Office of Broadband and Connectivity to ensure connectivity for all students and families. The LDOE is dedicated to continually supporting our school systems in increasing connectivity for our teachers and students.

Additional information regarding distance learning resources can be found in the Louisiana Board of Regents Distance Learning Resources and the Home Access Playbook - U.S. Office of Educational Technology.

Each school system should have a process for determining technology integration supports, connections to high quality instructional materials, and system technology implementation procedures. This will vary based on each system's local policies and procedures, but each process should plan for, at a minimum:

- Maintaining a 1:1 student to device ratio
- Types of devices
- Inventory control, issuance, and replacement policies
- Roles and responsibilities
- Family and educator technical support
- Funding, sustainability, and procurement options
- Professional development
- Tips for preparation
- IT Support (call center, email)
- Affordable internet access for families

All students should have access to a device and the Internet. Student access to technology enables continuous learning. Systems should use the following steps to assess access and usage:
1. Identify which students do not have access to the Internet and/or a device.
2. Determine which device to provide students who do not have internet access at home. Consider protective add-ons and one-stop management for the device.
3. Determine how to provide technical support for devices.

TRAINING

The U.S. Department of Education (ED)'s Office of Education Technology recommends a list of basic digital literacy skills and how preparation should be instituted for schools and families. Basic technology literacy includes:
- How to use the devices at home
- How to connect to the internet (e.g., from a Wi-fi hotspot or Mi-Fi)
- Basic device capabilities necessary for learning such as how to use a mouse, where to locate the camera and microphone, and commonly used software
- Promising practices for basic troubleshooting (e.g., unmute, turning on the device, restarting)

- The ability to use technology to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information

TEACHING FAMILIES TO USE DEVICES AND INTERNET AT HOME

School systems should ensure that students and parents receive explicit guidance on how to use school-provided digital devices appropriately. One best practice is to schedule technology-focused learning events at convenient times where families (parents, grandparents, and others who support children) can learn how to access school-provided digital devices and how to promote digital literacy and citizenship at home.

A specific program endorsed by the Board of Regents is the Northstar Digital Literacy program which can be a helpful tool for supporting planning efforts.

The ED Office of Education Technology also suggests that training should include information tailored to the different applications or platforms students will use for remote learning and how a family can support virtual learning. This includes:
- Walking families through logging in and out of platforms
- Demonstrating where lessons, lesson plans, and homework can be found and how assignments are to be submitted
- Demonstrating where families can find grades and how students and families can communicate with the teacher
- Basic troubleshooting procedures that may be required when using the platform

A checklist and list of key questions is available to assist systems with providing training and technical support for digital literacy.

IMPLEMENTATION AND TRACKING

The list below includes sample tools and resources that can support system implementation and tracking of technology and student engagement during continuous learning.
- Educational Technology Leader monthly calls
- Sample Home Learning Professional Development Portal- Caddo Parish

The use of technology in continuous learning environments often requires different approaches to concerns such as administering virtual assessments and maintaining academic integrity during the continuous learning experience.

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR TECHNOLOGY

- Proactively ensure connectivity for all students
- Develop system-wide technology policies and procedures to ensure all technology is in place to meet continuous learning needs
- Provide appropriate training to staff, students, and family to access the technology required for continuous learning

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How many students do not have access to the Internet and/or a device?
- What resources are available to proactively increase or improve connectivity for families in your community?
- What policies and procedures exist related to types of technology devices provided to students and maintaining a 1:1 student to device ratio?
- What are the inventory control, issuance, and replacement policies?
- What are the defined technology roles and responsibilities for staff, students, and families?

- What is the plan to offer technical support to families and educators?
- How will the system manage technology funding, sustainability, and procurement?
- What professional development is offered to teachers on using technology in continuous learning settings? What digital literacy trainings are offered?
- What guidance will be given to teachers to prepare for using technology in continuous learning settings?
- How often are students, teachers, and families exposed to the technology required for continuous learning?

FOCUS AREA 3: INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

Instructional quality at all parts of the learning process is the foundation for seamless transitions into continuous learning environments. When creating a continuous learning plan, systems should focus on three areas.

- **Focus on quality**
  Teachers and students will have the greatest success when plans build from the instructional plan in place for the academic year. Rather than turning to new instructional materials, school systems should use their existing high quality curriculum resources.

- **Focus on simplicity**
  Plan for an appropriate amount of active instruction per day based on the age of the children. Give families and staff specific guidance about when and how to use recommended materials. Consistent days and times for teacher-student phone calls or online conferences will simplify routines.

- **Focus on families**
  Develop a learning plan that works for families. Be thoughtful about the expectations placed upon families during this time.

HIGH QUALITY CURRICULUM

All school systems must have strong, yet agile continuous learning plans that provide standards-aligned instruction using high-quality curriculum during modified operations, including provisions for:

- A strategic communications plan to connect with every student on a daily basis, provide weekly feedback on students' work, and communicate a family's role in supporting their child's continuous learning
- Versatile delivery methods for instruction, related services, and professional development
- Adaptive staffing models that enable feedback on students' work and frequent communication with students and families
- Flexible calendars and school schedules that maximize learning opportunities in a dynamic public health context.

PLANNING

IDENTIFY RESOURCES

Using high-quality instructional materials, school systems must identify what instruction is going to be provided to students and how it will be delivered.

DEVELOP APPROACH

School systems should decide on the delivery approach for continuous learning. Systems will need to prepare teachers, communicate expectations to families, and provide logistical updates to all stakeholders.

Disrupting a school year can create academic challenges for students. Instructional materials are one of the most important tools educators use in the classroom to enhance student learning. School systems should plan to use high-quality instructional materials in all learning scenarios (virtual, hybrid, and traditional). In order to provide continuous core instruction with high-quality materials, modifications to routines and procedures are necessary for school systems and leaders, teachers, and parents.

Pacing may need to be adjusted to ensure that high-quality instructional materials are taught as intended. Instructional pacing of high quality-materials is adapted using publisher guidance, when available, to ensure students continue on-track to complete all grade-level standards.

For English Language Arts, units should be taught as intended to the greatest extent possible when adapting to virtual/hybrid learning. Lessons may take multiple days to complete.

For math, lessons should be taught as intended to the greatest extent possible when adapting to distance learning. If pacing must be adjusted, publisher guidance will indicate which lessons are most critical.

Educators must ensure that high-quality instructional materials are accessible during virtual/hybrid learning and that accommodations are continuously provided across all learning scenarios.

INSTRUCTIONAL BEST PRACTICES FOR A VIRTUAL SETTING

In order to provide continuous core instruction, modifications to routines and procedures are necessary for school systems, leaders, teachers, and parents.

As continuous learning plans are created, it is important that educators take into account the best practices for teaching in a virtual setting using the [Louisiana Department of Education's Virtual Instruction Guide](). Synchronous learning is any activity in an online course that happens in real-time, like a Zoom meeting or a chat. It requires all participants to be in the same online environment, actively participating at the same time. Asynchronous learning in an online course consists of activities that students can generally complete on their own schedule within the given timeline for the task. Table 1 on the next page discusses how each learning time should be considered.

Things to consider when implementing a high quality virtual program:

- Ensure students are equipped with devices prepared to live stream while accessing other educational activities
- Ensure teachers are equipped with devices capable of running multiple applications while live streaming
- Students and teachers require high-speed Internet Access appropriate to live stream for virtual class meetings
- Virtual programs should adopt a learning management system (LMS) to organize virtual learning
- Staffing and scheduling should allow teachers to focus on virtual students
- Hybrid options where students visit a campus in small groups has been a successful option for some schools
- Determine sustainability (such as budget, students, teachers/facilitators)

ACCESSIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS

Regardless of the delivery approach, school systems must consider the accessibility of high quality instructional materials in a continuous learning environment. School systems should continue to prioritize the use of high quality core instructional materials for all students while also providing flexibility, based on student need. Once the delivery approach is determined, school systems should create the following schedules to support instructional staff, students, and families:
- An instructional staff schedule and set of responsibilities aligned to the platform you select; and
- Sample learning schedules for students at home.

LEARNING PODS

When planning for continuous learning, systems have the opportunity to integrate best practices for instructional quality with a variety of approaches such as learning pods. A learning pod is a group of at least ten K-12 students enrolled in the school who receive instruction in a small group setting.

Table 1. Learning Time Comparison

Learning Time	Advantages	Considerations	When to Use	Length of Time
Synchronous (in real-time)	- Provides the opportunity for asking and answering questions in real-time - Provides the opportunity for spontaneous interaction and exchange - Provides the opportunity for teachers to give immediate feedback on student learning - Builds the classroom community - Increases in the number of social interactions	Synchronous learning can widen the divide for learners with: - certain disabilities - unstable Internet access - inequitable access to a device and other equipment - caregiving responsibilities - no access to a suitable space to participate	- To interact with and between students - To check-in with students to clarify information - For focused activities and group presentations - For office hours	The ideal length of a virtual meeting session is 30-40 minutes for grades Pre-K-5, no more than 3 times a day, and 45-60 minutes for grades 6-12, no more than 3 times a day.
Asynchronous (at different times)	Students can complete work within a time frame set forth by the teacher. - Students have the opportunity to take the necessary time to digest and repeat/reread the content. - Students have time to compose and revise responses increasing access to those with language and other barriers.	Without proper motivation, it is possible for students to put off completing weekly work and fall behind. - Students can feel isolated or disconnected from the instructor and other students - A strong accountability and feedback system must be in place.	- When recording lecture/podcast (20 minutes max) - For readings - For video demonstrations/ worked problems - For quizzes, assignments, application, analytical group work	Students can complete work within a timeframe set forth by the teacher.

Adapted from: **https://www.concordia.ca/ctl/digital-teaching/synchronous-asynchronous.html**

ATTENDANCE

Students are considered to be in attendance during remote or hybrid instruction when attendance is checked and recorded on each school day and at the beginning of each class period in accordance with R.S. 17:232.B.(1) and when at least one of the following requirements is met:

1. The student logs into synchronous online instruction at the designated time for the course in which the student is enrolled. Specific login requirements and instructional expectations according to grade level are determined by the LEA.
2. Evidence exists that the student accessed a planned asynchronous instructional activity. Acceptable evidence of student participation in asynchronous activities is to be outlined by the LEA.

Remote attendance policy extends to students enrolled in a course for which instruction usually occurs in person at a school site, but for which instruction has been temporarily transferred to a remote delivery method due to initiation of continuous learning, a situation that renders the school site inaccessible for daily instructional activities, or for students

temporarily unable to physically attend at the school site. Remote learning attendance and related requirements shall be outlined in LEA policy and communicated to students and parents or legal guardians at the beginning of the school year and upon initiation of remote instructional delivery.

IMPLEMENTATION AND TRACKING

School systems should support each school site in developing specific guidance for continuous learning. The guidance below includes recommendations to consider while supporting schools at the classroom level.

DEFINE CLEAR STUDENT OUTCOMES

Instruction should focus on the essential learning of the grade level and subject area to ensure unfinished learning is minimized for all students. This may require schools to shift from offering online activities led by parents to offering teacher-delivered, standards-aligned instruction remotely. Schools should Implement the identified content, standards, or skills that the curriculum prioritizes.

Helpful Tools
Sample Scope and Sequence for Continuous Learning
Curricular Resources Annotated Reviews
Louisiana Academic Content Professional Development Guide
Distance Learning Capacity Framework

IMPLEMENTING REMOTE INSTRUCTION

Remote instruction includes multiple strategies for communication. It is not limited to online learning. Focus on delivering the content and utilizing technology effectively. Look for ways to build in learning events in and out of class to promote engagement. Finally, make sure to support the needs of diverse learners.

Helpful Tools
Continuous Learning Survey for Families
Sample Technology Training Schedule for Teachers
Sample Online Professional Learning Videos for Educations
Sample Positive Incentive System
Sample Student Social Activities
Guidance for Supporting Students with Disabilities
Guidance for Supporting English Learners

INITIATE COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Connect with each student on a daily basis and provide formative feedback on student work at regular intervals appropriate to the length of continuous learning time. Staff should also keep in contact with families and colleagues.

Helpful Tools
Guidance for Communication Plans
Sample Continuous Learning Tracking System
Sample Weekly Parent Letter
Sample Teacher Collaboration Plan
Sample Weekly Teacher Meeting Schedule
FirstLine Schools Case Study
Monroe City Case Study

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

- Determine the instructional approach using your high-quality instructional materials. Adapt to the new structures and schedules.
- Determine digital tools needed for interfacing with students, delivering instruction, and collecting and assessing student work.
- Plan how physical learning materials (e.g., manipulatives, printed material) will be distributed to and accessed by students.
- Implement the instructional plan and make adjustments as needed based on student needs.
- Refer to the OSERS guidance letter to ensure support for diverse learners and students with disabilities are in place. Ensure English learners and students with disabilities have access to instruction and appropriate support.
- Ensure that strong communication routines are in place. Establish and share instructional norms with students and parents.
- Establish a clear process for students to receive and respond to feedback in a timely manner.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What is your instructional approach? Does it vary by grade level, content, and or length of modified operations?
- How, and in what scenarios, will you use synchronous and asynchronous instruction?
- How will pacing be adjusted in short-, medium-, and long-term modified operations?
- How are you ensuring the use of high quality instructional materials?
- What digital tools are essential for continuous learning to be successful?
- How will physical learning materials be distributed when necessary?
- What support will be in place for all learners?
- What is your communications plan to maintain connections with students?

FOCUS AREA 4: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

In order for students to be successful even in the midst of extended school closures, the family-school partnership is critical in continuous learning environments.

A few key areas that should be considered when developing an effective continuous learning framework for family engagement and support are:
- family technology training that will build the families capacity to aid students in their learning;
- meaningful student mentorship opportunities that foster healthy relationships;
- ongoing effective methods of communication between the school staff and families
- inclusive school-parent compacts that clearly outline goals and responsibilities for all stakeholders; and
- establishing an informative parent portal to keep parents abreast of the latest resources and school information.

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

TECHNOLOGY TRAINING FOR FAMILIES

The purpose of providing technology training for families is to educate them on how to use technology to support their child(ren)'s education experience. Student success during extended school closures, as well as, during direct instruction hinges on parent/family understanding and acceptance of classroom technology and innovation.

Some examples of the different types of technology training are:
- Live stream with follow up asynchronous resources for families in multiple languages (example)
- "How to" guidance documents for families with active links to resources
- Standards or principles for systems to evaluate their technology training support for parents

MENTORSHIPS

During continuous learning, mentors are able to promote continued student growth. Mentors serve as a thought partner for students during the continuous learning process and on their academic journey. Empowering students to become autonomous learners and agents of their own change is the goal of a mentor. They express understanding of students' aspirations and fears, and support their success by acting as an advocate for students' best interests.

Research[1] confirms that quality mentoring relationships have powerful positive effects on young people in a variety of personal, academic, and professional situations. Ultimately, mentoring connects a young person to personal growth, development, social, and economic opportunity.

TYPES OF MENTORING

Traditional mentoring is a one-on-one relationship, sometimes called a Big/Little relationship, in which one mentor is matched with one child based on common interests. The pair meets regularly (usually once a week) over the course of a year or more. The relationship tends to be close and requires a serious commitment on both sides.

---

[1] Technical Assistance Packet #1: "The ABC's of School-based Mentoring" [Linda Jucovy, The National Mentoring Center]

Other types of mentoring include:

Group Mentoring: One adult volunteer builds relationships with a number of young people. Meetings can take place with a focus on a particular project or an ongoing activity.

Team Mentoring: A group of two or more adults work together as a team to mentor a group of youths. This system often focuses on team building, leadership development, and community service.

Family Mentoring: Low-income families face enormous obstacles in getting basics like food and shelter. The stress can severely disrupt family life and lead to homelessness. These families can be matched with mentors.

Whether mentoring through an organization or filling the role with a familiar child, here are some guidelines to follow:
- Be Consistent
- Keep an open mind
- Be firm, but friendly
- Partner with the parent
- Offer a different perspective

To start a mentoring program, school systems should:

START WITH INTENTION
Start your program with an intentionality of involving families as you recruit mentors and youth. Before your program even starts, think critically about how you will engage families.

BUILD A STRONG ORIENTATION PROCESS
Many mentoring programs have found success in holding an orientation session for youth and parents. This is a great time to set expectations for participation and explain why it is important for the youth to have consistent attendance to get the most out of the mentoring relationship. This is also a time to ease concerns—some parents worry they have done something wrong if their child wants or needs a mentor. Explain that we all need mentors—some youth naturally find mentors and some find them through planned mentoring programs. Supporting their child in the program is a sign of great parenting.

SET CLEAR EXPECTATIONS
Families need complete information to make sure the program is the right fit for them and their child and to fully engage in the program. Explain the program goals, expectations and required paperwork. Offer to answer any questions at the beginning of the mentoring experience or throughout the program.

STAY CONNECTED
If you are not successful in getting parents to an orientation session, make an effort to call them. Throughout the mentoring program, stay connected with families. There are multiple ways to stay connected through social media, phone, text, email or one-on-one meetings.

Some examples of best practices identified in research are individualized goal setting, developing relationships built on trust, and developing self-awareness and fostering passions.

COMMUNICATION

Throughout the continuous learning process, positive communication and relationships with families help to build trust. Trust is an important part of helping to make sure to maintain partnership with families and working as a team with families to help children meet their goals.

Now more than ever, parents and teachers are encouraged to work as a team for the benefit of children. The purpose of implementing effective methods of communication with families is to help inform, reassure, and engage families with clear, concise, and effective communication streams. Some examples of the different types of communication streams are ClassDojo, ClassTag, SeeSaw, Remind, emails, phone calls, notes, postcards, and social media. These tools offer a variety of platforms to communicate and stay connected with families. Other tips on communication strategies can be found below.

Louisiana Department of Education Guidance on Communicating during School Interruptions
Parent- Teacher Communication Strategies
Two way Partnerships

RESOURCES

FAMILY-STUDENT COMPACT/MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The purpose of a School-Parent Compact is to build partnerships between the home and school. Goals that outline a plan for achievement are communicated at the system and school level. The agreement that parents, students, and teachers develop together explains how parents and teachers will work together to make sure all students reach or exceed grade-level standards.

Each school receiving funds under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) must develop a written school-parent compact jointly with parents for all children participating in Title I, Part A activities, services, and programs. That compact is part of the school's written parental involvement policy developed by the school and parents under section 1118(b) of the ESEA. The compact must outline how parents, the entire school staff, and students will share the responsibility for improved student academic achievement and the means by which the school and parents will build and develop a partnership to help children achieve the State's high standards. An example of best practices can be found in the article Building Powerful Partnerships with Families, which discusses how to transform your Title 1 School-Parent Compacts into effective action plans.

Effective Continuous Learning Family Compacts:
- Link to goals of the school improvement plan
- Focus on student learning skills
- Describe how teachers will help students develop those skills using high-quality instruction
- Share strategies parents can use at home

More specifically, a modified version of the regular school and parent compact may be necessary to accommodate the virtual learning environment and enhance the family member's role as a learning coach. Examples of a few responsibilities that may be included are:

School Responsibilities:
- provide the system's high-quality curriculum and instruction in a supportive and effective learning environment that enables the participating students to meet student academic achievement standards.
- provide all services designated in each student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan. This includes, regularly measuring the student's progress in the general curriculum and in any individual goal areas; and, offer intervention(s) when the student does not demonstrate proficiency.
- provide ongoing communication with parents and students during open house and parent-teacher conferences.

Parent/guardian Responsibilities:
- establish a daily routine and schedule with students
- ensure the student attends online instruction delivery during designated times
- monitor student's weekly grades to ensure access to resources and materials
- participate in office hours when needed
- communicate with teachers and administrators when needed
- maintain a positive and supportive role
- encourage physical activity daily
- ensure your student has appropriate and sufficient reading materials

Student Responsibilities:
- attend instruction and all scheduled meetings with their teacher
- establish daily routines and timelines to participate and engage in the learning activities
- stay on the pace set by the teacher
- complete and submit all assignments on time with integrity and academic honesty
- use an assignment calendar to stay on track
- follow the student handbook and Rules of Behavior for the course
- comply with the Acceptable Use of Technology Agreement for Students in the student handbook
- monitor email and online platforms daily to check for announcements and feedback from teachers
- contact the teacher(s) when needing additional support or clarification
- read every day
- do some sort of physical activity every day

ESTABLISHING A PARENT PORTAL

The purpose of providing a parent portal with resources is to create a one-stop point for communication with school personnel, a place to access tools to learn about the technology used for student learning, and tips and tools for parents to engage with their student's learning.

Things to consider when developing a parent portal:
- Assemble a parent portal team that includes parents for input
- Choose the best time to launch
- Develop a rollout strategy that will work best for your system
- Keep information streamlined and current

Some examples of topics/materials to include in the parent portal are:
- School Information- school report cards, school directory, Improvement plans, etc.

- Assessment Resources- guides to the state assessments, assessment calendar, etc.
- Academic Support Resources- standards, compacts, homework help, etc.
- College and Career Prep Resources- graduation requirements, financial aid resources, ACT prep, dual enrollment, etc.
- Information for families of students with disabilities- Accommodations, Dispute Resolution, Parent Surveys, etc.

OTHER RESOURCES

Continuous learning survey of families
LDOE's family support toolbox

ESSENTIAL TASKS FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

- Develop partnerships with families, including technology training and mentorship opportunities
- Create a communication strategy to engage families before, during, and after continuous learning
- Create a parent portal for families to use during continuous learning

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- How are you proactively developing partnerships with families? How will these partnerships function in a continuous learning setting?
- What is your communication strategy to engage families if continuous learning is needed?
- What is your family communication strategy while continuous learning is activated?
- What professional development is offered to families on using technology in continuous learning settings? What digital literacy trainings are offered?
- What is your family communication strategy before, during, and after continuous learning?
- What platform will be used for parents to access information and training around continuous learning?

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: DEVELOPING YOUR CONTINUOUS LEARNING PLAN

Systems may build upon their Strong Start plan by adding in additional details to address the four continuous learning focus areas. The following outline can serve as a possible guide to structure your continuous learning plan using the designated components.

SECTION 1: COVER PAGE

SECTION 2: SNAPSHOT INFORMATION
- Include system, superintendent's name, and contact information
- Additional information could include: Total schools in each grade band, names of schools, etc.

SECTION 3: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Describe high level priorities and actions.

SECTION 4: SCHOOL AND SYSTEM PLANNING

Part 4.1: Emergency Planning Team
List and describe members and roles filled by each person.

Part 4.2: Scope and cadence of work
- Describe how emergency plans and continuous learning plans were created
- List team members and plan to conduct a meeting
- Describe how the plan was drafted and feedback solicited
- Explain how the school system plans to communicate with stakeholders

Part 4.3: School/system emergency plan for continuous learning
- Explain continuous learning conditions
    - Triggers for continuous learning
       e.g. % of students impacted, impact on operations or facilities
    - Scale for activating continuous learning
       e.g. student group, whole school
    - Continuation of services
       e.g. well-being, special education, nutrition

- Describe modified Operations
    - Short-Term (How will it look for 1-2 days?)
    - Medium-Term (How will it look for 3-10 days?)
    - Long-Term (How will it look for 11+ days?)

- Connection to emergency operation plan(s)
    - How does continuous learning connect with your Strong Start Plan?
    - Last updated
    - *Link to plan (not included in this document)*

SECTION 5: TECHNOLOGY

Part 5.1: Planning
- Actions to increase community internet connectivity
  - Describe plan to increase connectivity and partnerships created to support the goal
- Policies and procedures for 1:1 student to device ratio
- Funding, procurement, and sustainability policies
- Inventory control, issuance, and replacement policies
- Technology roles and responsibilities for staff, students, and families

Part 5.2 Training
- Professional development
  - Describe plan to manage professional development for all educators to integrate technology supports into instruction
- Guidance for teachers using technology in continuous learning settings
- Describe guidance supports in place to help teachers during continuous learning
  - Training for families
- Describe training plan to build families' capacity to support students at home

Part 5.3 Implementation and Tracking
- IT support to families during continuous learning
  - Describe how families will have ongoing support during periods of continuous learning
- Tracking student access and usage
  - Describe plan to track student engagement through technology

SECTION 6: INSTRUCTIONAL QUALITY

Part 6.1: High Quality Curriculum
- High quality instructional materials
  - Describe how high-quality instructional materials are used and will continue during continuous learning
- Digital materials
  - Describe the plan to integrate digital materials into instruction to support continuous learning
- Physical materials needed for learning
  - Describe plan to distribute necessary physical materials for continuous learning periods

Part 6.2: Planning
- Identify resources
  - Describe key resources that will support instruction during continuous learning
- Instructional approach
  - Describe variations by grade, content, and/or length of modified operations
  - Describe conditions for synchronous and asynchronous instruction
- Pacing adjustments by modified operation length
  - Describe how pacing will be altered in short-, medium-, and long- term modified operations
- Supports for diverse learners
  - Describe plan for supporting diverse learners, including maintaining compliance with all accessibility requirements

Part 6.3: Implementation and Tracking
- Student objectives

- Describe how schools will set and track student objectives for continuous learning
- Implementation of remote instruction
  - Describe operational plan for implementing remote instruction in short, medium, and long term modified operations
- Communication and support
  - Describe plan for teachers to communicate with students and colleagues at regular intervals

SECTION 7: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT

Part 7.1: Partnership development
Describe a plan to build and strengthen partnerships with families before, during and after continuous learning

Part 7.2: Communication strategy
Describe how schools will communicate with families
- Before continuous learning
- During continuous learning
- After continuous learning

Part 7.3: Resources
- Family-student compact
  - Describe the process for creating family-student compacts
- Parent Portal
  - Describe plan for creating and/or updating a parent portal with key information to support students during continuous learning

School systems with questions can contact Keisha.Thomas2@la.gov.