2020-21 Planning Guidance for Minnesota Public Schools

July 23, 2020

Introduction

Spring 2020 brought unprecedented changes to society and our education system. As we plan for the 2020-21 school year, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) is working with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to monitor the COVID-19 pandemic and determine how to keep our students, families and staff healthy and safe. We have developed guidance for three scenarios for the school year, detailed in this document. School districts and charter schools should plan for all three scenarios, based on MDH planning guidance, so our schools can be ready for whatever the public health situation may require. Schools should offer distance learning to enrolled students who may be medically vulnerable or otherwise unable or unwilling to return to in-person or hybrid learning.

Vision

Minnesota is the best state in the country for children to grow up in – those of all races, ethnicities, religions, economic statuses, gender identities, sexual orientations, (dis)abilities, and zip codes.

Guiding Principles

- Practice servant leadership
- Treat everyone with respect and dignity
- Do the right thing, especially when it is difficult
- Ask how your actions are reinforcing or removing structural inequity
- Promote the common good over narrow special interests
- Be accessible, transparent, and accountable
- Include voices from communities who will be most impacted

Priorities

Minnesota does best when state agencies and community partners collaborate to achieve common goals. We will solve problems in education, health care, environment and energy, housing, jobs, transportation, and so much more by focusing on these key priorities:

- Children and Families
- Equity and Inclusion
- Thriving Communities
- Fiscal Accountability and Measurable Results
- Minnesota's Environment

Purpose

Ensure that every student in the state of Minnesota receives an equitable education and has equal access to learning and instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Process for Developing Guidance

Since the beginning of Distance Learning in March, MDE has honed and modified the recommended guidance to better meet the academic, social-emotional, and mental health needs of our students. Simultaneously, MDE developed, and subsequently, released summer learning guidance that included a hybrid-model option in addition to distance learning. As we consider options for the system and structure for the 2020-21 school year, we can use what we learned from the distance learning model and what we are learning in the hybrid-model to ensure that our students continue to receive a high-quality education and our staff have what they need to support their students.

What: Build three scenarios for the 2020-21 school year

- Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students
- Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits
- Scenario 3: Distance learning only

How: Feedback groups, family survey, systems review, and feedback loops.

MDE has created a system and structure to implement both a distance learning and a hybrid model. As a result, we can build upon the existing structure to maintain what is working for students, families, and staff, and revise and/or completely revamp what is not working for students, families, and staff. In partnership with the Wisconsin/Minnesota Comprehensive Center (WMCC), MDE is engaged in a systems-review of distance learning plans looking specifically at structure, content, and equity. Over 150 participants representing stakeholder groups from educational organizations, community organizations, teachers, advocates, students, and families engaged in distance learning discussions conducted via Zoom between June 8 and June 16, 2020. Each session was facilitated by a staff member from WMCC using a set of guiding questions. All points of view were welcomed and valued. The participants were encouraged to share their thoughts and provide feedback that could inform future planning, even if they seemed different from what others shared. Each session was recorded and was only accessed by WMCC for analysis. A representative from MDE listened in on live sessions but did not participate. The feedback groups included:

- BARR
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- Children's Cabinet
- Children's Defense Fund
- Coalition of Asian American Leaders
- Council of Asian Pacific Minnesotans
- Council of Minnesotans of African Heritage
- Early Learning Coordinators
- Education Minnesota
- Education Partnership Coalition
- Elementary and Secondary School Families
- Full Service Community School Coordinators
- Ignite After School
- Minnesota Association of Alternative Programs
- Minnesota Association of Charter Schools
- Minnesota Association of School Administrators
- Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
- Minnesota Association of Special Education
- Minnesota Community Education Association
- Minnesota Council of Latino Affairs
- Minnesota Education Equity Partnership
- Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association
- Minnesota Rural Education Association
- Minnesota School Board Association
- Minnesota School Nutrition Association
- Minnesota Youth Council
- PACER
- Parent Teacher Associations
- Racial Equity Coordinators
- School Bus/Transportation Companies
- School Nurses of Minnesota
- Second Harvest Heartland
- Secondary School Students
- SEIU 284
- Tribal Nations Education Committee
- United Way
- Urban Indian Alliance

A summary of findings from the feedback sessions can be found on MDE's Public Engagement web page.

In addition, MDE created and administered a family survey statewide to gather additional feedback from our families. This survey was written in English and translated into three additional languages.

MDE also partnered with the Wisconsin/Minnesota Comprehensive Center (WMCC) to do a systems-review of distance learning plans focused on structure, content, and equity. The systems review is a random sample of Minnesota's three largest school districts, 68 Metropolitan Statistical Area school districts, 39 Micropolitan Statistical Area school districts, 41 Balance Area school districts, and 118 charter schools.

The information gleaned from the feedback groups, family survey, and WMCC systems review will be triangulated to ensure that the guidance we provide districts and charter schools will support our students in receiving a high-quality education and ensure that our staff has what they need to support their students.

Three Scenarios for 2020-21

- **In-person learning for all students**. In this planning scenario, schools should create as much space between students and teachers as is feasible during the day, but will not be held strictly to enforcing 6 feet of social distancing during primary instructional time in the classroom. Activities and extracurricular programming should continue to follow the COVID-19 Sports Guidance for Youth and Adults (PDF). This scenario may be implemented assuming state COVID-19 metrics continue to stabilize and/or improve.

- **Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits**. In this planning scenario, schools must limit the overall number of people in school facilities and on transportation vehicles to 50% maximum occupancy. Sufficient social distancing with at least 6 feet between people must occur at all times. If distancing cannot be achieved in a space or on a transportation vehicle, the number of occupants must be reduced. Schools must also include plans for contactless pick up and/or delivery of meals and school materials for days that students and staff are not in the school building, as well as implementation of a school-age care program for critical workers. This scenario may be implemented if COVID-19 metrics worsen at the local, regional, or statewide level. Scenario 2 may also be implemented within a school if they experience clusters of cases within a classroom or the school.

  Hybrid learning defined – Hybrid is commonly used to describe classes in which some traditional face-to-face instruction has been replaced by distance learning activities. A hybrid class is designed to integrate face-to-face and distance learning activities so that they reinforce, complement, and elaborate on one another, instead of treating the online component as an add-on or duplicate of what is taught in the classroom. During classroom instruction time, students can be engaged in authentic, collaborative learning experiences. The distance learning components can include multimedia-enhanced content, learning practice, and channels for ongoing discussion. In some hybrid approaches, direct instruction that normally takes place in the classroom is “flipped” with intentional online learning tasks. Another method involves facilitating flipped, short mini-lessons for students to access online (asynchronously or synchronously).

- **Distance learning only.** This scenario may be implemented if local, regional, or statewide COVID-19 metrics worsen significantly enough to require the suspension of in-person learning.

  Distance Learning defined – Students engaging in distance learning have access to appropriate educational materials and receive daily interaction with their licensed teacher(s).

  It is important to note that distance learning does not always mean e-learning or online learning. It is critical to provide this learning in a format that can be equitably accessed by all students.

  MDE expects that students who participate in distance learning have full access to appropriate educational materials. Districts and charters must maintain educational continuity for schools and programs. As a district or

charter, you must ensure equity in your plans. School districts and charters must ensure equal access to ALL students.

As your district or charter prepares to implement a distance learning model, the Federal and State requirements must be followed. This means that students need to be able to participate in their learning equitably and have access to all relevant services and supports. Considerations include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring all students in the school or district will have equal access to the learning and required materials, including technology.
- If using an online learning system, ensure it can effectively support the district or school's unique learning and teaching needs, including the ability to provide differentiated instruction as well as one-on-one support for students who need it. Regardless of where the learning is happening, supports identified on a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan must be provided (more detail below). Individual Learning Plans for English Language Learners must also be followed.
- Consider student privacy when developing your distance learning plan. See the U.S. Department of Education's Protecting Student Privacy page, and their list of related resources.
- Providing training to staff, students, and parents/guardians on implementation of your distance learning model and the district or school's expectations.
- Programming options for school nurses, school counselors, school psychologists, school social workers, paraprofessionals, other school specialists and cultural liaisons.
- Tracking the attendance of both students and staff.
- Ensuring the distance learning model in use is secure and will not allow for the release of protected student or staff information.

Schools should provide materials for students to continue their learning. Each school would determine the most appropriate way to communicate and provide instruction for each student which could include some/all of the following:

- Paper packets or worksheets, which could be distributed daily by bus route or collected several times a week at a central location
- Textbooks
- Telephone instructions
- Online resources (take into account availability of broadband)
- Instruction via the school's learning management system (LMS)

Being prepared for the start of the 2020-21 school year includes contingency planning for the possibility of future emergency, short-notice school in –person capacity reductions or school building closures. Plans for in-person learning, hybrid learning, and distance learning must include a focus on the continuity of teaching and learning and all key functions of your school district and charter school. It is possible that all three contingency plans could be used during the 2020-21 school year. This guidance document is intended to support planning and provide an immediate tool to help school districts and charter schools prepare for next year.

All plans for the 2020-21 school year should be posted to your website, and communicated with your students, families, staff, and school community.

Equity

Minnesota defines educational equity as the condition of justness, fairness and inclusion in our systems of education so that all students have access to the opportunities to learn and develop to their fullest potential. The pursuit of educational equity recognizes the historical conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success in learning for students based on their races, incomes, and social conditions. Eliminating those structural and institutional

opportunities requires systemic change that allows for distribution of resources, information and other support depending on the student's situation to ensure an equitable outcome.

Equity is a priority to reach all children, especially children of color, indigenous children, immigrant children, low-income families and communities, and people who have disabilities must continue to be prioritized. Further, access to mental health services and support, hands-on student education and support, broadband and devices, and consistent instructional expectations continue to be concerns for many students. Responding to these challenges will take innovation and public-private collaboration. Our educators stand ready to meet this need. Safely providing opportunities for in-school learning and other activities will provide engagement, support, and access for our students, families and communities.

Operations Guidance

Overview

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

- Students and teachers should minimize close contact and follow all other required and recommended MDH guidelines.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

- Students and teachers should maintain six feet of social distancing and follow all other required and recommended MDH guidelines.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

- Students and teachers will continue to be engaged daily in teaching and learning.
- Prioritize continuing to provide critical services such as food services to support the health and safety of students.
- Provide guidance to teachers regarding delivery of distance learning and expectations during distance learning.

Health Expectations and COVID-19 Screening Process

Follow Minnesota Department of Health 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Schools.

Required health practices must be implemented by all Minnesota public schools. These practices are foundational to minimizing the risks of exposure to COVID-19 for students, staff, and families. These practices are considered the minimum level of implementation, and schools may not be less restrictive.

Recommended health practices are additional strategies that schools may choose to use to minimize the spread of COVID-19. MDH and MDE recognize there are diverse learning environments that will require teams to use thoughtful strategies when applying guidance to meet the health and safety needs of all students and staff. Not all recommended practices will be possible in all settings, and therefore should be tailored as appropriate.

[UPDATED 07/22/20]: Per Governor Walz's Executive Order 20-81, as of July 25, 2020, masks are required indoors in public spaces in Minnesota. This includes school buildings. The MDH planning guidance has been updated to reflect this.

District and School Inventory

This inventory guide was developed by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching.

As district and school leaders develop plans for the 2020-21 school year, it is critical to first collect certain data points regarding students, staff, buildings, buses, and technology. These data points should inform the design of teaching and learning in all scenarios. Furthermore, district leaders need to consider variations that may exist at the school-level in their district and how the district plan accounts for any differences as leaders aim to equitably serve all students.

The guiding questions below are intended as a starting point in helping district leaders identify and collect critical district-level and school-level data points. There may be additional district-level and school-level data points that the district may want to gather to inform decisions.

District-level

- Staff
  - How many staff members are expected to return for the new school year? To what extent do you expect these numbers to change before or during the school year (e.g., teachers leaving/retiring due to transition to distance learning, teachers leaving/retiring due to health concerns regarding in-person instruction)?
  - How many district staff have active teaching licenses? How many of these individuals have a higher risk with coronavirus?
  - What is the supply of bus drivers across the district? How many of these individuals have a higher risk with coronavirus? By bus route?
  - What is the supply of substitute teachers, bus drivers, nurses, counselors, and support staff across the district?
  - How many of these individuals have a higher risk with coronavirus?
  - What budget is available to increase the supply of teachers and staff to meet long-term or short-term identified needs?
- Building
  - What additional spaces does the district have access to outside of the schools that could be used for learning?
- Buses (including any vehicles used for transporting students to/from school or to other school events)
  - How many buses are or could be made available in the district?
  - How much variation is there in the size and maximum capacity of buses in the district?
  - How have the buses been currently or historically used (i.e., transportation to/from school, transportation for multiple schools, athletic events, food service delivery)?
- Technology–Devices and Access
  - How many devices (tablets, laptops) does the district have in inventory?
  - How many internet accessibility devices (hotspots) does the district have in inventory?
  - What partnerships (if any) does the district have with internet providers in the region?
  - How many students have access to a device that is not issued by the district and what type of devices do students have access to (e.g., tablet, laptop, desktop, mobile phone)? Are these devices shared with other adults or students in the household?
  - How many students have access to reliable internet at home?
- State and Federal Guidelines and Regulations
  - What state and federal guidelines and regulations might impact decisions regarding fall planning?
  - What additional flexibility (if any) has been provided by state and federal agencies in response to COVID-19?

School-level

- Students
  - How many students are expected to be enrolled in the fall?
  - How many of these students have pre-existing conditions that may compromise their immune systems?
  - What is the breakdown (%) of how students arrive at and depart from school (i.e., school bus, dropped off via car, drive themselves, walk, public transportation)?
- School Staff
  - How many adults are on staff in the school and expected to return for the new school year?
  - What is the breakdown of the staff – administrators, licensed teachers, support staff with a teaching license, support staff without a teaching license, full-time nurses, part-time nurses, etc.?
  - How many substitutes do you have identified and available by school?

    - How many of these individuals have are a higher health risk related to coronavirus (e.g., how many of these individuals have a known pre-existing condition or are 65 years or older)?

- Building
    - How many classrooms are available?
    - What is the size of each classroom?
    - Are desks or tables that accommodate 6 ft. of social distancing available in each classroom? d. What additional spaces are available (e.g., gym, lunch room, auditorium, etc.)?
    - What cleaning protocols are currently in place?

Communication with Students, Families and Staff

Create a plan for developing, seeking feedback and communicating the district or charter school's plan under each scenario for the 2020-21 school year. Involve students, families and staff in developing these plans. Your plan should include, at a minimum, how you will address operations; academics; student, family, and staff supports; and professional development and training. The plan must be translated and communicated in both written and oral languages based on the needs of your community.

- How will the district seek input from families and students in the development of the plan? How will the district share the plan with families and students?
- How will the district seek input from key labor groups (teachers, secretarial, custodial, etc.) throughout the development of the plans, especially on any job description adjustments based on identified needs? How will the district share the plan with key labor groups?
- How will the district seek feedback from district and school staff? How will the district share the plan with district and school staff?

Consider creating an advisory group that consists of students, family members, staff, and community members; utilizing your World's Best Workforce (WBWF) committee; utilizing your American Indian Parent Advisory Committee; or utilizing some other form of diverse advisory committee that already exists in your school district.

Once a model of delivery is determined for the 2020-21 school year, survey your families and staff on what their specific needs are given the learning model.

Student and Family Engagement

Ongoing research shows that **family engagement in schools** improves student achievement, reduces absenteeism, and restores parents' confidence in their children's education. Students with involved parents or other caregivers earn higher grades and test scores, have better social skills, and show improved behavior.

Create a plan for engaging families and students throughout the school year. Including implementing written and oral translated communication strategies.

For more information and best practices, see the section on Student and Family Engagement and Relationship Building under Supporting Students and Families in this document.

Nutrition

Just as school officials are planning for operations under each of the three learning models, food service managers must also plan for all the options. Of critical importance is for Superintendents and other district leadership to include food service directors and managers in their back-to-school planning sessions. Food service operators need a minimum lead time of 6-8 weeks for securing food and non-food supplies and to arrange specific meal distribution methods and

develop staffing schedules. Different learning models will require different menus and meal delivery/service. In order for meal service to accommodate each of the learning model options, nutrition needs to be present in the development conversations. Nutrition directors/managers may currently be furloughed so it is critical they are called back to work to prepare for SY20-21.

What Meal Pattern/Program Will Be Required?

Schools are encouraged to continue providing **access** to meals as they traditionally did prior to COVID-19. When school is back in session, operators should plan to utilize the National School Lunch and Breakfast (NSLP/SBP) meal pattern and follow NSLP/SBP regulations for all three learning options. At this time, USDA has not provided any waivers to allow another meal pattern or Child Nutrition Program to be used during regularly scheduled school time. Things to remember about operating an NSLP/SBP include:

- Schools must distribute an Application for Educational Benefits form to all households to complete. This application form determines meal eligibility and also factors in to the state compensatory funding formula.
- Meals must be served to students and claimed for reimbursement in the household's determined category of approved eligibility: Free, reduced-price and paid.
- Not all meals served to students can be served free of charge as was offered in the spring 2020. Schools will need to follow their school board approved meal charge policy for charging individual students for meals according to their category of meal eligibility.

Decisions that will impact food service:

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

Physical Distancing: Physical distancing and other safe health practices according to guidelines established by the Centers for Disease Control and the Minnesota Department of Health's new restaurant and dining guidance must be followed for both students and food service staff. Questions to answer include:

- Will students eat in the cafeteria, classroom, hallway or other locations?
- Will additional meal periods or staggered meal service times be needed?
- How will the NSLP/SBP meal pattern requirements be met with meals distributed or served in other locations?
- Will the cafeteria space be used for other spaces if meals are served in the classroom?
- Will additional staff be needed with the elimination of student self-serve options or meal distribution to classrooms or other locations?
- Will additional preparation space be needed to accommodate physical distancing in kitchen areas?
- Are modifications needed in the kitchen during meal preparation activities?

Meal Service Locations. Serving in alternate locations may be required depending on individual school architecture and classroom learning models. Questions to answer include**:**

- What food service staffing requirements will be needed to handle service in multiple locations?
- Will additional technologies be needed for point of service counts if meals are served in classrooms, hallways or other locations?
- How will proper sanitation for students, staff and equipment at the point of service be addressed? There will be different safety/sanitation needs for classroom, cafeteria or hallway service.
- Will additional equipment, small-wares or meal service items need to be purchased?

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

Meal Service Operations. Daily meal service may require only one type of meal service, i.e., serving meals at school; or via distance learning distribution; or simultaneously providing meals at school for some students while serving other

students who are distance learning. With simultaneous or alternating meal service operations, the concerns identified above as well as the following should be addressed:

- Will multiple menu systems be required, one menu for school service and one for distance learning service?
- How will food vendor purchasing need to be modified?
- What are the staffing needs for simultaneous vs. alternating operations? Will staff schedules need to be altered for each learning method?
- What are the staff training needs for operating under multiple menu systems?
- Will meals be served in cafeteria, hallway or classroom, home delivered, taken home by the student or picked up by the parent?
- Are separate transportation systems needed for delivering meals?
- How will changes in meal participation effect operations?
- What are the point of service counting measures that will be implemented for both operations?

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

Meal Service Operations. Meal service to students could be provided by home delivery, curb-side pick-up, bus stop pick-up or other methods. The following concerns should be considered:

- How will meals be "ordered" for distance learning pick-up?
- How will we meet the NSLP/SBP meal pattern requirements with meals distributed via bag or boxed meals?
- Where will meals be distributed, i.e., school, bus stops, home delivery other?
- How frequently will meals be distributed and in what quantity?
- What will food service staff scheduling look like? Will there be a reduction or increase in staff hours?
- Will weather impact meal pickup?
- What transportation is available for delivery to homes or bus stops?
- Which staff will deliver meals?
- How will delivery be scheduled?
- Is equipment available to ensure food safety? It may be difficult to maintain proper temperatures of food (milk and hot food items) with long delivery schedules or a long curb-side pick-up schedules. Will additional food storage equipment need to be purchased?
- How will point of service meal counts be taken at the various distribution sites?
- How will special dietary needs be accommodated?

School Nutrition Budget Considerations for all Learning Options

It is likely that an increase in food service related expenses will occur. It is possible that some schools will experience reduced meal participation. Some questions to consider include:

- Will additional food service equipment, such as hot and cold food transport containers to ensure safe food delivery to classrooms, hallways, home delivery or curb-side delivery, be needed?
- Will additional staff resources/hours be needed?
- Will personal protective equipment and other purchases needed to ensure staff safety be required?
- What types of service plates, utensils, etc., be required if meals are served in the classroom or other locations?
- Will there be additional sanitation and cleaning items/costs?
- Will an a la carte program be practical or allowable? There will likely be a significant reduction or loss of a la carte revenue.
- Will additional food items need to be purchased with multiple menus? Will pre-packaged and/or "shelf-stable" food items need to be purchased for distance learning distribution?
- Are any additional meal packaging equipment/supplies necessary?
- Will additional electronic POS (Point of Service) systems need to be purchased?

Available Support

The School Nutrition Program team at MDE is recording each session of a July webinar series that focuses on food service options. Considering the complexity of school meal programs and the incredible disparity in how school districts of different sizes and demographics manage these programs, these webinars can assist operators to start thinking about the many ways operations will have to change. District staff can contact the MDE-FNS office to request an electronic link for the recorded webinars.

- July7: Meal Distribution Models
- July 14: Menu Planning
- July 21: Equipment Consideration
- July 28: Staffing
- August 4: Financial Implications

In addition, the national School Nutrition Association has produced *Back to School Thought Starters*, a 25-page resource designed to help food service professionals ask the right questions to prepare for the next "normal."

USDA Waivers to Meal Service

MDE has applied for a variety of waivers to assist school food authorities (SFAs) operate quality programs while meeting the constraints of hybrid or distance learning educational models. We will update SFAs and district leadership when more information about potential waivers become available.

Internet and Device Access

Technology has been an important tool for students and families to engage in learning as well as stay connected to their schools, friends, family and community.

In many cases, districts have provided the only device or hotspot available for families to have access to the internet. This has allowed for access to instructional materials for distance learning as well as online information and applications for benefits, social connections, and COVID-related news and alerts.

For this reason, school districts and charter schools are encouraged, to the extent practicable, to allow students access to district-provided technology (such as devices and wireless hotspots) during distance learning or hybrid learning.

We know that that some families are resistant to using technology, and we must work with them where they are at, and see that their needs are met in effective and creative ways.

Infrastructure

Access to high-speed broadband, efficient internal networks, robust Wi-Fi systems and the people necessary to manage the infrastructure and deploy the devices are vital component of K-12 school infrastructure. The need to have this in place was highlighted as critical this past spring, to increase the sense of urgency for our education systems are to succeed.

- Infrastructure Self-Assessment: A self-assessment to be taken by multiple people to identify needs with the district's infrastructure.
- Future Ready Robust Infrastructure Framework: A framework and rubric to consider the quality and availability of devices, network infrastructure, and support.
- Broadband Imperative: Considerations that should be taken to develop policies and plans that provide support for decision-making.

Device/Account Management

While the one device to one student (1:1) initiatives have grown organically over the past few decades, the pandemic created an urgency on getting devices into students' hands and ensuring that they and their information is safe and secure. Districts and charter schools should consider device and account management both through quality and access but also safety.

- Future Ready Device Framework: A rubric to evaluate and understand the quality and availability of devices
- Promising Practices: A webinar from MDE outlining promising practices for acquiring and effectively using technology.
- Security Checklist: Consideration to security and private data is increased during this time. A quick review of security planning is essential.

Federal Funding: GEER and ESSER

Note that for each of the funding applications in this section, budget worksheets are available on the CARES Act Funding Information page of the MDE website.

Governor's Emergency Education Relief fund (GEER)

Based on feedback from a range of communities across the state, the Office of the Governor and the Minnesota Department of Education have identified three key priorities for which these funds can be used:

- Expanding technology capacity to meet student learning needs, with particular attention to increasing broadband access, establishing wireless hotspots and purchasing devices such as laptops or tablets for students.
- Improving student-to-teacher ratios for summer school programming to at most nine students per teacher.
- Supporting summer programming for children ages 0-8 through enrichment opportunities provided by nonprofit partners.

Applicants for GEER funds must download and complete the application and budget worksheet. Completed applications and budget worksheets should then be uploaded into SERVS when the system is ready to process them.

Application: Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund

Frequently Asked Questions: Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief fund (ESSER)

ESSER funds are divided into two streams: a formula-based allocation and state-directed grants. Districts and charter schools will be notified of their eligibility for one or both funding streams. To receive funds, applicants must complete the appropriate application and budget worksheet, then upload those documents in SERVS when the system is ready to process them.

The formula-based allocation to districts and charter schools is based on their allocations under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). These funds can be used for a wide range of expenses to meet local needs.

Application: ESSER 90%

Frequently Asked Questions: ESSER 90%

State-directed grants, provided to districts and charter schools that do not receive a formula-based allocation, districts and charter schools that receive less than $10,000 from their formula-based allocation, and districts and charter schools whose share of students from historically underserved populations is less than their share of other ESSER funds, can be used for a combination of:

- Supplementing GEER funds for summer school programming
- Supporting mental health
- Meeting the needs of historically underserved populations

Application: ESSER 9.5% State-directed grant

Frequently Asked Questions: ESSER 9.5% State-directed grant

[UPDATED 07/23/20] Transportation

Requirements: Scenario 1 and 2

- Systematically review and evaluate school transportation capacity with the goal of creating as much space between riders as possible, recognizing that it is not always feasible to have 6 feet of social distancing. Consider reducing capacity or adding routes to allow for more physical space between riders. See Additional Requirements: Scenario 2, below, for transportation-related requirements specific to Scenario 2.
- All persons driving or riding in a school transportation vehicle must wear a face covering. Please reference the Face Coverings section of the MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools for additional details. An extra supply of face coverings should be maintained on school transportation vehicles for riders who forget to bring them.
- Arrange seating to maintain 6 feet of distance between the driver and all riders.
- Clean and disinfect transportation vehicles regularly, focusing on frequent cleaning of touched surfaces in the vehicle (e.g., surfaces near the driver's seat, hard seats, door handles, seat belt buckles, light and air controls, doors and windows, grab handles) between routes.
- Keep doors and windows open when cleaning the vehicle and between trips to let the vehicles thoroughly air out.
- Follow the symptom screening protocol outlined in the Monitoring and Excluding for Illness section of the MDH 2020-21 Planning Guide for Schools for any person entering a school transportation vehicle. Consider the option of a parent/guardian attestation. People must stay home and not board transportation if they are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone positive for COVID-19.
- Require that people who become ill during the day not use group transportation to return home.
    - Create a plan for getting students home safely if they are not allowed to board the vehicle.
    - If a driver becomes sick during the day, they must follow protocols outlined for people who are ill and must not return to drive students.

Additional Requirements: Scenario 2

- Limit the number of people on transportation vehicles to 50% maximum occupancy.
- Create as much space between riders as possible, recognizing that it is not always feasible to maintain 6 feet of social distancing. Household members may be seated in rows together. Consider reducing capacity or adding routes to allow for more physical space between riders.

Recommendations: Scenario 1 and 2

- Provide hand sanitizer to support healthy hygiene behaviors on all school transportation vehicles for safe use by staff and older children.
- Consider using assigned seating for riders to assist with rapid contact tracing in the event there is a positive case who rode on a school transportation vehicle while potentially infectious.

- Consider keeping windows open if appropriate and safe while the vehicle is in motion to help increase air circulation.

Additional Considerations from the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching:

- Identify the maximum number of students who ride the bus, expected number and size of buses, expected schedule needs for buses, and expected number of bus drivers.
    - Consider health risks for bus drivers and expected fluctuation in number of available bus drivers.
    - Create contingency plans for supplementing number of bus drivers as needed.
        - Identify additional school staff who have applicable licenses to operate school buses – e.g., athletic coaches
        - Identify and encourage additional staff – e.g., teachers, school leaders, district leaders, support staff – to acquire applicable license to operate school buses
- Based on estimates for the number of students who typically ride the bus and identified school schedules, identify any necessary alterations that need to be made to bus routes if any have potential to exceed maximum capacity in the morning or afternoon.
- Identify bus procedures for bus drivers and students. These **could** include:
    - Filling in seats beginning from the back of the bus
    - Limiting two students per bus row (one on each side) and have students seated in every other row
    - Keeping students seated next to the window
    - Disembarking from the bus one at a time
    - Identification of drop-off and pick-up areas that are separate from car pick-up and drop-offs

Tribal Considerations

The pursuit of educational equity recognizes the historical and contemporary conditions and barriers that have prevented opportunity and success in learning for students based on their race/ethnicity, income, and other social conditions. The Minnesota Department of Education, Tribal Nations Education Committee (TNEC), and the Office of Indian Education are here to support you with your efforts.

Districts and charter schools need to take into consideration the needs of American Indian students and their families. Regardless of which learning scenario is determined for the fall, include voices from the communities who will be the most impacted. Indian Education staff in your districts and schools are trusted by American Indian students and families, and should be included in planning and implementation for the fall. Ensure that the actions you take are reinforcing or removing structural inequities in your district or school.

All school districts and charter schools that are required under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to consult with Tribal Nations must also collaborate with TNEC members regarding the formulation of their fall learning plans. This meaningful collaboration should include Indian Education staff and possibly TNEC members in the preparation and implementation of fall learning. The Office of Indian Education at MDE has contact information for Indian Education staff as well as tribal contacts if needed.

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

Continue collaborating with American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC) and Indian Education staff. Aid-eligible schools will follow the same timeline as previous years with Indian Education Program Plans (IEPPs) due on October 1. Under Minnesota Statutes, sections 124D.78 and 124D.81, there are many schools that are new to the AIPAC and Indian Education Aid this year. Please contact the Office of Indian Education for support and guidance as needed.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

Collaboration with American Indian students, families and Indian Education staff is crucial to implementing a model that will fulfill the statutory requirements while ensuring that all students have access to the appropriate educational materials and all relevant services and support needed for student success. Consider the significant spiritual, mental and emotional needs that must be addressed in your American Indian communities, especially where inequities have been exacerbated.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

District and school administrators should be collaborating on plans to address the specific needs of their American Indian students. Indian Education staff are an important part of this process and should be included in distance learning planning. Indian Education staff will help your schools and districts keep communications open and transparent with American Indian families and their communities. Be aware of outreach to American Indian families and how this can be improved in a time of uncertainty. Consider reaching out to families to assess student needs, and address those needs with the school or district.

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan – Worker Protection

Governor Walz's Executive Order 20-74 declared that all critical businesses must develop and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. The Department of Labor and Industry has created templates and instructions for creating a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan you may use.

A school district or charter school's 2020-21 school year plan meets the COVID-19 Preparedness Plan requirement as long as they are adhering to all MDH guidelines, as well as following the Safely Reopening Guidance developed by the Department of Labor and Industry – specifically for front office staff.

Use of Facilities for Non-School Activities

Facility Access and Community Rentals

Public schools serve as a primary facility provider for youth and adult organizations and providers in Minnesota. Facility users may use indoor and outdoor facilities so long as they follow state guidance:

School districts and charter schools are encouraged to consider:

- Facility users should create, follow and communicate to participants a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in accordance with applicable guidelines available on DEED's website.
- Facility access must follow the Minnesota Department of Health guidelines on limitations and participation as outline on the Stay Safe Minnesota web pages.

Athletic Facilities

As outlined in Executive Order 20-74, gymnasiums, fitness centers, recreation centers and other athletic facilities may open if they can ensure adherence to the applicable Stay Safe MN guidance. Schools operating these facilities must create and follow a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan. Outdoor facilities may be used as long as they follow MDH guidance.

Indoor Meetings and Other Non-School Uses

For indoor meetings or events held by an outside organization in school facilities, the seated entertainment and meeting venue guidance must be followed, and a preparedness plan must be developed and shared on your district or school's website. The occupancy limits are set at 25% capacity, not to exceed 250 participants.

Out-of-School Time

Schools should work with community partners and other stakeholders to provide out-of-school time (OST) programming that addresses both students' social emotional needs and academic learning loss. OST programming, including after school, weekend, and summer programming, could be used for academic enrichment, tutoring, social emotional support, mentoring, or supplemental instruction designed to close learning and opportunity gaps.

Breakfast, Lunch, Recess Protocols

See Minnesota Department of Health 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Schools.

Activities and Athletics

MDE continues to partner with the Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) in providing guidance to member schools regarding participation in athletics and activities. School-based activities and athletics are important to our students' educational experience and more specific guidance will be provided in alignment with the three educational scenarios described in 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Schools. This guidance will follow the recommendations of the Minnesota Department of Health focused on the safety of students, adults and communities and will be provided soon.

Public Libraries

MDE recognizes the need to balance the needs of the community with the health and safety of library staff and patrons. Therefore, this guidance is permissive, and ultimately decisions regarding library offerings will be made at the local level, within set parameters.

Public libraries are assets to student learning. Their programs add a critical dimension of informal learning to students and complement classroom activities. Hours and locations may be reduced; appointments may be required. Many libraries are offering increased access to e-books and curbside pick-up for materials placed on hold.

Future Ready Schools Planning Dashboard: Future Ready Schools provides educators with research-based tools and resources that facilitate the modernization of schools and districts that support personalized, student-centered learning. Their Planning Dashboard can help schools develop a digital learning vision and implementation plan.

Public Library and School Library Collaboration Toolkit: This toolkit includes context and suggestions for creating partnerships between public libraries and school libraries of all sizes.

eLibrary Minnesota Database Tutorials (ELM): ELM gives all Minnesotans free access to magazine, journal, newspaper and encyclopedia articles, media, including images, videos, and audio files, and other information resources. Instructional materials and tutorials are available for each database.

Libraries must develop a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan in accordance with applicable guidelines available on DEED's website.

Disciplinary Incident Reporting

Disciplinary and behavioral incidents are expected to decrease during the distance learning and hybrid learning, though reportable incidents can occur in all potential school settings: distance learning and in-person learning. Reportable incidents must be reported in DIRS following normal reporting procedures, submitting the supplemental DIRS COVID-19 Reporting: Incidents Occurring at Alternate Locations form as needed. Considerations for each setting are listed below. Detailed reporting requirements and definitions are provided in the Disciplinary Incident Reporting System (DIRS) User Guide.

Student Settings

Distance learning – online or other forum

In distance learning settings, the school district or charter school's code of conduct student disciplinary policy/student disciplinary policy applies, as well as requirements established in the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act (PFDA, Minnesota Statutes, sections 121A.40-121A.575).

Regular classroom setting

Follow the school district or charter school's code of conduct/student disciplinary policy and the PFDA and submit data in DIRS following normal procedures.

Related COVID-19 Guidance

- Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) Distance Learning Reporting Instructions – instructions to report enrollment and attendance during the distance learning period.
- Special Education and COVID-19 Questions and Answers: Due Process – requirements and supports for special education students, including behavior responses for students receiving on-site care in the school setting.
- Supporting Students and Families COVID-19 Resources – provides guidance for engagement with students and families, maintaining a positive school climate, supporting students' mental health and emotional well-being, and adapting MTSS frameworks for distance learning.
- U.S. DoE Office for Civil Rights Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil Rights of Students – requires schools to continue to investigate reports of bullying and harassment of students and to take action to end bullying or harassment.

Meeting the Distance Learning Needs of Families

Districts and schools should offer distance learning to enrolled students who may be medically vulnerable or otherwise unable or unwilling to return to in-person or hybrid learning.

Distance Learning Options:

- District or charter school provides distance learning
    - Distance learning students receive the same calendar days/hours of instruction as the regular school program.
    - The district or school will ensure that the student has sufficient access to a device and Internet to fully participate in distance learning and will provide specific support to students and families on Internet safety and security, digital literacy, and digital learning technologies.
    - Attendance must be taken at least once per day for all students enrolled. Attendance is considered interaction with a teacher on an instructional day. A student could be reported in attendance by participating in a video class or chat; a phone call with the student or, for younger students, with the parent;

posting completed coursework to the learning management system or turning in complete coursework on a given day. Students for whom no teacher has direct interaction on a given day are reported as absent for that day.

    - See the Attendance and Membership section of this document for more details.

  - The distance learning curriculum will follow the same academic standards and pacing provided to students in the building.
  - Instruction will include daily interaction with the student's teachers and full access to the instructional materials, technology and resources provided to students in the building and as needed for distance learning.
  - Support for special education, multi-lingual learners and social-emotional learning will be provided to distance learning students.
  - Students participating in distance learning will participate in statewide assessments as comparable to students in hybrid or in-person instruction.
  - Districts and charter schools will create a process for families to notify the district or school in writing of their intent to have their student(s) participate in distance learning instead of hybrid or in-person learning.

- District or charter school partners with a state-approved online provider to provide distance learning
  - This option provides online learning opportunities to students and families from an experienced, state-approved provider but allows them to remain enrolled in their local district or school and participate in extra-curricular activities and other programs offered by their district or school. It can also be accessed quickly as it is an already existing option and doesn't require extensive planning.
  - Students may enroll with an existing state-approved supplemental online learning provider. Students remain enrolled with their current district or school but take some or all of their courses with the online learning provider.
  - Grades are applied to their local transcript as they work toward grade progression and graduation requirements of their enrolling district or school.
  - The default funding mechanism for supplemental enrollment provides 88% of the basic education funding formula to the online provider and 12% of the general education funding remains with the enrolling district or school. As an option, a school may enter into a contract negotiated with the online learning provider for sharing the revenue they claim for the student.

Background Information on State-Approved Online Providers

State-approved Online Providers are the only schools authorized to provide fully-online distance learning opportunities to public school students in Minnesota. Online providers successfully complete an application, submit annual data reports, and are reviewed every three years based on National Standards for Quality Online Programs. Online providers have been operating in Minnesota for more than twenty years and have developed robust, diverse, mature models to deliver high-quality learning opportunities for their students.

There are two types of online options for students in Minnesota as described in Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.095, supplemental and comprehensive.

Supplemental: Any K-12 student in a Minnesota public school may replace up to 50% of the courses on their schedule with online supplemental courses. This may be increased to include 100% of their courses if both the online provider and the enrolling district agree. Courses completed and grades earned in supplemental courses are applied to the enrolling district's transcript and students work toward grade progression and completion of their enrolling district's graduation requirements.

Medically fragile students may wish to enroll in supplemental courses to avoid needing to be in their school buildings while remaining enrolled in their local schools and/or districts.

Comprehensive: Any K-12 student may enroll in a comprehensive online school. These schools are full-service, providing courses along with student support services like counseling, social workers, special education, EL support, and more. Students enrolling in comprehensive online schools leave their local school/district and transfer to the online school and work toward grade progression and completion of the online school's graduation requirements.

Students who found success during distance learning may wish to enroll in comprehensive online schools.

Planning considerations (COVID-19 response) for current and applicant State Approved Online Providers

- Since state-approved online providers normal mode of instruction is fully online, they are able to operate without requiring major changes to programming.
- Student mental and physical health are primary considerations for online providers. Providers should plan to offer enhanced services to support students who may be experiencing health issues and connect them with appropriate local support and resources.
- State-approved online providers who offer access to their building for in-person services and support, activities, gatherings, or field trips will follow the guidance from MDH and the CDC.
- State-approved online providers should consider how they could support medically fragile or other students who can/may not return to their local school if/when it is open. Providers may offer supplemental enrollment above 50% and create cost-sharing agreements with schools and districts to cover the costs of online instruction while holding the school or district harmless.
- Students enrolling for the first time in an online school may have significant learning gaps. Plan strategies to assess this early in the year and structure your courses to maximize flexibility and individual pacing and personalized support.
- State-approved providers will support students as they are already required to do with obtaining devices and an Internet connection sufficient to successfully access and complete online courses.
- State-approved providers will work with MDE on developing viable strategies for statewide assessments.

Student and Family Support

Overview

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

- Assess what you know about individual staff, family, and student impact due to COVID-19.
- Communicate implications of COVID-19 to the way school operates early and often; be clear, direct and empathetic.
- Provide mental health support by activating school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses to develop individual and group support plans for students and families for 2020-21 school year.
- Create a communication outline describing the plan for student support.
- Develop ways to elevate student voice and participation in leadership decisions as students return to school buildings. Consider surveying older students to allow them to share where they think they have academic or social needs; use both multiple-choice questions for standards/ skills and open-ended questions about social needs.
- Follow MDH and Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL) guidance about in-school and out-of-school activities and sports.
- If you don't already have one, consider implementing programs attending to social-emotional learning skills and/ or whole child programming that connects academics to student well-being.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

- All considerations in Scenarios 1 and 3.
- Create consistent opportunities for students to build school culture when they have the chance to be in the building, and make sure students who are distance learning all or most days have the chance to contribute.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

- Create both office hour and hotline options for students to get help or talk to a teacher or adult.
- Develop and require as many synchronous opportunities as possible, with opportunities for student-to-student interaction for students of all ages.
- Review parent communication and identify additional supports needed.
- Provide ways for administrators to be consistently "visible" to students and families in a virtual setting (e.g., weekly "Principal Talk" session or "mail box" video or weekly newsletter to respond to questions or concerns).
- Consider incorporating social emotional learning programs in a distance learning setting and integrate student voice into weekly schedules and daily lessons.
- Consider a whole school and individual classroom back-to-school virtual "open house" or "meet & greet" for sharing mission, vision and expectations, making sure that the messages are consistent and that parents and community members are engaged from the start.
- Consider other school spirit "events" such as spirit days and friendly competitions that can happen remotely.

Student and Family Engagement and Relationship Building

Establish Classroom Communities that Center Relationships and Well-being

This could be your first year ever *not* greeting students as they bounce through school doors into new classrooms to meet their new teachers and classmates on the first day of school. And regardless of whether we begin the school year in an in-person, hybrid learning or distance learning model, the first day of school routines that you've leaned on in past years are likely irrelevant in our new social distancing and virtual contexts. More importantly, students will enter your

classroom transformed and likely traumatized by their months of pandemic isolation, surges in unemployment and economic uncertainty, and the racial justice movement ignited by the killing of George Floyd while in Minneapolis police custody. Your students, classrooms, daily routines, curriculum and instruction, and family and community relationships must adapt to fit our new understandings and realities.

Inviting families to share their Hopes and Dreams for their child with you, and scheduling virtual or outdoor home visits with families to uncover student's Funds of Knowledge are two key ways to build relationships during the first weeks of school and are far more effective than asking this clichéd question. Families also appreciate a letter of introduction and photo from new teachers so they can recognize the school staff communicating with their students online.

Build peer-to-peer relationships by nurturing classroom communities. Practice social-emotional learning (SEL) in your classroom and facilitate family conversations centered on the social-emotional skills children are developing this year. Host an online spreadsheet for family members to opt in and share their contact information. Create classroom photos or self-portrait rosters and add fun information about each student. Mail copies to families so they can talk about and help their child get to know their peers. Map students' home addresses to help them connect while practicing social distancing guidelines. Learning activities that include creating and/or delivering something to a classmate can add social components and physical activity to your student's day.

Mail personalized notes of appreciation and encouragement to show you care enough to invest the extra time to sit down and think about them. Or, take an extra moment to write a personal sentence or two to each student/family on any learning packets, progress reports, or newsletters that you send via school mailings.

Celebrations can build community and resilience during difficult times. Host virtual celebrations for your students and their families regularly, even for nonsensical reasons. Plan to record the celebrations to share with students and families who can't attend while also adhering to FERPA and your district's privacy policies. Personally deliver celebratory notes and trinkets to students when they reach milestones and learning goals.

Provide unstructured time for students to interact and connect with peers online while you update, record or grade coursework and listen to ensure a safe and supportive environment. Collaborate with Community Education to curate opportunities for family experts to offer online dance, yoga, painting and other opportunities so students have access to additional adult and student interactions beyond the school day.

Distance learning brings families closer to the classroom and the skills their children are learning. Consider hosting weekly classroom check-ins for all families as well as office hours for 1:1 time with students and families. The time you invest in families will echo in their daily conversations with their children and what you learn through your conversations can be incorporated into personalized instruction.

Welcome challenging conversations, emails, and texts, by practicing empathic listening. Families and students need to be able to share their challenges and unique needs with you so that you can create conditions of high support and high expectations for learning. Relational-trust is built through struggle. As you demonstrate care and concern for your classroom community you are nourishing rich conditions for learning.

Purpose of Family and Community Engagement

The purpose of family engagement in public preK-12 education is to ensure that schools and districts provide all families with the information and opportunities necessary to meaningfully participate in and shape their children's educational experience. It guarantees inclusion of diverse perspectives and lived experiences, and is grounded in the belief that families and their broader communities play a key role in providing children with a purposeful and effective learning experience that values their linguistic, heritage, and cultural attributes.

All Local Education Agencies (LEAs) receiving Title I funds are required under Section 1116(a) (2) of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to develop a written family and community engagement plan that must be developed jointly with parents. To the extent practicable, this plan must be translated, accessible, and distributed to all parents and guardians at the beginning of the school year.

American Indian Education Programs are specifically designed to meet the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian students. All school districts with 20 or more American Indian students submit Indian Education Program Plans (IEPP) by October 1st to the Office of Indian Education. All IEPP should include family engagement opportunities specifically targeting American Indian students and families. District Indian Education staff and American Indian Parent Advisory Committee (AIPAC) ensure an inclusive family engagement plan targets the needs of American Indian students.

The recommendations in this document merely offer supportive ideas and solutions intended to enhance and modify schools and districts' existing family and community engagement plans. These recommendations were developed with a focus on what effective family and community engagement look like in the context of distance, hybrid, and in-person learning this fall.

Challenges to Family and Community Engagement during COVID-19

The Minnesota Department of Education recognizes that communities of color and American Indian communities have been severely impacted by COVID-19. With that said, we have a responsibility to lift up their voices by telling their stories and using the lessons we have learned to inform this next chapter on how we respond to the pandemic with respect to preK-12 public education. Distance learning magnified many critical inequities that communities of color and American Indian communities have been struggling with, that have always demanded our collective attention and resources. With renewed synergy and focus on family and community engagement, we believe it is critical for schools and districts to prioritize the following most frequently identified barriers to meaningful engagement as you plan for fall 2020:

- Inadequate language access for limited-English and non-English speaking parents and community members,
- Breakdown in communication between students and teachers, parents and teachers, and between teachers and school cultural liaisons/bilingual staff to provide coordinated support efforts,
- Limited communication between schools and community-based organizations that received high volumes of calls from their constituents about distance learning,
- Lack of guidance and resources for parents to utilize at home to keep children emotionally engaged and healthy,
- Lack of support for parents who continue to work and could not be home to provide guidance and structure for their children, and
- Lack of understanding and resources to address broadband access that should have included providing tech support and equipment necessary for distance learning.

Toward Solutions and Recommendations

The lessons we learned this spring, as we transitioned to distance learning, remain applicable as we prepare for the new school year within the continuing context of the global COVID-19 pandemic, as well as civic unrest and economic uncertainty. You may wish to revisit earlier guidance documents posted in MDE's COVID-19 family engagement toolkit, in particular:

- Engaging and Communicating with Families during Distance Learning
- Promising Practices for Connecting with Students and Families who have little or no engagement webinar and one-pager

- Best practices for Remote Interpreting in Educational Settings provided by the iteworkgroup.org

Essential Core Beliefs and Considerations for Engaging Families

School's seeking to improve connections with students, families, and communities should consider incorporating Karen Mapp's four essential core beliefs about family engagement:

1. All families have dreams for their children and want the best for them.
2. All families have the capacity to support their children's learning.
3. Families and school staff are equal partners.
4. The responsibility for cultivating and sustaining partnerships among school, home, and community rests primarily with school staff, especially school leaders.

When engaging families listen for areas where the school's distance, hybrid, or on-site social distancing learning plan may be in conflict with the resources available to or the lived-experiences of the families that the school serves. For example, schools serving large numbers of American Indian students or refugee-experienced students must consider potential instructional, personal, and institutional barriers to learning and engagement.

Recommendations for Family Engagement for Fall 2020

1. **Examine and address biases.** Leadership should set expectations and provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their own practices and participate in conversations around identifying and examining biases to reduce barriers to relationship building. Educators must examine what assumptions they are making about the communities that they serve in order to effectively engage those communities.

2. **Establish a team focused on engaging students and families.** A well-rounded team of professionals that have strong community knowledge and the closest connections with families (for example, classroom, special education, and English Language teachers, cultural liaisons, Indian Education and Achievement and Integration staff, social worker, counselors, etc.) will ensure that the engagement effort is well coordinated and thoughtfully implemented. Ensure the team has adequate time dedicated to the work of engaging students and families. Ensure that members of this team are consulted and participate in decisions and planning for distance, hybrid, or in-person learning scenarios.

   In a distance, hybrid, or in-person learning scenario be strategic about how you utilize the expertise of your staff. Cultural and family-community liaisons, office staff, and bus drivers have some of the closest relationships with the families and communities most impacted by the COVID pandemic and the transition to distance learning. Schools will need to be innovative around in their response to the technology needs of cultural communities. Encourage collaborations between technology integrationist or school media specialist and cultural liaisons to provide culturally responsive technology and language access services, that include and aren't limited to troubleshooting internet connectivity, website navigation, account activation, and tutorials.

   This fall, schools and districts should strategically leverage the skills and expertise of Indian Education staff to provide additional academic support to American Indian families. School staff should be aware of Indian Education services provided at their school to ensure American Indian student inclusion. During distance learning American Indian Education staff are effective in collaborating around assessing family distance learning and non-academic needs, family and student communication preferences, providing additional academic support, coordinating teachers and school programs, collaborating with teachers to provide culturally relevant curriculum and instruction, facilitating the AIPAC to provide direction on culturally appropriate distance learning support and family engagement opportunities.

3. **Define what engagement is for you and what the priorities are.** In the era of distance and hybrid learning, schools will need to revisit what engagement means and how they can stay meaningfully connected with their families. Once this definition is established, priorities need to be set to focus resources and time on what matters most to the communities that the school serves.

   In a distance, hybrid, or in-person learning scenario you may wish to consider prioritizing relationships and well-being. In support of student well-being, teachers may encourage access to the school counselor and psychologist while collaborating with students to make up lost instruction time. Be sure to provide families with clear and concise descriptions of student attendance and participation expectations as well as family involvement expectations that take into consideration the home environment, parent's work schedule, and mental/physical health.

   In a distance or hybrid learning scenario supporting relationship building, well-being, and engagement will also mean ensuring services around language assistance, school systems and policies navigation, and tech support are addressing immediate needs. The team can survey and identify students and families without broadband access and equipment (i.e. computers, noise-canceling headsets, wireless mouse and ergonomic chairs) and work with those students and their families to ensure access or establish individualized analog learning arrangements.

4. **Establish a formal process for monitoring engagement and for intervening when needed.** Once engagement is defined and priorities are set, schools should establish a formal process to determine how engagement is going. This should include data points to monitor, clear direction for how monitoring should work, and clear processes and roles for monitoring and intervention when appropriate.

5. **Set criteria and tier students based on individual needs.** A clear monitoring process will allow schools to determine which students or families to focus engagement towards. Any tiered-support process for engagement should involve easily-understood criteria for when additional engagement efforts are necessary and clear guidance on what additional engagement efforts should look like.

   In a distance or hybrid learning scenario, this could involve identifying students who do not have broadband access at home or proper equipment (i.e. computers, noise-canceling headsets, wireless mouse and ergonomic chairs) and working with those students and their families to provide reliable and adequate internet access. It could also mean you have to establish personalized learning plans with the student and parent/guardian and set and maintain a communication schedule that is outside of your regular check-in schedule. Flexibility will be key to an effective monitoring process in these scenarios.

6. **Establish weekly communication and collaboration with community organizations, tribal nations, and community leaders.** Schools shouldn't have to pursue the work of family engagement alone. Establishing strong relationships and ensuring regular communication with external partners will improve the likelihood of strong engagement between the school and the communities it serves. As you build community partnerships you expand the resources and referral services available to your staff, students, and families and help the community identify underutilized resources and unmet needs. Based on conversations with families, create resources, family events, and partnerships that leverage strengths in your community and address the needs you've become aware of.

   In a distance, hybrid, or in-person learning scenario, teachers and family engagement staff will feel more confident and equipped to support families if they can quickly identify information about community-based resources and supportive services providers. Establishing a list of who to call and what services they provide for your staff to reference will enhance your school's coordinated efforts to assist family in a time and accurate

manner. Establishing strategic partnerships with local community-based non-profits could also help improve your school's language assistance services for "low incidence" spoken languages and provide more opportunities to work with community leaders to engage or reconnect with families.

7. **Seek feedback from students and families.** Even the strongest community engagement plans will need revising and adjusting. Schools should elicit feedback from families and students on their engagement efforts. The school's engagement team must set a schedule for when to collect and examine this feedback and set a process for how to revise the engagement effort based on the feedback it receives. Schools should be transparent with families and students about what they heard and how the feedback was used to improve engagement efforts.

   Effective communication is one of the most important factors in a distance and hybrid learning scenario since face-to-face time with your students will be limited and infrequent. Provide families with a list of who they can contact at school with specific questions, needs, and concerns. Teachers and family engagement staff should feel prepared and confident to connect with students and families, listen with a keen focus on providing timely solutions, take notes, respond to urgent needs, and there must be a clear process for staff to relay the information they receive from the families back to your school leadership. Other important things to consider going into this fall is to ensure that your school has accurate contact information for all students; be proactive about how and when to inform parents about grading, attendance, and homework policies; and regularly communicate with parents about your school's plan to keep students focused and engaged in learning and changes to your school's distance/hybrid plan.

8. **Equip and require all teachers and front line staff to receive training on your school's language access policy, how to navigate the language line to request for interpreters and be informed about** remote interpreting in educational settings, **and leadership should set high expectations for everyone to set aside time to contact students and families.** Teachers and staff will need to engage with families and students at one point or another. By setting aside a dedicated amount of time each day, schools can ensure that engagement is consistent and that the effort is seen as a priority by all educators.

   In a distance or hybrid learning scenario, school leaders can prioritize goals for connecting with families and provide calling scripts for teachers and staff like this Family Wellness Check-In Guidance from the Flamboyan Foundation. Equip your staff with resource and referral lists like Rochester Public School's COVID-19 Resource page and this list of resources for families from the Minnesota Children's Cabinet and parent notifications letters from TransAct. Knowing about available supports helps staff feel confident and better prepared to make calls, identify strengths, hear concerns, and build relationships.

Mental Health and Well-being

Trauma-Informed Care

Restorative practices support and align with trauma-informed practices in schools. Building community practices help to create caring relationships and ensure that all students will be seen and have voice and choice, key principles of a trauma-informed approach according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.[1] A Washington State University study that reviewed Trauma-Informed School Practices stated: "Consistent with trauma-informed whole school practices, the benefits of high-quality school climate arise from practices that support reinforcing

[1] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014. Downloaded June 28, 2019.

high-quality relationships, fairness, and challenges to implicit bias. Restorative practice does not have its origins in trauma-informed care, but is wholly aligned."[1]

What are Restorative Practices?

Restorative practices (RP) are drawn from the traditions of Indigenous people and communities of color around the world. They are grounded in a belief that people are profoundly relational, interconnected and inherently good. Restorative practices include ways of creating community that honors the importance of relationships amongst all members in the community; as well as practices to repair relationships when harm has been caused. RP address the needs all people impacted by the harm.

By using restorative practices in the school, people get to know one another and build relationships with each other, which is key element to learning, bullying prevention, and creating a positive school climate for students and adults. Key principles guide the practices.

The Practices

The Practices of a Restorative School are formal and informal practices that transfer the restorative mindset into the daily lived experiences of school. Specifically, the practices include but are not limited to:

- Practices that develop the restorative mindset:
  - Build community among adults
- Examine your own relationship to harm
- Explore implicit bias, historical trauma and resilience
- Practices that build community:
  - Empathetic communication which includes listening with care and curiosity, and speaking using the language of feeling, of empathy
- Circles to build and maintain relationships, to teach, to meet, to problem-solve, to provide ongoing support
- Practices that respond to harm:
  - Restorative questions used in a chat or conversations with one or two people
- Circle or conferencing with a group of people affected by harm, using the restorative questions.

These practices are used to build healthy relationships and to create community in school, to develop a positive school climate, prevent bullying and harm, and to help repair harm. Restorative practices apply equally to everyone in the school community: students, adults, families and community members.

Restorative Mindset

Restorative practices are based in the belief that all people are worthy and relational, that "all humans have gifts and everyone is needed for what they bring."[2] Supporting this mindset of interconnectedness and relationships is an

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[1] Blodgett, C., Ph.D., Washington State University & Dorado, J. Ph.D. University of California, San Francisco – HEARTS. A Selected Review of Trauma-Informed School Practice & Alignment with Educational Practice, White Paper funded by the California Endowment (2015). Also, Dorado, J. S., Martinez, M., McArthur, L. E., & Leibovitz, T. (2016). Healthy environments and response to trauma in schools (hearts): A whole-school, multi-level, prevention and intervention program for creating trauma-informed, safe and supportive schools. School Mental Health, 8(1), 163-176.

[2] Boyes-Watson, C., and Pranis, K. (2015) Circle Forward: Building a Restorative School Community. Living Justice Press, St. Paul, MN

awareness and understanding of trauma, the impact of racism and implicit bias in our daily interactions. The development of a restorative mindset includes reflection upon and knowledge about power, privilege, history, race, justice and language.[1]

Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools

The Minnesota Department of Education developed Restorative Practices Implementation Guidance to provide school districts and schools with guidance and resources to help them integrate restorative practices into schoolwide climate, discipline, equity, and teaching and learning practices.

Contributors

Members of the Circle Advisory Team provided language, insight, recommendations and comment to the development of these guidelines. MDE staff also contributed to the development of these documents.

Restorative Practices Resources

- Administrator's Checklist for RP Implementation
- Circle Outlines for Adult Learning
- Restorative Practices in Schools Program Directory
- Restorative Practices in Schools Videos
- Restorative Practices in Schools Books and Manuals
- Restorative Practices in Schools Websites
- Restorative Interventions for Bullying Toolkit

Mental Health Supports for Students

Distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has created different types of traumatic experiences and high levels of stress for many of our staff, students, and families. For many, especially children, the stress and trauma threaten to have long-lasting negative impacts on the body and brain. Each person will need additional supports and systems that will help to rebalance and refocus on the task of learning and being productive in a school. When considering the reopening of schools, schools should contemplate not only the physical health of their constituents but also their mental health and wellness and make it a priority within their planning. This can be done by assessing the availability and accessibility of mental health resources and supports for their students, families, and staff members as they return to school, continue distance learning, or participate in a hybrid model.

As provisions for these activities and supports become a part of your back-to-school planning, consider the following guiding questions and resources:

Guiding Questions

- What are we doing to promote wellness of students on a daily basis?
- Are staff trained in providing supports through a trauma-informed and responsive lens?
- What is the LEA doing to reduce the stigma associated with accessing services?
- Have we adopted a suicide prevention policy and provided staff training?

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[1] Winn, M. (2018). Justice on Both Sides: Transforming Education Through Restorative Justice Harvard Educational Press, Cambridge, MA

- How will we engage the school community and mental health practitioners in a survey to understand its constituents' needs in order to build upon existing assets and determine the current mental health needs of staff, students, and families?
- How are we engaging community-based and local government partners in supporting the mental wellness of staff and students?
- What supports are currently in place to assist students and staff with mental health issues?
- What technology is being used to deliver mental health services remotely? Is this technology platform HIPAA or FERPA compliant? Is it secure?
- How will we train staff in evidence-based practices (CBITS, SSET, DBT for Schools, etc.)?

Resources

In addition to visiting MDE's Supporting Students and Families COVID-19 resources, consider exploring the following resources related to school mental health:

- American Academy of Pediatrics COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Return to In-person Education in Schools
- National Center for School Mental Health
- Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network Responding to COVID-19 School Mental Health
- Plan Ahead to Support the Transition Back by the Center for Mental Health in Schools at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) highlights essential supports for the transition to schools reopening.
- Resilient Educator COVID-19 Toolkit equips teachers with actionable strategies and advice in working with and supporting children, parents, and families during these difficult times. Rich teacher wellness and self-care resources nurture teachers to become more resilient.
- Compassion Resilience Toolkit offers information, activities, and resources for school leadership and staff to understand, recognize, and minimize the experience of compassion fatigue and increase compassion resilience.
- Trails to Wellness by the University of Michigan Trails offers a menu of strategies for self-care, each grounded in empirical research.
- American School Counselor Association & National Association of School Psychologists School Reentry Considerations

School Climate and Social-Emotional Learning

Distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has created different types of traumatic experiences and high levels of stress for many of our staff, students, and families. This experience emphasizes the importance of social emotional well-being for all. While it is uncertain what model (fully in person, hybrid, or distance learning) schools will be implementing this fall, school climate improvement and social and emotional learning (SEL) will be critical to re-engaging students, supporting adults, rebuilding relationships, and creating a foundation for academic learning.

As students and staff return to classrooms adapted to ensure physical distancing, consider how your school might adapt instruction to account for the following:

- Intentional development of school climate in which relationships are prioritized and all students and adults feel safe and, supported, as well as a sense of belonging and agency.
- Dedicating time to develop, embed, and deliver SEL instruction to develop student and staff's social emotional skills and mindsets.
- Supporting the physical, social, emotional, and professional well-being of all school employees, including teachers, administrators, and classified staff.

School Climate

School climate is defined as the quality and character of school life. A school's climate is based on patterns of students', parents' and school staff members' experiences of school life. School climate also reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning, and leadership practices and organizational structures. Every student, parent or caregiver, school staff, and school community member have different experiences of school life all day, every day. When schools are intentional about creating a positive school climate, the school community's experience improves. This leads to students being more engaged in school and feeling more connected to school–resulting in a school climate that supports the success of all students in school and throughout their lives.

As provisions for these activities and supports become a part of your back-to-school planning, consider the following guiding questions and resources:

Guiding Questions

- Does your leadership have a clear school climate vision that is widely communicated, dedicated time for school climate improvement, and dedicated time for school staff development?
- How will you clearly communicate rules about physical violence, verbal abuse, harassment, and bullying? Do you have clear and consistent procedures and enforcement for adult intervention?
- How will you cultivate an emotionally safe, culturally sustaining and engaging learning environment that prioritizes relationship building in your classrooms?
- How will you increase a sense of belonging and connectedness to school for students, families and staff?
- How will you use supportive teaching practices, such as constructive feedback, varied opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and skills, support for risk-taking and independent thinking, atmosphere conducive to dialogue and questioning, academic challenge, and individual attention?
- How will schools support the development of social and civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions including effective listening, conflict resolution, self-reflection, emotional regulation, empathy, personal responsibility, and ethical decision-making?
- How will schools cultivate mutual respect for individual differences (e.g. gender, race, culture, etc.) at all levels of the school (student-student, adult-student, adult-adult), and overall norms to culturally sustain all students?
- How will schools offer time for staff to reconnect and engage in this work before students enter the buildings?

Resources

In addition to visiting MDE's School Climate Center and Supporting Students and Families COVID-19 resources, consider exploring the following resources related to school climate:

- School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth outlines six strategies that teachers, administrators, other school staff, and parents can implement to increase the extent to which students feel connected to school.
- Fostering School Connectedness Staff Development Program can strengthen school staff members' abilities to improve school connectedness for students in their school.
- National Center on Safe and Supportive Schools Learning Environments offers a variety of resources for school climate improvement, student engagement, trauma informed practices, and more.
- The Aspen Institute's Education and Society Program Fostering Connectedness in the Pandemic Era and Supporting Students to be Independent Learners: State and District Actions for the Pandemic Era.
- Edutopia spotlights what works in education by showing people how they can adopt or adapt best practices, and telling stories of innovation and continuous learning in the real world.

Social and Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning (SEL) is broadly understood as a process through which people build awareness and skills in managing emotions, setting goals, establishing relationships and making responsible decisions that support their success in school and in life. SEL develops cognitive social competencies, such as self-awareness, self-management and social awareness, according to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Developing such competencies in students fosters positive social skills, reduces conduct problems, diminishes emotional stress and improves academic performance.

When we develop social and emotional skills, our ability to form relationships and build social awareness increases, which enhances our ability to connect with individuals of diverse perspectives, cultures, languages, histories, identities and abilities. By implementing SEL on a macro-level in schools, we create more equitable, better-performing, culturally sustaining schools and communities. This type of systemic change creates school environments in which all students learn the skills they need to be prepared for career, college and life. As an educational approach, SEL recognizes that students are complex human beings, whose learning and behavior are just as impacted by their emotions – and their control over those emotions – as they are by the quality of instruction and discipline.

As provisions for these activities and supports become a part of your back-to-school planning, consider the following guiding questions and resources:

Guiding Questions

- How will schools and districts ensure SEL activities are integrated into lessons in every classroom?
- How can you value and foster staff SEL development through purposeful incorporation in meetings, routines, staff-expectations, and professional development?
- How much time during the learning schedule will you plan to address students' social and emotional learning? How can you integrate the MDE's SEL competencies into the standards-based lessons and activities that are already planned?
- What evidence based materials/programs/curriculum will you use? How will you ensure that they are organized around a high quality systemic SEL?
- Will students participate in wellness and social activities, or other physical and emotional health practices?
- What platforms will be available for students to interact with their peers, their teachers, one-on-one, and in groups to build and maintain collaboration and connections?
- What opportunities will be created for staff to process and share their emotions and reflect on their own social and emotional competencies?

Resources

In addition to visiting the MDE's School Climate Center and Supporting Students and Families COVID-19 Resources, consider exploring the following resources related to school climate:

- Leveraging SEL to Reopen and Renew Your School Community (CASEL): This guide positions SEL as a critical underpinning to the success of overall transition planning, recognizing school leaders have multiple other considerations for reopening schools, including academics, operations, access to technology, and physical health.
- SEL Three Signature Practices Playbook: Practice ways to introduce and broaden the use of SEL Practices in classrooms, schools and workplaces.
- Teaching the Whole Child: Instructional Practices That Support Social-Emotional Learning in Three Teacher Evaluation Frameworks by the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders at American Institutes for Research, provides an easy read on social and emotional learning (SEL) and the student academic outcomes associated with SEL.

- The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has a webpage with resources to guide caregivers, educators and leaders during this time.
- Sanford Harmony, a Pre-K-6 research-based social emotional learning program, promotes positive peer relations among students through lessons and activities that encourage communication, collaboration, and mutual respect. These free resources can be used by parents at home to help children express feelings and solve problems together.
- Second Step: COVID-19 resources
- Panorama Education: SEL and Self-Care Resources for Educators, Schools, and Parents Related to Distance Learning and COVID-19
- National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations: Pyramid Model Resources for Educators for SEL

Bullying and Harassment

COVID-19 is not at all connected to race, ethnicity, or nationality. School staff should be mindful that bullying, intimidation, or harassment of students based on actual or perceived race, color, national origin, or disability (including the actual disability of being infected with COVID-19 or perception of being infected) may result in a violation of state and federal civil rights laws. School districts and charter schools must take immediate and appropriate action to investigate what occurred when responding to reports of bullying or harassment. If parents and families believe their child has experienced bullying, harassment, or intimidation related to the COVID-19 outbreak, they should contact their school principal or their designee.

American Indian Students

Excerpt from Indigenous Family Engagement: Strong Families, Strong Nations:

Families are the heart of Indigenous nations and communities. For many Indigenous people and communities, families include all of our relations – reflecting multiple generations, extended family, other community members, more-than-humans, and the lands and waters of our homes. Indigenous familial relationships have a wide geography and reflect Indigenous knowledge systems as they unfold in everydayness (Corntassel and Scow 2017). Families are the archetype for Indigenous nations and often reflect a complex web of interdependence between all things. Families are the primary contexts in which Indigenous children learn who they are, Indigenous ways of knowing, and what is expected of them as they become adults and eventually become good elders. In this way, the strength and well-being of Indigenous families are fundamental to the strength and well-being of Indigenous nations. Given this perspective, we suggest the everydayness of Indigenous families' lives is perhaps the sites in which the most radical and hopeful possibilities for Indigenous resurgence and futures can and do unfold (Simpson 2011; Corntassel and Scow 2017).

Non-Indigenous educators and administrators must self-reflect on stereotypical, racist, and privileged assumptions about Indigenous families and how these assumptions have and continue to impact their relationships and interactions with Indigenous students and families. While continuing to challenge assumptions and stereotypes, educators must begin the process of reaching out and serving Indigenous communities in order to build trust. This could take the form of attending cultural events, meeting families on and off campus, visiting homes if families are comfortable with it, and inviting family and community members into the classroom as teachers, collaborators, and decision-makers.

When working with Indigenous families, ensure that your engagement processes and practices reflect a commitment to long-term and sustained collaborations with multiple families and community members. Utilizing a single family or organization repeatedly contributes to tokenism of Indigenous families and perpetuates asymmetrical power relations. Collaboration should position Indigenous families and community members as meaningful decision-makers in order to create culturally resurgent learning experiences throughout the school year.

English Learner Students

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

It is important to remember that providing service to students identified as English learners is a matter of equity. There are a number of state and federal laws that clarify the legal and ethical responsibility for districts and charter schools to provide both access to academic content and facilitate student progress towards English language proficiency (ELP). See the U. S. Department of Education Civil Rights Obligations. In order to meet the needs of English learners, districts and charters have found that during hybrid instruction there are three main areas of focus: Connections with families, relationships with students, and collaboration among teachers providing instruction.

Connections with families

Districts and charter schools should be proactive in communicating with multilingual families. Information should be provided to families in their preferred language(s) and there should be clear outreach strategies that include connecting through community organizations, bilingual/bicultural staff, community elders, and planned calling trees. Districts and charters should have sufficient bilingual/bicultural staff to reach out to all families in order to collect feedback and input on the hybrid learning practices. Attendance policies should be reviewed in order to collaboratively build trust and engagement with families. (For example, defining attendance by logging on to a computer session could lead to non-engagement. This would be compounded by a punitive approach to engagement and should never include law enforcement, threats regarding immigration status, court involvement, etc.). Additionally, districts and charter schools should prioritize funds towards providing access to technology and internet access for traditionally marginalized communities in order to address and not exacerbate existing achievement gaps.

Relationships with students

We believe that relationships are the foundation of all learning. Districts and charter schools should prioritize relationship building and engagement and have clear expectations for student contact with the EL teacher. This student contact time (one-on-one or in a small group) should be used for conferring, providing feedback, setting individual learning goals, and/or checking on progress. Incorporate the experiences of students to enrich the curriculum. Writing assignments, projects, community experts and student choice help make learning relevant and engaging.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

It is important to remember that providing service to students identified as English learners is a matter of equity. There are a number of state and federal laws that clarify the legal and ethical responsibility for districts and charter schools to provide both access to academic content and facilitate student progress towards English language proficiency (ELP). See the U. S. Department of Education Civil Rights Obligations. In order to meet the needs of English learners, districts and charter schools have found that during distance learning there are three main areas of focus: Connections with families, relationships with students, and collaborative instruction for language production.

Connections with families

Districts and charter schools should be proactive in communicating with multilingual families. Information should be provided to families in their preferred language(s) and there should be clear outreach strategies that include connecting through community organizations, bilingual/bicultural staff, community elders, and planned calling trees. Districts and charters should have sufficient bilingual/bicultural staff to reach out to all families in order to collect feedback and input on the distance learning practices. Attendance policies should be reviewed in order to collaboratively build trust and engagement with families. (For example, defining attendance by logging on to a computer session could lead to non-

engagement. This would be compounded by a punitive approach to engagement and should never include law enforcement, threats regarding immigration status, court involvement, etc.). Additionally, districts and charter schools should prioritize funds towards providing access to technology and internet access for traditionally marginalized communities in order to address and not exacerbate existing achievement gaps.

Relationships with students

We believe that relationships are the foundation of all learning. Districts and charter schools should prioritize relationship building and engagement and have clear expectations for student contact with the EL teacher. This student contact time (one-on-one or in a small group) should be used for conferring, providing feedback, setting individual learning goals, and/or checking on progress. Incorporate the experiences of students to enrich the curriculum. Writing assignments, projects, community experts and student choice help make learning relevant and engaging. Also, know your students well and keep in mind that student backgrounds vary greatly. Many students learning English were born in the US; newcomers may have strong literacy skills and grade level content knowledge in the primary language; the children of migratory farm workers have deep roots in communities outside Minnesota; other students may have had interrupted education; and some students learning English will also qualify for gifted and talented or special education.

Students Experiencing Homelessness

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program is authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) (McKinney-Vento Act). The McKinney-Vento Act was originally authorized in 1987 and most recently re-authorized in December 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Under the McKinney-Vento Act the term "homeless children and youth" means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence which includes children and youth:

- who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- who are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- who are living in emergency or transitional shelters or are abandoned in hospitals;
- who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- who are migratory children who live in one of the above circumstances.

The term unaccompanied youth includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B, Section 725(2)

Rights of Homeless Children and Youth under the McKinney-Vento Act

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, school districts and charter schools must review and revise policies and procedures to remove barriers to a high-quality education for homeless children and youth. Every school district and charter school must designate a local liaison able to carry out their duties to ensure that homeless students are identified and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school. The McKinney-Vento Act also requires that:

- homeless students who move have the right to remain in their schools of origin (i.e., the school the student attended when permanently housed or in which the student was last enrolled, which includes preschools) if that is in the student's best interest;

- if it is in the student's best interest to change schools, homeless students must be immediately enrolled in a new school, even if they do not have the records normally required for enrollment;
- transportation must be provided to or from a student's school of origin, at the request of a parent, guardian, or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local liaison;
- homeless students must have access to all programs and services for which they are eligible, including special education services, preschool, school nutrition programs, language assistance for English learners, career and technical education, gifted and talented programs, magnet schools, charter schools, summer learning, online learning, and before- and after-school care;
- unaccompanied youth must be accorded specific protections, including immediate enrollment in school without proof of guardianship; and
- parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth have the right to dispute an eligibility, school selection, or enrollment decision.

Challenges facing Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Homeless children, youth, and families face unique challenges. Not having stable housing is traumatic. The reasons for homelessness are traumatic and that trauma can have a negative impact on student behavior and learning and can contribute to adult homelessness. Unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and are especially vulnerable to predation and trafficking. They are often working to support themselves and their siblings. Young children experiencing homelessness may lack appropriate food items such as formula and soft food. Young children may not live in appropriate physical settings which is "child-proofed". Students experiencing homelessness are significantly more at risk of losing services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Migrant Students

Migratory children and families face unique challenges due to the migratory lifestyle, especially during a pandemic. The following is a list of some challenges that migratory families may encounter during the pandemic:

- Farmworkers do not have the luxury of staying home and self-quarantining in already crowded and limited housing
- Lost wages with serious financial consequences
- Limited access to health insurance and benefits
- Unpaid sick leave
- Broken and confusing immigration system
- Lack of accurate and timely information in multiple language
- Lack of access to healthy and affordable food options
- Increased stress
- Higher rates of infection

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

Based on the above challenges, the following are guidelines for supporting migratory children and families in a pandemic in a scenario in which all students return to school buildings following the most current Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) guidelines. Same expectation as all other students, and:

- Make extra effort to ensure families understand district expectations for health and safety.
    - Translate into families' languages.
    - Use multiple modes of communication: mobile phone text, phone/video calls, social media, paper, pre-recorded videos, etc.

- Post signage for health and safety options in multiple languages (ex. hand washing, physical distancing, coughing/sneezing into arms, etc.)
- Provide additional personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks and gloves, sanitizer and wipes to help families stay healthy and clean at home and at school.
- Provide after-school supports and childcare for families working extra-long hours.
- Provide transportation to and from school. Make expectations for physical distancing on school buses clear and accessible.
- Provide clear instructions around enrollment procedures, especially for those procedures that have changed due to health and safety protocol.
- Provide supports for meals outside of the school day and over the weekend.
- Make sure the district's designated migrant liaison has access to Migrant Student Information Exchange (MSIX). MSIX contains the most updated student information to assist in student placement (e.g., grades, health information, or identification for English learner status or special education). Contact Tri-Valley Opportunity Council for more information at 952-232-1200.
- Ensure migratory students who may be identified as English learners receive appropriate services.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

Students return to school buildings where a hybrid model is implemented following the most current CDC and MDH guidelines. In addition to the guidance under scenario 1, consider the following:

- Student schedules must be strategic as families have 12-16 hour work shifts and older siblings are responsible for younger siblings.
- Provide optional childcare for younger siblings that are not scheduled for in-school instruction (e.g., KidZone model- structured activity)
    - Plan for delivery of educational materials.
    - Plan for delivery of meals. All migratory students qualify for free meals.
- Ensure that all migratory student have access to reliable internet services and devices for each school aged member in the family. It cannot be assumed that migratory students have devices or internet access carried over from the previous spring as migratory students may have last enrolled in a district in another state.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

If no students return to school buildings and a distance learning model is implemented, consider the following guidance for supporting migratory children and families:

- Districts must provide each migratory child in each family with electronic devices with reliable internet access (sufficient bandwidth, hotspot).
- It is a challenge for migratory children and families to connect with the community and access resources, even prior to distance learning. Thus, it is more important than ever to build community in the distance-learning setting. Some ways to do this may include, but are not limited to:
    - Video/phone conferencing
    - Providing printed materials
    - Supporting students and parents in accessing online materials
    - Most families use their phones to access information; make sure materials are accessible on mobile devices. As families may have limited data plans, ensure other sources of information are available and accessible to migratory families in other formats.
    - Defining and clearly communicating expectations (both of students and parents) and make sure the expectations are reasonable and have proper accommodations.
    - Providing clear structure to the day.
    - Including activities that build relationships among students.

- Remembering that migratory students' parents work long hours. Students may be home supervised by an older sibling or neighbor. Make sure activities are engaging, instructions and expectations are clear and provided in multiple modes and with regular frequency. Do not assume students received the information. Confirm understanding with each student.
- Soliciting input from migratory families on what works and what doesn't during distance learning.
- Providing guidance to parents:
  - Designate a point person, such as the district's migrant liaison, with whom migrant families can connect. The district's migrant liaison should be informed of local resources to support families and address their needs.
  - Engage them in supporting their children's education by providing them effective teaching strategies (as most parents are not trained instructors though they are fulfilling the role of teacher in this setting).
  - Provide them technological support – meet virtually with parents at the beginning of the year and periodically and frequently to introduce them to the instructional platforms their children are using, to help them access grades and assignments, establish username and passwords and to troubleshoot technology.
  - Provide online and offline options for parents to connect with their child's teacher.

Students Receiving Special Education Services

Special education provides individualized services to students with unique needs for learning supports, in specialized environments for learning. In this regard, special education programs and students with individual needs for learning supports are important considerations in planning to serve students whether via in-person learning, hybrid learning or distance learning. At the school district, program and individual student level, two goals should drive planning:

- Maximizing effectiveness of specialized instruction and related services; and
- Minimizing COVID-19 infection risk through application of CDC and MDH recommended safety measures.

The core work for special education administrators and staff is decision-making that strikes the optimal balance between these goals, even when simultaneously achieving both of these goals presents a significant challenge. For example, distance learning may not be the ideal way to provide specialized instruction and related services, but is an effective way to minimize infection risk for students who are very vulnerable to infection or in local situations where community-acquired infection risk is elevated for all students and staff.

The Special Education Division is partnering with experts across teams at MDE and in other organizations such as the Minnesota Department of Health to engage in an ongoing process of developing supports for special education planning. This guidance is based on feedback received from special education administrators, special education staff, families of students with disabilities, and partnering state agencies providing services and supports to students with disabilities. This guidance will be expanded along with frameworks, tools and strategies to support problem-solving, decision-making and innovation by special education administrators and staff that will meet the challenges posed by COVID-19, and ensure the health and school success of students with disabilities.

As school districts and charter schools are planning for each scenario, refer to the Minnesota Department of Health 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Schools.

Special Education for In-Person Learning, Hybrid Learning and Distance Learning

What are the service delivery options for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEP's), including in Setting 4 programs, within each of the scenarios?

Each of the three scenarios must include plans for special education programs, special education services, special education staff and students with IEP's in all instructional settings, including Level 4 programs. School districts may use

the CDC Schools Decision Tool to help plan for each scenario related to the most effective delivery of specialized instruction and related services while also ensuring safety from COVID-19 infection risk for students with disabilities. The CDC Schools Decision Tool should be used in combination with CDC guidance "People Who Need to Take Extra Precautions" in relation to both students and special education staff with health conditions, and especially CDC guidance "People with Disabilities" in relation to students with disabilities.

How are Individualized Education Programs (IEP's) implemented for in-person learning, hybrid learning and distance learning?

In all three scenarios, the school district or charter school remains responsible for the free appropriate public education (FAPE) of its students eligible for special education services who have an individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan. For each scenario, districts and charters must plan how they will continue to meet the requirements of Part B (3-21) and Part C (birth to three) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. As a school district is planning for distance learning, including as part of a hybrid model, IEPs may need to be reviewed and amended (e.g. transition planning). For all three scenarios, MDE recommends school districts and charter schools:

- Develop a process to communicate with parents and guardians regarding their child's services, including discussion of amending IEP's to best to meet the student's needs in distance learning or a hybrid model if applicable, and including specialized instruction, related services, and accommodations. This can be done through having an amended IEP with contingency plans for each scenario.
    - Consider what other IEP team members, and agencies and organizations should be included in the communication, including contracted providers and non-public agencies. Telehealth and telemedicine may possibly be used to provide special education related services if FERPA and HIPAA compliant.
    - Review the delivery of special education and related services, as well as general education curriculum to ensure that students with disabilities have equal access to learning options, especially if distance learning is adopted, including in a hybrid model. This will necessitate communications between IEP case managers, general education teachers, parents and guardians, and related services providers to ensure that students with disabilities can be appropriately involved and make progress toward the general education standards and IEP goals.
    - As for all students, develop and require as many synchronous opportunities as possible, with opportunities for student-to-student interaction for students of all ages and in multiple settings.
    - Districts and charter schools will need to continue addressing translation and interpreter needs for students and families when developing and providing instructional materials in any of the three options, and especially distance learning.
    - If adopting distance learning, including as part of a hybrid model, consider the use of hot spots and free internet services being offered by internet companies for the delivery of instruction and for special education due process procedures. In addition, a student's IEP team should consider the need for parent training as a related service to ensure a student has meaningful access and engagement in distance learning.
- Develop a protocol to communicate with school administrators and educators in order to prepare staff to plan for the needs of students eligible for special education, child find activities, evaluations/reevaluations, and IEP implementation for all scenarios.

Individualized Education Programs must continue to be implemented in all three scenarios. School districts and charter schools should develop and use a process to hold IEP meetings, review IEP goals and services, and conduct evaluations and reevaluations. This could include virtual meetings and phone conferences. School districts may refer to federal guidance in a memo from the U.S. Department of Education (ED), Office of Special Education Programs and a webinar

from the Office for Civil Rights on ensuring web accessibility for students with disabilities for schools utilizing online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak. For relevant guidance regarding how schools can protect civil rights during an outbreak, school districts may refer to the ED Office for Civil Rights Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil Rights of Students.

Are there alternate location options for delivery of in-person specialized instruction and related services when a school plans for distance learning, or on distance learning days in a hybrid model?

Distance learning is implemented when the severity of infection risk is so significant that in-person contact between school service providers and students must be minimized as much as possible until the risk is reduced and schools are adequately prepared to provide a safe environment for both students and staff. The CDC guidance "Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission" illustrates that delivery of in-person specialized instruction and related services at an alternate location from the school reduces the effectiveness of school and community mitigation strategies when there is substantial community transmission or impact of COVID 19. For this reason, MDE does not advise providing in-person specialized instruction and related services during distance learning, either at alternate locations or in the homes of students. During distance learning, including on distance learning days in a hybrid model, related service providers may utilize options for virtual delivery of related services, including through telehealth and telemedicine options. In-person specialized instruction and related services may be provided to students in full reopening of schools, or may be provided on days of school building and facility attendance within a hybrid model.

COVID-19 Health and Safety Information

How can providers of special education related services safely deliver services within the three scenarios school districts and charter schools are planning for?

Providers of special education related services are able to provide in-person special education related services in school buildings and facilities if in-person learning is implemented, or on days of school building and facility attendance in hybrid learning, if school staff and services meet recommendations of MDH and CDC provided in guidance from these agencies for the following:

- Schools and Childcare (MDH)
- Masking Recommendations for Childcare and Schools (MDH)
- COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs (MDH)
- Infection Control (CDC)
- Considerations for Schools (CDC)
- Childcare, Schools, and Youth Programs – Plan, Prepare and Respond (CDC)
- K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs – FAQ's for Administrators, Teachers and Parents (CDC)

During distance learning, including on distance learning days in hybrid learning, related service providers may utilize options for virtual delivery of related services through telehealth and telemedicine options.

School nurses are able to help design and provide training, as well as provide opportunities for staff practice and follow-up coaching of staff at specific sites or for specific services. Districts and schools may also consider documenting CDC and other training completed by staff, including completion of CDC video training. Training follow-up and coaching may include posting pictures and diagrams reminding staff how to use PPE. Training follow-up and coaching should include periodic checks on staff understanding, application and questions.

What COVID-19 safety and prevention factors should be considered by special education administrative teams in planning for in-person learning and delivery of specialized instruction and related services?

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) has provided the following guidance for planning delivery of specialized instruction and related services in school buildings and facilities with PPE and other measures to minimize infection risk for students and staff:

- How do students/staff move around in the classroom or school spaces? How restrained or controlled is the movement? Are people confined to a specific area or wandering? Is there much mixing of groups of students or staff?
- How long are students and staff in the space? How long are the typical interactions? Do all staff need to be involved in the interaction for the same amount of time?
- How close are students and staff in this area? Is there social distancing? How much distance can be obtained and with what kinds of activities?
- How can students and staff be grouped to create small groups that are predictable in membership? Can one specialty discipline act as proxy for other disciplines who use virtual means in order to minimize mixing?
- How are students or staff engaging with objects, equipment with the service or classroom? How can you minimize sharing? How can you incorporate frequent personal hand hygiene and frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces?
- Are there points of increased congestion in the flow of students or staff in the classroom, hallways, arrival and dismissal?
- When providing 1:1 services consider identifying which students and or staff are at higher risk for COVID19.
- What services have increased risk of staff and students coming into contact with fluid or secretions from the nose and/or mouth (e. g. coughing, drooling, spitting, eating, drinking)? How can you strengthen personal hygiene, cleaning and consider what type of PPE may be needed?

What are considerations for staff use of PPE in relation to communicating with students with disabilities and providing specialized instruction and related services?

The Minnesota Low Incidence Projects and MDE Special Education Division have identified a number of considerations for staff use of PPE in relation to communicating with students with disabilities and providing specialized instruction and related services. These include:

- Cloth face masks can limit or obstruct access to communication for persons who rely on speechreading, facial expressions and American Sign Language (ASL) grammatical markers. Masks with clear, plastic “windows” still obscure access to the face, which is a critical part of speechreading and impacts spoken language comprehension.
- Cloth face masks can also limit or obstruct access to instruction and classmates/peers for social interaction.
- Cloth face masks and greater distances between people may distort or reduce the volume of speech sounds. It can also make accessing and understanding facial expressions and ASL grammatical markers difficult.
- Because of the straps around the ears or around the head, wearing masks can be difficult for persons who use behind-the-ear hearing aids, cochlear implant processors, eye protection, glasses, helmets, head gear, head/neck supports on a wheelchair/in standers.
- Wearing cloth face masks can create barriers for persons who have difficulty controlling their saliva.
- Educational Implications of Social Distancing:
    - Some students will not understand the concept of social distancing and may not observe the practice independently.
    - Some students may be tactilely selective and may not tolerate wearing a cloth face mask. Others may not understand the need to wear a cloth face mask or may become distracted by wearing a cloth face mask.

- Many students who use hearing assistive technology and/or students with low vision need to be in close physical proximity with teachers and peers in order for spoken language to be accessible and understood.
- Many students require physical touch with adults to support their communication access and physical access to education (e.g., hand-under-hand support, use of tactile sign language, support for physical transitions in and out of equipment, personal cares [toileting and feeding] and therapies).
- Students may be in contact with many service providers and staff (e.g., nurses, paraprofessionals, interpreters, classroom teachers, special education teachers, deafblind interveners, therapists) throughout the day, thus increasing exposure. Considerations may include the prioritizing of some services or utilization of virtual support in an effort to mitigate risk.
- Itinerant staff travel to many different sites in a single day and come into contact with numerous staff and students, increasing the potential for exposure. Considerations may include virtual coaching of an on-site proxy if possible in an effort to mitigate risk.
- Itinerant staff will need extra time to sanitize material before and after visiting each different school / classroom. Considerations may include provision of additional materials that can remain on-site or with specific students, if possible, in an effort to mitigate risk.
- Administering assessments and evaluations may require staff and students to be in close contact with one another.

What are considerations for staff use of social distancing in relation to communicating with students with disabilities and providing specialized instruction and related services?

The Minnesota Low Incidence Projects and MDE Special Education Division have identified a number of considerations for staff use of social distancing in relation to communicating with students with disabilities and providing specialized instruction and related services. These include:

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- Students may be in contact with many service providers and staff (e.g., nurses, paraprofessionals, interpreters, classroom teachers, special education teachers, deafblind interveners, therapists) throughout the day, thus increasing exposure. Considerations may include the prioritizing of some services or utilization of virtual support in an effort to mitigate risk.
- Itinerant staff travel to many different sites in a single day and come into contact with numerous staff and students, increasing the potential for exposure. Considerations may include virtual coaching of an on-site proxy if possible in an effort to mitigate risk.
- Itinerant staff will need extra time to sanitize material before and after visiting each different school / classroom. Considerations may include provision of additional materials that can remain on-site or with specific students, if possible, in an effort to mitigate risk.
- Administering assessments and evaluations may require staff and students to be in close contact with one another.

Special Education Behavioral Supports and Mental Health Services

How can school districts and charter schools support parents in safely keeping home students with significant needs for behavioral supports during distance learning, including distance learning days in a hybrid model?

School districts and charter schools can support parents in safely keeping home students with significant needs for behavioral supports by engaging families in collaborative planning for parents to provide behavioral supports in the home that augment behavioral supports and skill building for the student in school. The Association for Positive Behavior Support has developed guidance for establishing the Positive Behavior Support process at home. In addition, Positive Supports Minnesota and the Minnesota Positive Behavior Support Network provide information and resources for schools, practitioners and families.

Tele-delivery of Special Education Services

What are FERPA and HIPAA requirements for the tele-delivery platforms used by special education related services providers?

FERPA requirements and the HIPAA Privacy Rule requirements contain similar provisions governing privacy, access and disclosure. However, in the school setting, FERPA, rather than the HIPAA Privacy Rule, applies to student information and student privacy. This includes information maintained by health-related service providers such as speech-language pathologists and occupational therapists when they are working for or on behalf of the school to provide services to students. More information about the application of FERPA and HIPAA to student health records is available from the US Department of Education, including specific clarification for FERPA and COVID-19.

FERPA requires that schools cannot disclose private data or personally identifiable information from a student's education record without consent or an eligible exception. Education records include all records that are directly related to an individual student and that are maintained by an education agency (school) or someone acting for the school. If the school is providing services to a student in a way that does not disclose private information from the student's record, then the law does will not apply. However, if the school has concerns that use of a video platform to provide services could contain and thus could reveal personally identifiable information, then the school should use a platform that incorporates security measures to ensure that private data is encrypted and that it cannot be accessed by individuals who do not have authority to access the data. Taking these steps will help the school comply with both FERPA and the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, which requires schools to protect private data with appropriate security safeguards. Schools can also address privacy concerns by informing parents about the proposed services and platform for delivery and seeking parent consent.

Schools may also refer to the Notification of Enforcement Discretion for telehealth remote communications during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: "OCR [Office of Civil Rights] will exercise its enforcement discretion and will not impose penalties for noncompliance with the regulatory requirements under the HIPAA Rules against covered health care providers in connection with the good faith provision of telehealth during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency."

The National Center for School Mental Health maintains updated information on FERPA and HIPAA policies for tele-delivery of services and policy flexibilities, especially for (but not limited to) tele-delivery of behavioral supports and mental health services.

Where must a speech language Pathologist (SLP) be licensed to provide direct services via tele-practice for a Minnesota school district?

Both the state where they are located when providing the service and the state where the child is located at the time of service delivery. To clarify licensing requirements, SLPs who are licensed by the Minnesota Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) and will do distance learning with the options outlined in the MDE Guidance on pages 3 and 4 do not need a Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) license. They will be utilizing distance learning in conjunction with other school staff and will not be doing tele-practice in a health care setting. ASHA continues to update their website with additional information for practitioners.

Do SLPs need to have their Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) to provide direct services via tele-practice for a Minnesota school district?

There is nothing in current Minnesota Statutes, federal regulations or in ASHA documents that would require CCCs for providing speech language pathology services via tele-practice.

Can Speech Language Pathologists (SLPs) licensed in Minnesota provide services to students who have temporarily moved out of state during COVID-19?

Currently, this is dependent on the requirements in the state in which the child is temporarily residing. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) is actively encouraging states to make accommodations for out-of-state practitioners during the COVID-19 outbreak. As you may be aware, the Federal government has also asked all governors to waive their licensing restrictions during the outbreak.

Given that the students are residents of Minnesota, you may find that local licensing boards may not deem your remote practice as subject to their rules. The best way to determine if any flexibility exists is to contact these boards directly. Further, in many states school-based practice is exempt from licensing rules and only subject to the rules of the state department of education. School districts can find information and contacts on all states via ASHA's state pages. School districts should also check the ASHA state law/regulations tracker.

Third Party Billing

What are Medical Assistance (MA) billing requirements for related services for in-person learning, hybrid learning and distance learning?

Minnesota Health Care Programs (MHCP) requirements and procedures for school district third party billing are not modified when Medicaid covered services are delivered as part of any of the three scenarios. Requirements are listed in the IEP section of the MHCP Provider Manual. MHCP allows payment for telemedicine services for some IEP health-related services. Telemedicine is defined as the delivery of health care services or consultations while the child or youth is at an originating site and the licensed health care provider is at a distant site. Requirements and procedures for telemedicine are also provided in the IEP section of the MHCP Provider Manual. Information on waivers and modifications, including expanded access to telemedicine services, is available from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Can school districts receive Medical Assistance (MA) reimbursement for telehealth and telemedicine services?

Telehealth and telemedicine are terms used in the health, mental health and medical services fields. Telehealth usually refers to using telecommunications and information technology to provide access to health assessment, diagnosis, intervention, consultation, supervision and information across distance (e.g. Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services). Telemedicine usually refers to the delivery of health care services or consultations while the child or youth is at one site and the licensed provider is at a distant site (e.g. Minnesota Health Care Programs IEP Services). Telemedicine may be provided with real-time two-way, interactive audio and visual communications, including secure videoconferencing or store-and-forward technology to: provide or support health care delivery; and to facilitate

assessment, diagnosis, consultation, treatment, education, and care management (e.g. Telemedicine Delivery of Mental Health Services). Specifically for children's mental health services, the Children's Therapeutic Services and Supports definition specifies electronic communication using interactive telecommunications equipment including, at a minimum, audio and video equipment permitting two-way, real-time, interactive communication between the child and a provider who delivers services from a distant site.

It is possible that the special education services delivered by a school district may not always and exactly meet these definitions of telehealth and telemedicine, nor do they need to for the sole purposes of special education. These definitions are important when special education services, especially tele-delivery of related services, are considered for possible MA reimbursement to a school district.

MDE provides information on selecting an online platform for student services and student privacy in the online setting to help school districts plan provision of services as part of distance learning. Whether a school district can receive Medical Assistance reimbursement for any service depends upon meeting all applicable requirements for coverage. Basic information from the Department of Human Services on requirements for coverage may be reviewed for Individualized Education Program Services and Children's Therapeutic Services and Supports. Additional information on third party reimbursement to school districts is also available from the Minnesota Department of Education.

Specifically for tele-delivery of mental health services and behavioral supports, the National Center for School Mental Health maintains updated information on policies, technology supports for multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS), telehealth platforms, and information on internet and cellular data.

Alternative Delivery of Specialized Instructional Services (ADSIS)

How are ADSIS service minutes documented when a school district reopens fully, distance learning, or on distance learning days in a hybrid model?

At this time, MDE is not providing new direction to ADSIS practitioners on matters such as recording hours within the Service Hour Spreadsheet or how to modify the language within the approved application for the service delivery model. ADSIS programs should be included and engaged with their local district or charter school plans for in-person learning, hybrid learning and distance learning. Though the ADSIS service delivery model will inevitably change during this unprecedented time, ADSIS funds are secure. It is most important for school districts and charter schools to focus on aligning ADSIS delivery model to local plans for all scenarios. All of the reporting requirements will become clear as we gather more information.

Technology and Digital Literacy

MDE has brought together a team of experts from our school districts to create differentiated learning modules for students, families, and staff in the use of technology devices. This team will create modules to support the following:

- Students: Create modules to develop digital citizenship, internet safety, and device use that is both device agnostic and device specific
- Families: Create modules to support families in safety and security in device use, digital citizenship, instructional platforms, and device use that is both device agnostic and device specific
- Staff: Create a learning community model through weekly webinars to support the learning and use of best practices in use and instruction that are both device agnostic and device specific

MDE will make these learning modules available as soon as they are developed.

Academic Guidance

Overview

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

- Grade-level teachers should meet to review what was taught during the distance learning period this spring.
  - Identify gaps.
  - Prioritize a strong review and inclusion of spring's focus standards and key skills in first several weeks of school with attention all year; develop scope and sequence for infusion of critical standards not addressed or mastered from previous year and align to current year's standards.
- Identify a process to determine student learning gaps and target individual student learning needs.
- Explore and determine which extended learning strategies are effective for local usage: extended year or day, looping teachers, additional tutoring, etc.
- Provide or expand intervention time within school day to help fill learning gaps for individual students.
- Create a communication outline describing the student academic plan for 2020-21.
- Set expectations for virtual programs/structures to continue to be used or embedded into classroom lessons, which will make a future transition easier if needed.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

- All considerations in Scenario 1 and 3.
- Prioritize student groups that could be brought back to buildings, with these considerations:
  - Younger student learning loss may be highest.
  - High school juniors and seniors may need more immediate support for college prep and transition.
  - All students could benefit from time in buildings with teachers.
- Prioritize what can/should be taught in physical classrooms compared to distance learning.
- Determine best schedules for students with an IEP.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

- Develop student feedback and/or grading plans for distance learning and make any needed policy adjustments.
- Develop individualized plans for all students representing special populations (e.g., students with disabilities, English learners, gifted and exceptional students, etc.).
- Plan inclusion and pull-out structures for special education students in need of additional support.
- Consider additional support for students with IEPs:
  - Face to face or virtual.
  - Meeting with parents and previous teacher to make adjustments to IEP.
  - Co-planning and teaching with classroom teacher and special ed teachers.
- Determine support structures needed to supplement instruction for English learners (e.g., interpreters, software options, etc.).
- Plan for progress monitoring in a virtual setting for students, especially younger students.

Equity

Racial and cultural diversity are hallmarks of our society. To celebrate this diversity, and cultivate harmony and respect for all peoples, educators must nurture diversity, equity, and inclusion within the classroom. The classroom isn't an island. Its walls, even adorned with posters of diverse figures from history, are porous to ideas. By teaching students about the contributions that all cultures bring to our society, educators can encourage them to spread this respect for diversity beyond school.

Learning Loss

Districts should acknowledge and plan for addressing learning loss as they plan for reopening schools in the fall, whichever scenario is being used to deliver instruction and student supports. An evidence brief from Results 4 America—"School Practices to Address Student Learning Loss" —authored by Elaine Allensworth (UChicago Consortium on School Research) and Nathaniel Schwartz (Annenberg Institute at Brown University) summarizes the issue of learning loss resulting from missing several months of in-person school. The following key information quotes and summarizes the brief.

Considerations to Inform District and Charter School Planning for Fall

1. *Learning losses are likely to show up differently across grades and subjects, with larger and more consequential losses in math.*

Losses are likely to be larger in math than ELA but potentially more responsive to intervention efforts. The Northwest Evaluation Association's recent report predicting average student learning loss forecasts larger losses in math (one-half to two-thirds of a regular year's growth) than reading (one-third of a regular year's growth).

Even with large predicted learning losses, most students will remain within the typical grade range and be able to engage with typical class content next year. Typical differences in achievement between students in the same classes are already large. In grades 6-8, the typical difference in math achievement between students at the 25th and 75th percentiles at a given grade is 5-6 years' worth of learning. In grades 4 and 5, the difference is 2-3 years of learning, and in the primary grades the difference is one and a half years of learning. The students who are most likely to fall out of grade range include those who were already struggling and those in earlier grades where growth rates are steepest.

Previously low-achieving students will be least likely to have succeeded in online learning options, according to studies.

2. *Supportive school environments and strong teacher-student relationships speed recovery from learning loss.*

Strong relationships with adults in schools consistently predict students' capacity for resilient behavior, even in the face of traumatic experiences. Research on the stress of school closures and on the academic impact of Hurricane Katrina finds that while students initially experience some learning loss, the persistence of these losses depends on the receiving environment. Losses fade after a year or two when students return to stable schools. Losses tend to persist, especially in math, when students reenter chaotic or hostile environments. Students who have at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult are more likely to respond to adversity and succeed.

Students who were already facing adversity will struggle in the coming year for multiple reasons, including loss of learning from the prior year, trauma, long-term stress, and potentially declining family resources. Rates of illness and death and the economic impacts of the crisis are hitting African-American and Hispanic families the hardest.

Evidence-Based Strategies to Consider

- High-intensity tutoring that is directly tied to classroom content can substantially accelerate learning in both math and reading for even the most struggling students.
    - Schools that have restructured to provide around two hours of daily tutoring as part of an extended school day have been able to meaningfully close gaps in achievement.
- Extended learning time interventions, including weeklong acceleration academies staffed with highly effective teachers and some double dose math structures, show strong evidence of effectiveness.
- Strong systems to monitor for early student warning signs paired with strong norms and routines help students recover emotionally and engage academically.

Focusing on students' social-emotional learning is vital to building and rebuilding students' academic engagement. Incorporating well-conducted school-based SEL interventions have the potential to positively impact the culture and climate of classrooms, student well-being, and improve academic outcomes over time.

Ongoing monitoring will be critical to identifying struggles that are likely to emerge throughout the upcoming year. Systems that track attendance, assignment completion, and grades strengthen schools' ability to individualize services and match specific interventions to the needs of different groups of students.

Strategies to Avoid

- Compressing content or teaching extra content without changing the degree to which students are getting extra support has not been shown as effective in addressing learning loss.
    - In general, when teachers increase expectations without providing more supports, students' outcomes have been shown to decline, particularly low-achieving students' outcomes.
- Large-scale grade retention without substantial additional support for students has mixed results of effectiveness.
    - Retaining students, particularly in the middle grades, appears to increase the probability of dropping out of high school.
- Focusing exclusively on tier 2 and tier 3 interventions in RTI structures without a focus on core instruction and core supports, screening of students, and monitoring of student progress and responses to interventions has not shown clear gains.

Attendance and Membership

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

Attendance and Membership

Students and teachers participate in classes at the school site for the regular school day. Attendance is taken on a daily basis and students who are enrolled generate membership. Each school and grade has an established daily schedule. Students scheduled to participate for less than the full school day are reported as part time.

The core school day can vary among schools within a district/charter school and among grades within a school. Districts and charter schools' school calendars are expected to provide the minimum number of annual instructional hours:

- 350 for state-approved voluntary prekindergarten and school readiness plus
- 425 for half-day, daily or full-day alternate day kindergarten
- 850 for full-day, daily kindergarten
- 935 for grades 1-6

- 1,020 for grades 7-12

School districts' calendars must also provide a minimum of 165 instructional days for grades 1-11.

The school's learning plan must include a process to identify and follow-up with students experiencing frequent absences to assure that barriers to participating in instruction can be identified and resolved.

Unable to Attend at School Site

Students who, although not medically confined to their home, are unable to attend on-site may be provided direct instruction by an appropriately licensed teacher:

- In the student's home: each hour of direct instruction generates one hour of membership.
- Remote class participation: schools and students with the technology that allows students to remotely participate in their class for the full school day generate full-time membership. Membership for students who participate for less than the full school day is reduced proportionately.
- Packets of daily coursework may be provided to the student supplemented by daily contact from the teacher: each hour of coursework completed and turned in by the student generates an hour of membership.

Teachers must maintain daily participation records for each student that supports the student's attendance and membership reported. Daily teacher instructional contact may be provided via live interactive video calls, instructional management websites, email exchanges and/or phone calls. Documented interaction with a teacher must exist for the student to be considered in attendance.

Homebound

Students who are medically confined to their home for COVID-19 or any other illness or condition and as documented by a medical authority are eligible for homebound instruction provided directly by an appropriately licensed teacher. An average of one hour of direct instruction generates one membership day for homebound students. Homebound instruction could be provided in the student's home or remote synchronous instruction via any internet platform available to the teacher and student could be used.

Students who meet the homebound definition (refer to the criteria in the MARSS Manual) have an enrollment record that spans the first and last day of homebound instruction and are flagged as homebound. The attendance is reported as zero and the membership days is the number of hours of homebound instruction that was provided between the student's Status Start and End Dates.

State Approved Alternative Programs (SAAPs)

All students enrolled in a SAAP must meet the at-risk criteria found in Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.68, subdivision 2, and have a continual learning plan (CLP). Theirs and their teachers' daily schedule and/or transcript must support the membership hours reported for state aid.

Seat-based classes. Middle and secondary students enrolled in seat-based SAAP classes generate membership hours for their scheduled class time during the core school day. There must be student and teacher schedules that support the membership hours that are claimed. Membership is not generated for homework or time outside the scheduled class time.

Seat-based classes may also be scheduled outside the core school day; however, student and teacher schedules must support the extended day instruction and students must be working on different credits/classes than they are working on during the core school day. Individual student and teacher schedules must be maintained that support the additional membership hours and class size.

Attendance is taken for each hour of scheduled class time with the teacher.

Independent Study. High school students earning credits via independent study generate membership hours based on direct instructional time with the teacher and the completed credit or portion of a credit that the student earns and which is recorded on the transcript. Refer to the Independent Study Membership Hours Calculation for State-Approved Alternative Programs. Actual face to face instructional time with the teacher must constitute at least 20 percent of the membership hours claimed for a given student and credit. Therefore, membership hours for independent study credits cannot exceed five times the student's actual attendance time with the teacher.

Attendance is the documented time with the teacher and is delivered face to face. Records of actual time the student and teacher meet must be maintained and reported as attendance hours. Actual instructional time with the teacher must constitute at least 20 percent of the membership hours claimed for a given student and credit. Therefore, membership hours for independent study credits cannot exceed five times the student's actual attendance time with the teacher. If a student is awarded independent study credit for less than 20 percent of the membership hours, reduce the membership hours to equal five times the attendance hours. Membership hours must also be prorated if the student completed part of the credit in a prior school year.

Targeted Services. Students in grades kindergarten through eight and who choose to enroll in the program can be served in seat-based programs outside the core school day and/or school year, e.g., after school, during the summer, during school vacations, etc. Targeted services student membership cannot be generated during the core school day. Students generate membership for each scheduled hour of instruction.

Attendance is taken for each hour of scheduled participation. Individual student and teacher schedules must be maintained that support the additional membership hours and class size.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Prekindergarten students with an IEP generate membership hours for the general education participation provided by the school district at no cost to parents and for the time of any services required by their IEP that takes place in the home or in time or place outside the general education enrollment. Infants, Toddlers and preschool student receive services at home or in school or community-based settings.

Children who receive an evaluation for special education generate attendance and membership hours for the time of the activities required to complete the evaluation including writing the evaluation report and, for eligible children, up to two hours of time writing the IEP/IFSP..

Refer to the MARSS Manual, Appendix 6 – Reporting Early Childhood Special Education Students for more information.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) and School Readiness Plus (SRP)

Students attending a state-approved VPK or SRP program generate membership for their scheduled program. Students must participate for the full scheduled day to be eligible for state funding.

Refer to the MARSS Manual, Appendix 6 – Report Voluntary Prekindergarten Students and Appendix 6 – Reporting School Readiness Plus Students for more information.

Shared Time

Nonpublic school students who take core curriculum classes at the public school site are eligible to generate membership hours for the academic or special education services they receive from public school teachers. Special education services can be provided at the public school site, a neutral site or the nonpublic school. Under the on-site

model, nonpublic school students would participate in shared time classes just like the public school students. Shared time students are identified in MARSS with State Aid Category 16 or 17 depending on the residency in the serving district and the agreement with the resident district.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

Hybrid instruction could be provided in one or a combination of schedules depending on the school, classes and/or grade levels. Each student and teacher has a daily schedule that supports the length of the school day reported, the dates of instruction, the classes in which the student is enrolled and the student's Percent Enrolled as reported on MARSS. Students participating for less than the full scheduled school day are reported as part time.

The core school day can vary among schools within a district/charter school and among grades within a school. Districts and charter schools' school calendars are expected to provide the minimum number of annual instructional hours:

- 350 for state-approved voluntary prekindergarten and school readiness plus
- 425 for half-day, daily or full-day alternate day kindergarten
- 850 for full-day, daily kindergarten
- 935 for grades 1-6
- 1,020 for grades 7-12

School districts' calendars must also provide a minimum of 165 instructional days for grades 1-11. Schools have the option of extending the school year over more days but for shorter instructional days.

Different schools, grades or classes could implement different hybrid schedules within the same district or charter school:

- All students in a school, grade and/or class alternate between attending at the school site and participating in remote instruction on the same schedule. For example, all students in a given first grade classroom or middle school math class attend at the school site together on Monday, Wednesday and alternate Fridays between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. On Tuesday, Thursday and the opposite Friday, the teacher delivers instruction at the same time through distance learning to the same students who are off-site. All students in the class have the same daily schedule, but would alternate between on-site and remote/off-site days. This reduces the student's time in the classroom allowing for other classes to use the room on alternate days. It also allows all students the opportunity to attend at the school site.
- A subset of students in a class or classroom could attend at the school site for the scheduled class time while other students in the class or classroom participate remotely. All of the students in the class would receive the same instruction at the same time on the same schedule, i.e., some students in the classroom and some remotely/off-site. The students would alternate physical attendance schedules allowing all students who are able to attend at the school site. This allows for social distancing for students and teachers while giving all students the opportunity to attend at the school site.
- For schools and students without adequate technology, either of the first two scenarios could be used for on-site instruction. On days that the students are receiving distance learning off-site they are provided with recorded videos and/or coursework that they are expected to review and complete at home and return to the teacher the next time the class meets on-site. Attendance must be taken for both the on-site and off-site instructional days. A student could be considered in attendance on the off-site instructional day by turning in specific completed coursework the next time the class meets on site along with a record of teacher contact, e.g., phone, text message exchange, email exchanges, etc. on the off-site day.

Under any of these scenarios, students with special learning needs or situations could attend at the school site more frequently, up to full-time. Under any of these scenarios, students who are unable to attend at all for the on-site portion of the day or week could participate fully online by remote, synchronous instruction. The scheduled instructional time generates student membership, whether provided on-site or off-site. Students who are expected to attend for less than

the full school day are reported as part time. Daily attendance is taken whether the student is on-site or receiving instruction off-site. Students without documented participation for are reported as absent, including both the on-site and the off-site instructional time.

The school's hybrid learning plan must include a process to identify and follow-up with students experiencing frequent absences on their on-site and/or off-site time to assure that issues of equitable access or barriers to participating in instruction can be identified and resolved.

Unable to Attend at School Site

Students who, although not medically confined to their home, are unable to attend on-site may be provided direct instruction by an appropriately licensed teacher:

- In the student's home: each hour of direct instruction generates one hour of membership.
- Remote class participation: schools and students with the technology that allows students to remotely participate in their class for the full school day generate full-time membership. Membership for students who participate for less than the full school day is reduced proportionately.
- In the student's home via bundles of instructional material: the student generates membership for the number of days represented by the completed coursework and days of documented interaction with the teacher.

Teachers must maintain daily contact and participation records for each student that supports the student's attendance and membership reported. Daily teacher instructional contact may be provided via live interactive video calls, instructional management websites, email exchanges and/or phone calls. Documented interaction with a teacher must exist for the student to be considered in attendance.

Homebound

Students who are medically confined to their home for COVID-19 or any other illness or condition and as documented by a medical authority are eligible for homebound instruction provided directly by an appropriately licensed teacher. An average of one hour of direct instruction generates one membership day for homebound students. Homebound instruction could be provided in the student's home. Or, remote synchronous instruction via any internet platform available to the teacher and student could be used.

Students who meet the homebound definition (refer to the criteria in the MARSS Manual) have an enrollment record that spans the first and last day of homebound instruction and are flagged as homebound. The attendance is reported as zero and the membership days is the number of hours of homebound instruction that was provided between the student's Status Start and End Dates.

State Approved Alternative Programs (SAAPs)

All students enrolled in a SAAP must meet the at-risk criteria found in Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.68, subdivision 2, and have a continual learning plan (CLP). Theirs and the teachers' daily schedule and/or transcript must support the membership hours reported for state aid.

Seat-based classes. Middle and secondary students enrolled in seat-based SAAP classes generate membership hours for their scheduled class time during the core school day. In a hybrid model, students are scheduled to receive part of their instruction on-site and part off-site. There must be individual student and teacher schedules that support the membership hours that are claimed for both the on-site and off-site instructional time. Membership is not generated for homework or time outside the scheduled class time. For example, for a SAAP with a 6-period day that is scheduled to be six hours long, a single class generates an hour of membership for each day that it is scheduled for students enrolled; homework does not generate additional membership time beyond the 60 minute class time.

Seat-based classes may also be scheduled outside the core school day; however, student and teacher schedules must support the extended day instruction and students must be working on different credits/classes than they are working on during the core school day. Individual student and teacher schedules must be maintained that support the additional membership hours and class size.

Attendance is taken for each hour of scheduled class time during both the on-site and off-site instructional time.

Independent Study. High school students earning credits via independent study generate membership hours based on direct instructional time with the teacher and the completed credit or portion of a credit that the student earns and which is recorded on the transcript. Refer to the Independent Study Membership Hours Calculation for State-Approved Alternative Programs.

Attendance is the documented time with the teacher and could be delivered either face to face or virtually. Records of actual time the student and teacher meet must be maintained and reported as attendance hours. Actual instructional time with the teacher must constitute at least 20 percent of the membership hours claimed for a given student and credit. Therefore, membership hours for independent study credits cannot exceed five times the student's actual attendance time with the teacher. If a student is awarded independent study credit for less than 20 percent of the membership hours, reduce the membership hours to equal five times the attendance hours. Membership hours must also be prorated if the student completed part of the credit in a prior school year.

Targeted Services. Students in grades kindergarten through eight who chose to enroll and are specifically scheduled to attend a targeted services program outside the core school day and/or year, e.g., after school, during the summer, during school vacations, etc. generate membership hours for scheduled instructional time. Targeted services student membership cannot be generated during the core school day. Students generate membership for each scheduled hour of instruction on-site plus up to an equal number of hours of distance learning time with the teacher while the student is off-site.

Attendance is taken for each hour of scheduled participation that generates membership including both the on-site and off-site instructional days and times. Individual student and teacher schedules must be maintained that support the additional membership hours and class size.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Prekindergarten students with an IEP generate membership hours for the general education participation provided by the school district at no cost to parents and for the time of any services required by their IEP that takes place in the home or in time or place outside the general education enrollment. Infants, toddlers and preschool student may also receive services at home or in school or community-based settings.

Children who receive an evaluation for special education generate attendance and membership hours for the time of the activities required to complete the evaluation including writing the evaluation report and, for eligible children, up to two hours of time writing the IEP/IFSP.

Refer to the MARSS Manual, Appendix 6 – Reporting Early Childhood Special Education Students for more information.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) and School Readiness Plus (SRP)

Students attending a state-approved VPK or SRP program generate membership for their scheduled program. Students must participate for the full scheduled day to be eligible for state funding.

Refer to the MARSS Manual, Appendix 6 – Report Voluntary Prekindergarten Students and Appendix 6 – Reporting School Readiness Plus Students for more information.

Shared Time

Nonpublic school students who take core curriculum classes at the public school site are eligible to generate membership hours for the academic or special education services they receive from public school teachers. Special education services can be provided at the public school site, a neutral site or the nonpublic school. Under the on-site model, nonpublic school students would participate in shared time classes just like the public school students.

Shared time students participating in a shared time class at the public school site may generate membership hours for the off-site portion of that class. Shared time students are identified in MARSS with State Aid Category 16 or 17 depending on the residency in the serving district and the agreement with the resident district.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

Distance learning instruction can be provided in a manner where students receive daily, interactive instruction remotely while off-site. The manner in which instruction is provided can be flexible among schools and grades but daily instruction must be scheduled for all students irrespective of the model used for delivering that instruction. Teachers are expected to provide daily interactive instruction to their students. Students are expected to have interaction with their teacher(s) to be considered in attendance on a given day. Students must have actual documented student-teacher or parent-teacher contact on a given day to be reported as in attendance on that day, i.e., schools must take positive rather than passive attendance.

Attendance must be taken and recorded at least once per day based on a teacher's direct interaction with the student. This interaction could be participation in a video class or chat; a phone call with the student, or for younger students, with the parent; posting completed coursework to the learning management system; turning in completed coursework on a given day along with a record of teacher contact, e.g., phone call, text message exchange, etc. Students for whom no teacher has direct interaction on a given day are reported as absent for that day.

The school's distance learning plan must include a process to identify and follow-up with students experiencing frequent absences to assure that issues of equitable access or barriers to participating in instruction can be identified and resolved.

Each student and teacher has a daily schedule that supports the length of the school day reported, the dates of instruction, the classes in which the student is enrolled and the student's Percent Enrolled as reported on MARSS. Students participating for less than the full scheduled school day are reported as part time. For example, for a high school with a 6-period day that is scheduled to be six hours long, a single class generates an hour of membership for each day that it is scheduled for the students enrolled.

The core school day can vary among schools within a district/charter school and among grades within a school. Districts and charter schools' school calendars are expected to provide the minimum number of annual instructional hours:

- 350 for state-approved voluntary prekindergarten and school readiness plus
- 425 for half-day, daily or full-day alternate day kindergarten
- 850 for full-day, daily kindergarten
- 935 for grades 1-6
- 1,020 for grades 7-12

School districts' calendars must also provide a minimum of 165 instructional days for grades 1-11. Schools have the option of extending the school year over more days but for shorter instructional days.

Unable to Attend at School Site

Students who, although not medically confined to their home, would have been unable to attend on-site would be expected to participate in the same instructional activities and with the same attendance expectations as other students.

Homebound

Students who are medically confined to their home for COVID-19 or any other illness or condition and as documented by a medical authority are eligible for homebound instruction provided directly by an appropriately licensed teacher. An average of one hour of direct instruction generates one membership day for homebound students. Under the distance learning model homebound instruction would be provided by remote synchronous instruction via any internet platform available to the teacher and student, including a phone call.

Students who meet the homebound definition (refer to the criteria in the MARSS Manual) have an enrollment record that spans the first and last day of homebound instruction and are flagged as homebound. The attendance is reported as zero and the membership days is the number of hours of homebound instruction that was provided between the student's Status Start and End Dates. Two 30-minute phone calls or other synchronous teacher instruction constitutes one day of membership.

State Approved Alternative Programs (SAAPs)

All students enrolled in a SAAP must meet the at-risk criteria found in Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.68, subdivision 2, and have a continual learning plan (CLP). Theirs and their teachers' daily schedule and/or transcript must support the membership hours reported for state aid.

Seat-based classes. Middle and secondary students enrolled in seat-based SAAP classes generate membership hours for their scheduled classes during the core school day just like students in the traditional middle and high school. In a distance learning model, students receive all of their instruction off-site. Membership is generated for the scheduled class time. Additional membership is not generated for homework or time outside the scheduled class time. For example, for a SAAP with a 6-period day that is scheduled to be six hours long, a single class generates an hour of membership for each day that it is scheduled for students enrolled; homework does not generate additional membership time beyond the 60 minute class time.

Attendance must be taken and recorded for each hour of scheduled participation.

Seat-based classes scheduled for outside the core school day must also have a daily schedule and class time that supports the membership hours generated. The students' and teacher schedule must support that this is a different class and credit than is being taken during the core school day. Attendance must be taken for each class session.

Independent Study. High school students earning credits via independent study generate membership hours based on direct instructional time with the teacher and the completed credit or portion of a credit that the student earns and which is recorded on the transcript. Refer to the Independent Study Membership Hours Calculation for State-Approved Alternative Programs.

Attendance is the documented time with the teacher and may be delivered virtually. Records of actual time the student and teacher meet must be maintained and reported as attendance hours. Actual instructional time with the teacher must constitute at least 20 percent of the membership hours claimed for a given student and credit. Therefore, membership hours for independent study credits cannot exceed five times the student's actual attendance time with the teacher. If a student is awarded independent study credit for less than 20 percent of the membership hours, reduce the membership hours to equal five times the attendance hours. Membership hours must also be prorated if the student completed part of the credit in a prior school year.

Targeted Services. There would be no targeted services programs under a fully distance learning model.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Prekindergarten students with an IEP generate membership hours for the general education participation provided by the school district at no cost to parents and for the time of any services required by their IEP that takes place in the home or in time or place outside the general education enrollment.

During any period of distance learning, direct and indirect service and support may be provided to infants, toddlers and preschool children with disabilities participating in school or community-based settings children care settings and in their homes. Count as membership all time documented in the child's IEP/IFSP even if that plan reflects participation that is not taking place due to distance learning.

Children who receive an evaluation for special education generate attendance and membership hours for the time of the all of the activities associated with the initial evaluation including time writing the evaluation report and up to two hours of time spend writing the IEP/IFSP for a child determined eligible for service.

Refer to the MARSS Manual, Appendix 6 – Reporting Early Childhood Special Education Students for more information.

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) and School Readiness Plus (SRP)

Students attending a state-approved VPK or SRP program generate membership for their scheduled program. Students must participate for the full scheduled day to be eligible for state funding. During any period of distance learning, VPK/SRP attendance and membership information is generated through parent-verified learning experiences. Guidance on preparing distance learning attendance and membership verification documentation is provided directly to VPK/SRP program by Early Learning Services.

Refer to the MARSS Manual, Appendix 6 – Report Voluntary Prekindergarten Students and Appendix 6 – Reporting School Readiness Plus Students for more information.

Shared Time

Nonpublic school students who take core curriculum classes from the public school site are eligible to generate membership hours for the academic or special education services they receive from public school teachers. Special education services can be provided at the public school site, a neutral site or the nonpublic school. Under the distant learning model, nonpublic school students would participate in shared time classes just like the public school students and generate membership hours for the scheduled class time. Shared time students are identified in MARSS with State Aid Category 16 or 17 depending on the residency in the serving district and the agreement with the resident district.

Residency and Foreign Students

Students must be physically located in Minnesota to be eligible to generate student membership and state aid. Students who left Minnesota during the 2019-20 distance learning period and who may have participated in distance learning but have not returned to Minnesota are no longer eligible to generate Minnesota state aid.

Foreign exchange students who are not physically living in Minnesota are not eligible to generate Minnesota state aid. This includes residents of other countries who are not in Minnesota as well as students from Minnesota who are exchange students in other countries.

15-Consecutive Days' Absence

Daily attendance must be taken for all students at least once per day. A student can be considered in attendance:

- By participation in a video chat or class session with a teacher
- By a phone call with the student, or for younger students, the parent
- By submitting completed coursework on a given day

Students who are absent 15 consecutive days must be withdrawn until they return to attend classes at the school site or participate in daily, interactive instruction, depending on the method that is in place for the 2020-21 school year.

Assessment

System of Assessment

Assessment is used to describe many different procedures and tools used to determine what students know and can do. At the classroom and district level, assessment can transform student learning and instruction when implemented with clear learning objectives and progressions aligned to the Minnesota Academic Standards or the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress. A comprehensive system of assessment includes a balance of assessments that produce both formative and summative evidence of student learning at the classroom, district, and state levels.

In this period of distance learning and instruction, student learning has become more individualized. To support both the academic and social-emotional development of students during this time, schools and districts are encouraged to focus on the formative purposes of assessments and assignments. For early learning assessments, teachers will need to partner with families to obtain additional information about their child that can be used as part of the assessment. For educators, formative practices deepen the understanding of what students know and can do. For students, assessment and assignments focused on formative purposes support a clearer message about what is important to learn and know. When students receive a clear message of what they know and what to do next, assessment engages students in their learning, strengthens relationships between the teacher, student, and family, and can support teachers to closing existing achievement gaps – including gaps that may have widened in the classroom during this time of remote instruction.

As districts plan and prepare for the 2020-21 school year, MDE is developing additional materials and trainings to support districts in guiding students' learning and identifying instructional gaps, and to promote the use of ongoing assessment to inform instruction and build educator capacity to fully understand the whole student. For more information, please visit *Testing 1, 2, 3* > Get Involved > Request Professional Development for more professional development opportunities or for early learning assessments visit *Assessment in Early Childhood*.

Statewide Assessment

Minnesota's statewide assessments and the data generated from assessment results provide insight into how the districts and schools are succeeding in teaching students Minnesota's rigorous, high-quality standards. Minnesota's statewide assessments evaluate the implementation of the Minnesota Academic Standards and WIDA English Language Development Standards. These assessments are aligned to the standards and the results are used to identify the success and needed improvement of standards-based education across the state.

Statewide assessments (ACCESS, Alternate ACCESS, MCA, and MTAS) must be administered in a standardized manner and environment. MDE is preparing for 2020-21 statewide assessments to be administered in-person in school buildings. Schools and districts should consider how best health practices can be implemented while administering assessments in-person. At this time the 2020-21 Testing Calendar dates will be as planned.

Minnesota's Statewide Assessment System

Learning Model During Assessment Window	ACCESS and Alternate ACCESS	MCA and MTAS
In-Person Learning	Yes	Yes
Hybrid Learning	Yes, on in-person days	Yes, on in-person days
Distance Learning	No	No

MDE is developing materials and trainings for the 2020-21 school year to support districts' administration in schools. MDE is working to release the *2020-21 Procedures Manual* by the end of October. Details for trainings and other resources will be shared as the dates approach.

In the fall MDE will be conducting action research to accommodate statewide assessment in different learning scenarios in school years beyond 2020-21. The details are being finalized and will be shared as they are available.

Reference the English Learner section of this document for information regarding ACCESS scores and exiting criteria.

The weekly *Assessment Update* for District Assessment Coordinators (DACs) will resume Wednesday, June 24. Updates, including recruiting volunteers for fall action research, for statewide assessments administrations will be shared via the *Assessment Update*.

Contact mde.testing@state.mn.us for further questions about statewide assessment administrations.

Early Learning Assessments

See Early Learning section of this document.

Other Assessments

College Entrance Exams

Commissioner Ricker has consulted with Health Commissioner Jan Malcolm and staff at the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) regarding the use of school facilities for college entrance exams (ACT and SAT). Based on MDH's recommendation, MDE will permit school building use under the requirement that schools develop a protocol adhering to the state's indoor seating entertainment/meeting guidance and prepare a plan template that describes in detail the steps they are taking to mitigate the risks. Plan template can be found here: https://staysafe.mn.gov/industry-guidance/all-businesses.jsp.

A district or charter school's protocol needs to be available on their website and sent to every test participant.

As the situation unfolds and recommendations for the learning mode (distance, hybrid, or all in-person) are made for the fall this section will be updated. Adjustments may be necessary to prioritize health and may require modifications to plans for fall in-district and Saturday national testing dates.

Grading

In distance learning, assessment and grading have become part of the social context of learning. Assessment and grading also reflect the health of relationships between students, teachers, and families since it is part of the communication

between school and families. Frequent and meaningful feedback is essential to maintaining strong relationships with students and for motivating their learning and progress. The principles in MDE's *Creating Equitable Grading Systems During COVID-19* should be used as guidance as districts prepare for a new school year. Updates to the document will be provided in July.

MDE recommends districts involve teachers, parents and students in the review and revision of a grading system in preparation for the fall. Districts should continue to consider the principle of "do no harm" to avoid damage to both students' future education opportunities and struggles that students and families will experience during this time beyond their control. Grades should include evidence of mastery at the end of a unit or course and that evidence should be able to be collected in a variety of manners to allow students to demonstrate their understanding. The summer is an opportunity for schools and districts to reconsider assessments developed and their alignment to learning goals to best reflect the learning. The grades should not be the only feedback that students and families receive about their learning and systems of communication should be set up to share formative assessment information. The process for grading should be transparent and evident to students and parents.

Any decision made for all students may have potential unintended consequences that in the moment districts and schools may be blind to seeing. Rather than thinking through perceived inequities, consider different student scenarios. Sample scenarios are provided below but districts and schools are encouraged to think about individual students in a range of situations in their system. These discussions are potential to reconsider long-standing inequities that currently exist and can be a lever for policy changes beyond the 2020-21 school year.

Understanding the Implications of Selecting Specific Grading Options

Sample scenarios:

Student 1 is a senior is a 3.45 GPA and is planning to go to school out of state. The student has been improving over the three years in high school and has improved her performance. The out of state university provides scholarships dependent upon the high school GPA. The scholarship is provided for students with a 3.5 GPA or better. Decisions on if the student can earn a grade or a pass/fail will determine if the student has the opportunity to improve her GPA.

Student 2 is a sophomore who has a 3.8 GPA but is struggling with the distance learning/hybrid learning model. His parents both work full-time and feel it is the schools responsibility to educate the student. The student is shy and uncomfortable asking for support and does not request help from either the teachers or other students and therefore is struggling. A normal "A" student is now performing at a "C" level. Decisions on providing a grade or a pass/fail will impact the student's cumulative record.

Student 3 is a junior who made decisions with her counselor last winter to take a number of Advance Placement and College in the School courses to better prepare herself for college and also to improve her GPA through weighted grades. There are a limited number of weighted classes in the school due to size. The district is considering continuing a pass/fail policy for all students. Decisions on a single quarter/trimester/semester could provide inequitable final rankings dependent on when students take courses.

American Indian Students

American Indian Education Aid

For Indian Education Aid, districts and schools are encouraged to find alternative and innovative ways in which to provide Indian Education services. Suggested options include:

- Purchasing items for culture trunks
- Purchasing the Native authored books found on our Native authored book list
- One-on-one tutoring services or academic help
- Purchasing online or Native mail subscription services
- Purchasing Native language learning applications or materials
- Purchasing Native films for use at future student and family engagement activities
- Purchasing items for take-home cultural activity kits (beading, regalia-making)
- Purchasing early-bird registration for the 2020 MIEA Convention
- Family Engagement events
- Professional development for staff that is specific to American Indian history, language, and culture

Additional Information

Districts and schools are no longer required to submit an Intent to Participate (formally known as the letter of intent).

Districts and schools that are eligible to participate in the American Indian Education Aid Program for the coming school year have received an email that contains their American Indian student count and their American Indian Education Aid estimate. All districts that are required to have an American Indian Parent Advisory Committee have been notified of their obligation to do so, and have received emails from the Office of Indian Education in support of helping facilitate the process in your districts

The Indian Education Program Plan deadline continues to be October 1, 2020.

Annual Compliance

American Indian Parent Advisory Committees meet annually to issue their vote of concurrence or nonconcurrence. The annual compliance documents associated with this vote are submitted each year by March 1, however extensions were granted to many districts statewide. The deadline for these documents was June 15, 2020. Indian Education Aid eligibility is contingent upon this paperwork being filed with the Office of Indian Education. Please reach out if you have any questions on annual compliance paperwork or process.

English Learner Students

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

Meaningful access for English learners includes differentiated supports for academic content as well as strategies to increase English language acquisition. Content teachers should provide multiple representations of concepts, sentence frames, differentiated texts, and vocabulary instruction with an explicit focus on academic language. EL teachers should have clear strategies that provide structured opportunities for students to produce oral and written language. (This is difficult but of utmost importance in a hybrid learning context.) Collaboration between content and EL teachers should be prioritized and clearly planned for from the start. Additionally, don't overwhelm students and families. Start with technology that students and families know and slowly introduce new resources as students become comfortable. Provide enough support and personal contact to ensure that independent assignments can be completed without need for a family member to teach the content at home. Design short, clear assignments that allow for feedback, but tie them to a "big idea" or larger learning target tied to grade level standards.

Additionally, districts and charter schools must continue to provide in writing how English language development services will be provided to English learners during hybrid learning. This can be in the form of an appendix to the current LIEP plan. This appendix should include the amount and scope/type of stand-alone ELD instruction, co-taught or collaborative ELD instruction, and mainstream classes (i.e., how EL supports will be provided). Service and support

should be differentiated by ELP to account for beginning, intermediate, and advanced ELP at each grade level. Instruction should address ELs' needs in each language domain (reading, writing, listening and speaking).

The district or charter school should also clarify how it will communicate the information in the adapted LIEP plan with families.

Resources

- Guidance for Using Distance Learning for English Learner Programming
- Guide to Supporting Immigrant and Refugee-Experienced Families during COVID-19
- Identifying Students for English Learner Status During Distance Learning
- Working with Young, Multilingual Learners
- Guidance for Using Distance Learning for Migratory Children
- Equity Lens Reflection and Exploration Tool for Learning
- Minnesota (WIDA) English Language Development Standards

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

Meaningful access for English learners includes differentiated supports for academic content as well as strategies to increase English language acquisition. Content teachers should provide multiple representations of concepts, sentence frames, differentiated texts, and vocabulary instruction with an explicit focus on academic language. EL teachers should have clear strategies that provide structured opportunities for students to produce oral and written language. (This is difficult but of utmost importance in a distance learning context.) Collaboration between content and EL teachers should be prioritized and clearly planned for from the start. Additionally, don't overwhelm students and families. Start with technology that students and families know and slowly introduce new resources as students become comfortable. Provide enough support and personal contact to ensure that independent assignments can be completed without need for a family member to teach the content at home. Design short, clear assignments that allow for feedback, but tie them to a "big idea" or larger learning target tied to grade level standards.

Districts and charter schools must continue to provide in writing how English language development services will be provided to English learners during distance learning. This can be in the form of an appendix to the current LIEP plan. This appendix should include the amount and scope/type of distance service for stand-alone ELD instruction, co-taught or collaborative ELD instruction, and mainstream classes (i.e., how EL supports will be provided). Service and support should be differentiated by ELP to account for beginning, intermediate, and advanced ELP at each grade level. Instruction should address ELs' needs in each language domain (reading, writing, listening and speaking).

The district or charter school should also clarify how it will communicate the information in the adapted LIEP plan with families.

Resources

- Guidance for Using Distance Learning for English Learner Programming
- Guide to Supporting Immigrant and Refugee-Experienced Families during COVID-19
- Identifying Students for English Learner Status During Distance Learning
- Working with Young, Multilingual Learners
- Guidance for Using Distance Learning for Migratory Children
- Equity Lens Reflection and Exploration Tool for Learning
- Minnesota (WIDA) English Language Development Standards

Students Experiencing Homelessness

Whether in-person, hybrid learning or distance learning, students experiencing homelessness will have new and urgent needs. SchoolHouse Connection, a national non-profit organization working to overcome homelessness through education, recommends the following considerations for fall 2020:

- Embed questions and information about homelessness in all school or district outreach efforts, including: food pick-up or delivery; mailing of learning packets; emails or other communications to all parents/students; school/district automated calling systems; and the school/district website, Facebook page, and other social media.
- Ensure that students experiencing homelessness are enrolled immediately, as required by the McKinney-Vento Act, whether school is online, in-person, or a hybrid model.
- Provide registrars and other enrollment personnel adequate training on the McKinney-Vento Act.
- Ensure online enrollment systems are accessible and understandable to parents and youth experiencing homelessness, with information about the McKinney-Vento Act. Online systems must provide a way for parents and students to enroll without typically required documents, such as proof of residency, health records, or guardianship, and an internal mechanism to refer potentially homeless students to the liaison.
- Remember that students experiencing homelessness may face needs and challenges beyond their homelessness particularly if they are students of color, with disabilities, and/or LGBTQ+. Center equity in all reopening plans and work with colleagues in special education, school safety, diversity, inclusion, and multiculturalism to ensure holistic responses.
- Prioritize students experiencing homelessness for resources that will be provided to all students, or to low-income students. Deliver or mail resources to students who lack transportation to pick them up.
- Expand the amount and uses of the Title I, Part A homeless set-aside as needed, to ensure it is adequate to address new barriers and increases in homelessness created by COVID-19.
- Target CARES Act funding (ESSER and GEER) to students experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure students experiencing homelessness have equitable access to all school activities, whether online or in-person.
- Prioritize students experiencing homelessness for devices and connectivity that will be provided to all students, or to low-income students. Deliver devices with meals or via U.S. mail when families and students cannot reach pick-up locations.
- Provide students with unlimited high-speed data, including through hotspots and cellphone data and minutes, to ensure students can complete all assignments and stay connected with liaisons, teachers, mentors, and peers.
- Plan to meet learning challenges beyond basic connectivity and devices, such as providing portable chargers for students without access to electricity; offering in-person or virtual supplemental academic support; and maintaining mentorship relationships with youth experiencing homelessness without a parent or guardian, in particular.
- Provide insurance for devices provided to McKinney-Vento students, recognizing the increased risk of theft and breakage due to unstable and unsafe living situations.
- Screen for trauma when school restarts, either in person or online. Simple, well-researched instruments include UCLA's COVID-19 Screen for Child/Adolescent PTSD and the Structured Trauma-Related Experiences and Symptoms Screener.
- Invite community mental health providers to support students virtually and/or on-site at schools.
- Implement trauma-informed training and practices available from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, ACES Aware, or similar resources. A recent review of programs with proven track records, many of which offer free tools and free online training, can help schools get started.
- Adopt positive school discipline practices school- and district-wide.

- Connect with community agencies providing food, health care, mental health care, shelter, and housing to families or youth, to find out what is available and how your students and families can access it.
- Use referral forms that can be completed and submitted online, or emailed to the liaison, for providers to connect families and students with liaisons.
- If 211 or another resource referral service is not available locally, create an on-line resource list that families and youth can access on a mobile device, and that community partners can update directly, such as through a google doc.
- In rural areas in particular, connect with faith communities, civic organizations, and youth groups that might be able to share McKinney-Vento information with families and offer support or funding for basic needs and distance learning equipment.

Additional Resources

- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)
- The Law & Non-Regulatory Guidance
- Posters and other materials
- Information about transportation funding for homeless students on the MDE website
- Information about the McKinney-Vento Act on the MDE website
- Minnesota Continuum of Care Information

Questions? Contact mde.homelessed@state.mn.us.

Migrant Students

The Migrant Education Program (MEP) is authorized by Part C of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended (ESEA). The MEP provides formula grants to state educational agencies (SEAs) to establish and improve, directly or through local operating agencies (LOAs), education programs for migratory children.

This guidance is meant to provide clarity regarding expectations for districts and charter schools when enrolling and educating migratory children in the fall of 2020. It is intended for use by all staff providing and/or coordinating supports for migratory children and their families.

Purpose of the Migrant Education Program

Following are the five main purposes of the U.S. Migrant Education Program (MEP):

- Assist states in supporting high-quality and comprehensive educational programs and services during the school year, and, as applicable, during summer or intersession periods, that address the unique educational needs of migratory children.
- Ensure that migratory children who move among the states are not penalized in any manner by disparities among the states in curriculum, graduation requirements, and challenging state academic standards.
- Ensure that migratory children receive full and appropriate opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards that all children are expected to meet.
- Help migratory children overcome educational disruption, cultural and language barriers, social isolation, various health-related problems, and other factors that inhibit their ability to succeed in school.
- Help migratory children benefit from state and local systemic reforms.

Definition of a Migratory Child

According to sections 1115(c)(1)(A) (incorporated into the Migrant Education Program [MEP] by sections 1304(c)(2), 1115(b), and 1309(3) of the ESEA, and 34 C.F.R. § 200.103(a)), a child is a "migratory child" if the following conditions are met:

The child is not older than 21 years of age; and

- The child is entitled to a free public education (through grade 12) under State law, or
- The child is not yet at a grade level at which the LEA provides a free public education, and

The child made a qualifying move in the preceding 36 months as a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher, or did so with, or to join a parent/guardian or spouse who is a migratory agricultural worker or a migratory fisher; and

With regard to the qualifying move identified in paragraph 2, above, the child moved due to economic necessity from one residence to another residence, and—

- From one school district to another; or
- In a state that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or
- Resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence.

Program Delivery

The following are possible teaching delivery options for any scenario in the fall:

- 1-to-1 daily instruction by a licensed teacher to provide additional structure for migratory students whose parents may not be able to provide academic assistance either virtually or face-to-face while maintaining physical distance according to CDC or MDH guidelines.
- Whole group virtual classroom meeting a minimum of 3 times a week to build community for students who experience social isolation due to high mobility, compounded by the effects of COVID-19
- Daily or weekly phone call by the teacher/para to check in and provide instruction – consider:
    - Whether instruction will be provided in Spanish or other languages
    - What support parents will receive to support their child academically.
    - How parents will be supported in navigating.
    - Most effective way communicate with parent (e.g., via email, text, WhatsApp, Facebook, etc.). Survey parents to determine the best mode of communication.

For more information and resources, see the Guidance for Using Distance Learning for Migratory Children document on the MDE webpage.

Students Receiving Special Education Services

For guidance related to special education, see the Students Receiving Special Education section under Student and Family Support.

For special education guidance related to early childhood, see the Early Childhood Special Education section under Early Learning.

Early Learning

Early Childhood Screening

Some of these considerations are impacted by whether or not social distancing is lifted and therefore will need to be revisited periodically. In the event that social distancing is not lifted in your community, your district would then follow the distance learning model to provide components online, by phone or mail. It is important to coordinate with Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and Early Childhood programs in the community.

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

As you assess your facility's capacity to provide face-to-face screening during COVID-19, Screening Coordinators may consider these things:

- Risks to families when they come in for screening
- Strategies in screening operations to mitigate these risks
- Local level of COVID-19 illnesses
- Impact of COVID-19 illness on screening staff
- How do you limit the number of families in one location at a time?
- How do you help families meet with the least number of staff?
- How do you best limit the amount of face-to-face time?

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

Since the Early Childhood Screening program involves face-to-face interactions, the distance learning model should be followed until social distancing is lifted.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

Vision: To ensure all Minnesota children are at their optimal health and development and prepared to learn.

Purpose: To identify and refer children who need further health or developmental evaluations and to connect children and families to early learning opportunities.

Early Childhood Screening components which may be provided online, by phone or mail:

- Collect the parent or caregiver report of their child's social emotional health: ASQ: SE-2.
- Collect the parent or caregiver report of their child's development: ASQ: 3 is an optional tool.
- Complete vision history, hearing assessment and history and request copies of screenings completed by health provider if available or ask parent if child passed these screenings at their last well-child check.
- Request the height and weight of child if known.
- Review immunizations.
- Assure children and families have a health care provider and health coverage.
- Review of risk factors which may influence learning.
- Follow up with parents/caregivers or clinics, if there is a signed release of information form, on past referrals by phone, text or mail with self-addressed, stamped envelope.
- Engage interpreters, where needed.
- Summary interview with the caregiver including referrals and resources.
- Provide Children and Families Resources in COVID-19 response.

When face-to-face screening resumes, these previously completed components will make the visits quicker.

Guidance for Early Childhood Screening Programs during COVID-19 has further information including questions and answers.

Providing screening while protecting children and families

Consider these actions to help provide a safe environment for children and families when screening:

- Follow Schools and Child Care: COVID-19 guidance posted by MDH (follow all exclusion or deny entry, safety and well-being, masking, handwashing, cleaning and disinfecting guidelines, assure your district program has recommended supplies and check back often as guidance is continually updated).
- Stagger appointments and limit visits so that only one child/parent/guardian is in the room at a time.
- Lower the number of families on-site at any one time.
- Close the registration area and have parents/guardians check in by phone from the parking lot.
- Call families the day of screening to review any symptoms or exposures.
- Reschedule appointments for families who are sick.
- Cross train staff so families interact with less staff members.
- Ensure availability of extra screening kits in order to sanitize and use plastic instead of cardboard items.
- Consider ways to accommodate children or families at high risk. This may mean offering a virtual screening with plans to follow up on vision, hearing or the observational tool at a later date.
- Communicate with parents in their home language how the program is following CDC and MDH recommendations in order to reduce parent/caregiver concerns.
- Consider that COVID-19 may impact staffing. Make sure that new staff are trained in as many areas as their profession allows.

Helpful resources for staff

- CDC school guidance including Spanish
- Supporting Mental Well-being during COVID-19

Early Childhood Family Education and School Readiness

As many Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and School Readiness programs know from their responses to COVID-19, distance learning required programs to rapidly innovate in order to continue their programming and services to children and families. While planning and preparing for the 2020-21 school year presents new challenges, it also presents new opportunities for early childhood programs to provide high-quality programming and services. To help you plan for the 2020-21 school year, below is guidance on the three scenarios (in-person learning, hybrid learning, distance learning). However, before you start planning for the scenarios, there are some important elements to consider. These elements can play a vital role in each of the three scenarios:

- **Relationships:** How will your program build relationships with children and families in the community? Relationships are at the heart of our work with families and their children. Consider ways that you will connect with families in your community. One way programs do this is by reaching out to families and asking them how they are doing (e.g., a wellness check-in). Another strategy is to ask families what is most important to them and their child. How are you building trust with families and ensuring that families are confident they have a school partner they can rely on?
- **Outreach:** Outreach is proactive, purposeful contact with others outside of your organization or program. How does your program define outreach and how has COVID-19 influenced your outreach plan and efforts? How are you prioritizing families who have not been connected with through previous outreach efforts?

- **Collaboration:** To most effectively meet the needs of children and families, collaboration must be an essential component of our efforts. Especially during these stressful times, be sure to discuss ways to support social-emotional learning and mental health. Collaboration efforts might include:
    - Consult with your parent advisory council.
    - Partnering with families to create goals and monitor progress.
    - Connecting services with the efforts of other organizations or programs (e.g. Head Start, WIC, local hospital, school district, Adult Basic Education (ABE), etc.).
    - Collaboration with groups (e.g. childcare providers, pediatricians, kindergarten teachers, etc.).
    - Collaboration with specific audiences (e.g. parents of children birth to age 5, parents of multiples, parents of children with special needs, grandparents, Hispanic parents, parents of newborns, etc.).
- **Equity:** How does equity impact your relationships, outreach, and collaboration efforts? How do you evaluate and improve your equity efforts?
- **Two-generation approach:** Through all of your programming and services, how are you including parents/guardians and other adults? ECFE is already a two-generation program. How can strengths and practices of ECFE, and the skills of parenting educators, be woven throughout your early childhood programming and services? In this approach, family engagement is not a supplemental service, but a foundational component built into all of your programming.
- **Cohort model:** A cohort model keeps children, families, and teachers together in consistent groups throughout the year. At the beginning of the year, a classroom (can be virtual) is established. The size of the cohort will depend on the type of programming. The cohort should stay together for twelve months before moving up to the next classroom/grade. Benefits of cohorts include: optimal continuity and stability for children and families, the opportunity to develop deeper friendships/relationships, increased trust, and increased opportunities for programs to individualize their programming to better meet child and family needs. How might you utilize a cohort model across your early childhood programs? How would schedules impact cohorts (e.g., if a School Readiness class goes the entire year but ECFE is one semester or a designated number of weeks)?
- **Transitions:** Early childhood programs are accustomed to focusing on transitions. With your planning, pay particular attention to the role of transitions for children and families. Also, consider transitions for your staff and programs. For example, what if you transition from an in-person model to a distance learning model during the school year?

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

For your in-person learning planning, the first priority will be health and safety considerations. This will include MDH 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Schools as well as CDC guidelines. Of course, your planning should be in accordance with your district's policies and procedures. Some other factors to consider include:

- Enrollment assistance: Depending on the number of sections and duration, districts should consider the needs of families in their district, especially those with identified risk factors.
- Prioritize classroom slots: this is particularly important if there are space or classroom size limitations.
- Distance learning: Consider the role that distance learning, or outreach via technology, can play in your programming. What can be done to enhance your programming and services?
- Access: Consider access to your programming and services. This is especially true if there are limitations to district transportation.
- Cohort model: How would you group children and families? What would class time look like if you utilized cohorts?

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

A hybrid model combines in-person learning and hybrid learning. This option may apply to all participants or may be tailored to children with the highest needs. For example, if classroom space is limited, you may decide to focus your in-

person programming on those children and families who would benefit the most from in-person approaches (while additional children and families would be served through distance learning approaches).

- Like the in-person option, health and safety are the first priority.
- Enrollment assistance: this includes planning and outreach to families to determine who would most benefit.
- Distance learning: Consider the role that distance learning will play in your programming. Are some children and families doing in-person classes while others are doing distance learning? Or, will your model be one that supplements in-person classes with distance learning?
- Access: Consider access to your programming and services. This is especially true if there are limitations to district transportation, technology or classroom space.
- Cohort model: How would you achieve consistency and coherence between the In-Person and Hybrid approaches? How do you ensure and maintain clear, effective communication?

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

- Along with your staff, determine what worked well during your spring 2020 distance learning and what needs to be enhanced. Numerous early childhood administrators commented on the success of their online parenting contacts/classes. How will you utilize parenting educators not only in ECFE, but also in other programs and partnerships (e.g., child care, Head Start, community providers)? How will you utilize parenting educators throughout the age span prenatal to third grade?
- Ensure children and families have access to technology and environments that support full participation in distance learning. Also, pay particular attention to collaborations and what families may need with regard to comprehensive services.
- Ensure children and families know how to use the platforms and online resources that you use. If families do not have access, how will you help ensure families have access to their technology needs? Do you have staff with the expertise to assist families?
- Work towards consistency and coherence in your distance learning. For example, ensure all teachers are using the same distance learning platforms.
- Consider logistics of your programming, including staffing and program costs. For example, some School Readiness programs were impacted last year by the absence of tuition. If your program is not able to charge tuition, how will this impact the programming and services you are able to provide? If you decide to use a cohort model for distance learning, how will you assign staff to the cohorts? Do you have human resources available to meet the needs of diverse learners and families?

Attending to the Mental Health of Young Children

Events of the last several months can take a toll on young children. They may have experienced loss of friends as they moved from school or child care to staying safe at home. They may have had loved ones who were sick or lost a job. They may have witnessed violence in person, by listening to others or watching television. These can cause fears and anxiety. Young children are just learning to express their feelings with accuracy. Because of this, they let you know how they are feeling through their behaviors.

Effects of Trauma: Managing Challenging Behaviors provides additional information about children who have been exposed to trauma and ways to support them.

Young children may react to stressful situations in one or more of the following ways:

- Change in regular sleep patterns including nightmares
- Change in eating habits
- Becoming clingy, whiny, angry or sad

- Physical complaints without illness
- Fears (of the dark, being alone or strangers)

When children experience stress that is excessive and prolonged it can interfere with their developing brains. The Center on the Developing Child describes three levels of stress:

1. Positive- which helps a child learn to cope with challenges
2. Tolerable- when a child has a supportive environment and relationships with adults
3. Toxic- when stress is prolonged and there is no adult emotionally available for support

Support the parent and families members to recognize the signs of a child's stress and interpret behaviors as expression of need and attempts to cope. Help adults surrounding a child understand their role in teaching a child to regulate their emotions and behaviors.

The Understanding Stress and Resilience in Children video series explains how high levels of stress can impact a child's well-being.

Children who are more resilient in the face of adversity are better able to cope with negative situations that arise throughout their lives. One critical factor in building a child's resilience is the presence of adults who support them during hardships.

Relationships with family and community members who provide warmth and support during challenging situations help a child learn strategies for coping. Helping children learn these strategies early can have lifelong impacts

In-Person Learning, Hybrid Learning and Distance Learning

- Establish routines that help build a sense of security by being able to predict what is coming next.
- Build sense of community.
- Strive to understand the child in the context of family, culture and community.
- Sensory activities can be calming as well as slow repetitive actions. Help children learn to take deep breaths when overly excited or anxious. Pace a child's day by alternating a boisterous activity followed by a calming one. Help children transition with calming activities.

National Association for School Psychologists offers practical suggestions for helping children cope with changes that result from COVID-19.

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

It's reasonable to expect that all children will experience some trepidation as they return to school or child care after being at home with family for a number of months. It may take some children additional time to adjust. These children may experience sadness as they separate from their parent and family members that lasts longer into the day than their peers or for additional days and weeks.

- Provide additional comfort and support for children experiencing difficulties.
- Plan favorite activities as distractions.
- Pair the child with another who can be a buddy.
- Spend time early in the day and often to demonstrate support.

If a child appears to be anxious or experiences prolonged reactions to separations, it may be time for the family to seek additional support through conversation with a parent educators in ECFE or a mental health consultant.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

It may take longer for children to develop trust and adjust to expectations in a learning program when their schedule alternates between days away and days at school. While this is not new to many early childhood settings, the additional stress of recent months, may extend the length of the transition. As children adjust they may continue to demonstrate signs of stress.

If the learning program differs significantly from the environment the child has been in, the child might experience additional stress. Find ways to learn about what the child is used to and ways to bring this into the learning program.

- Learn about the child's family, culture and preferred language. Find ways to incorporate it into your program.
- Learn about the environment the student will experience on days away from school. Are there adults who can support them emotionally and with their learning?
- Manage your expectations about what will be accomplished on days away from school.
- Recognize the value in unstructured time for rest, play and learning.
- Offer touch points on days you do not have in- person interactions.
- Be creative in how you reach out or in how you ask families to respond to you.
- Take a picture of you and the child to have at home.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

It may be harder in a distance learning environment to determine a child's well-being. Watch and listen for signs of stress.

To help eliminate stressful elements, find out what families need and support them in locating resources. Resources like food shelves, medical resources, unemployment insurance and connecting with other parents, family and friends can help parents be better positioned to help their child. Parents can help children cope with stress if they are able to cope with it themselves.

Family Wellbeing Strategies describe what early learning programs can do to support a family's well-being.

Many educators may be concerned about engaging in distance learning when there haven't been opportunities to build relationships first. It will be important to find ways to develop a caring relationship with each child to help buffer against stress they might be experiencing.

- Use open ended questions that build relationships with the child and the learning partner.
- Engage the learning partner. Build on strengths by identifying learning taking place during play and everyday activities. Suggest ways to expand it the next time they engage in the same activity.
- Strive for 5 back and forth comments in conversations.
- Follow the child's lead.
- Add touch points such as using the child's name frequently, ensure you are side by side on the screen, and reach out through activities such as individualized sidewalk messages, post cards or phone calls.
- Add support and additional interactions to ensure each child is feeling a sense of belonging.
- Determine if there is another adult who can serve as a learning partner if the parent is not available or offer additional support yourself.
- Map relationships each child has with a staff member. Perhaps someone else on staff has a relationship with an older child in the family and you can do some side-by-side interactions to start with.
- Ensure that someone is personally in touch with each child multiple times throughout each week.

Early Learning for Children Experiencing Homelessness

Outreach to young children in families experiencing homelessness is critical as districts develop implementation plans for fall. Districts and charter schools should make sure their McKinney-Vento liaisons are aware of what services will be offered, in what format in early learning, and how to connect families of preschool-age children to the available services.

Community partners, nonpublic schools, charter schools, Head Start and local child care providers should be consulted in district plans to support children and families experiencing homelessness. Knowing the opportunities that exist in a community helps in better supporting children and families experiencing homelessness. The Pathways to Partnership in Early Childhood document provides early childhood program information.

Guidance per model to support children experiencing homelessness:

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

Districts should consider how the in-school time aligns with the needs of children whose families are experiencing homelessness.

- Enrollment assistance: Depending on the number of sections and duration, districts should consider the needs of families in their district that may be experiencing homelessness through:
    - Prioritizing classroom slots: Depending on the funding source, such as early learning scholarships, children experiencing homelessness are considered a priority for awarding. Enrollment in SRP programs and early learning scholarship funding give priority to children experiencing homelessness and VPK programs can set local criteria for selecting students to be in a VPK-funded seat, and should consider prioritizing children experiencing homelessness.
    - Minimize transitions and increase dosage when feasible: Review funding sources that may be blended to create additional dosage and minimize transitions for a child experiencing homelessness. Examples could be full school day programming, extended day child care, or wrap around services.
    - Transportation for preschool age children experiencing homelessness should be considered. For districts receiving VPK or SRP funds, transportation is required. For districts that have Pathway II funding, transportation is an allowable expense. This is true for a child with a Pathway I scholarship as well, though funds first are awarded to the child and not the district or charter school. The McKinney-Vento Act requires LEAs to provide transportation services to the school of origin, which includes public preschools. Accordingly, transportation to the school of origin must be provided even if a homeless preschooler who is enrolled in a public preschool in one LEA moves to another LEA that does not provide widely available or universal preschool.
    - Coordination of meals when appropriate for district enrolled children.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

As with an in-person learning model, districts should consider how the in-school time aligns with the needs of children whose families are experiencing homelessness.

- Enrollment assistance: Depending on the number of sections and duration, districts should consider the needs of families in their district that may be experiencing homelessness through:
    - Prioritizing classroom slots: Depending on the funding source, children experiencing homelessness are considered a priority for enrollment. Enrollment in SRP programs and early learning scholarship funding give priority to children experiencing homelessness and VPK programs can set local criteria for selecting students to be in a VPK-funded seat, and should consider prioritizing children experiencing homelessness.
    - Minimize transitions and increase dosage when feasible: Review funding sources that may be blended to create additional dosage and minimize transitions for a child experiencing homelessness. Examples could be full school-day programming, extended-day child care, or wraparound services.

- Transportation for preschool age children experiencing homelessness should be considered. For districts receiving VPK or SRP funds, transportation is required. For districts that have Pathway II funding, transportation is an allowable expense. This is true for a child with a Pathway I scholarship as well, though funds first are awarded to the child and not the district or charter school. The McKinney-Vento Act requires LEAs to provide transportation services to the school of origin, which includes public preschools. Accordingly, transportation to the school of origin must be provided even if a homeless preschooler who is enrolled in a public preschool in one LEA moves to another LEA that does not provide widely available or universal preschool.
- Coordination of meals when appropriate and allowed for district- or school-enrolled children, including distance learning days

- Non-school time learning/distanced learning: In the hybrid model, for days that the child is not in the classroom, consider means and methods of supplementing learning that do not create an additional burden on the family. Ensure students have access to technology and environments that support full participation in distance learning.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

Students experiencing homelessness will have additional challenges without access to physical school buildings and regular person to person interaction. Opportunities that support participation and follow-up with children and their families is a critical component to plan.

- Create whole family resources that are accessible for families that may temporarily live in temporary housing in or outside the family's home district.
- Coordinate meals for district or school-enrolled children, including distance learning days.
- Ensure students have access to technology and environments that support full participation in distance learning.

Early Childhood Special Education

Scenario 1: In-person learning for all students

District response to Part C referrals

Accept referrals and contact each family. During the initial contact explain that:

"Evaluation activities and early intervention services will be conducted in settings that can ensure compliance with guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, including social distancing. We will develop a plan to complete your child's initial evaluation through a combination of virtual and school-based activities. If your child is eligible for services, you will be part of a team that will determine the most appropriate service setting or settings. I can share information about our program with you on the phone and then either email or mail you hard copy information."

Follow up by emailing or mailing the procedural safeguards and, as appropriate:

- Prior written notice to screen
- Prior written notice to evaluate
- Authorization for release of information

Part C post-referral actions

If a screening tool is warranted because there is no diagnosis, no prior screening or other data indicating a suspected disability is available, a screener completed by a parents such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE) can help determine if the team will propose an initial evaluation.

If eligibility can be established through a review of records because of a diagnosed condition or documentation of a previous evaluation, complete the initial child assessment through family interview and virtual observation. Propose in-person assessment activities to take place in a school setting following MDH guidelines. If the family is uncomfortable with in-person activities due to underlying health conditions among family members and you are unable to complete the assessment without a face-to-face meeting or observation, develop an interim Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) with the family.

If screening data suggests a disability is suspected or if an evaluation is requested by a parent, complete the evaluation and, if eligibility is determined, the assessment, using a combination of interview, virtual observation and in-person activities in a school setting.

Developing initial and annual IFSPs, and conducting periodic reviews

All meetings of the IFSP team will be conducted electronically or in settings that can ensure compliance with guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, including social distancing. If the meeting is held electronically, any written information you would typically provide to a parent during an in-person meeting should be mailed or emailed to the parent in advance.

An IFSP must be reviewed at least every six months. Progress on IFSP outcomes is provided by families through the period of intervention. Ongoing assessments of a child's development should be conducted following the schedule agreed to in the Prior Written Notice for the initial provision of service and are to be conducted using information (verbal and video) provided by parents along with virtual and in-person observations made in school settings.

If a parent wishes to postpone services until all services can be provided in the home, document this decision in your log notes. Report the voluntary withdrawal in MARSS using status end code 26.

Delivery of IFSP Services

Early intervention services will be conducted in settings that can ensure compliance with guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, including social distancing.

Transitions from Part C for children not potentially for Part B

As with all Part C to Part B transitions, the members of the IFSP team must first consider whether the child is potentially eligible for services under Part B. If the child is not deemed to be potentially eligible for Part B, the team may convene a meeting virtually or in person following all MDH guidelines. Document transition steps and services in the IFSP. Part C eligibility and services will end at age 3.

Transitions from Part C to Part B for children who are potentially eligible for Part B

The transition conference must be held before the child is 2 years, 9 months and will be conducted electronically or in settings that can ensure compliance with guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, including social distancing. If the meeting is held electronically, any written information you would typically provide to a parent during an in-person meeting should be provided to the parent in advance.

Obtain consent and complete Part B initial evaluation through a review of records or in settings and using strategies that are accordance with MDH guidance.

The IEP team must meet to develop an initial IEP within 30 days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services. If the meeting is to be held in-person, follow MDH guidelines. The IEP should be in place by the child's third birthday.

Post referral actions: Part B

Accept all referrals and make initial contact with the families. Send by email or mail a copy of the procedural safeguards and the following, as appropriate:

- Prior written notice for screening
- Evaluation plan and prior written notice
- Authorization for release of information

If parents choose to close out the referral (decline consent for evaluation), ask the family if they would be interested in re-referring in a month or two. If so, make a note in your calendar/records to make contact with them at a later date.

In cases where use of a screening tool is warranted (no diagnosis, prior screening or other data indicating a suspected disability is available), a parent assessment tool such as the ASQ or ASQ-SE could be used to determine if the team will propose moving forward with an evaluation.

If a disability is suspected due to a diagnosed condition, prior screening results, or an evaluation is requested by a parent, complete the evaluation in accordance with MDH guidance.

Report membership and attendance for evaluation following MARSS guidance.

Meeting timelines within the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

The OCR/OSERS supplemental fact sheet states: "As a general principle, during this unprecedented national emergency, public agencies are encouraged to work with parents to reach mutually agreeable extensions of time, as appropriate."

Conducting IEP team meetings

The IEP team must meet to develop an initial IEP within 30 days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services and meet at least annually to review and revise the IEP. If the meeting is to be held in-person, follow MDH guidelines.

Implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

IEP services will be conducted in settings that can ensure compliance with guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, including social distancing.

Reevaluations under Part B

In the event that a reevaluation becomes necessary for a preschool child, complete the reevaluation following guidance provided by the Division of Special Education and guidance provided by MDH guidance.

Reporting progress of students on IEPs

The United States Department of Education has not waived progress reporting requirement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on the district's progress reporting period, data would reflect the student's IEP, as well as progress toward goals and objectives in any IEP amendments or individualized distance learning plans developed with parental participation and consent during the extended distance learning period.

Transition from Developmental Delay at age seven

Complete Part B reevaluations in accordance with MDH guidance and in accordance with existing guidance provided by MDE. To remain eligible for services under Part B a student must meet initial eligibility under another disability category and demonstrate an educational need for service.

A new enrollment record must be created in MARSS that includes the student's new disability category. End the existing record with a status end code of 99.

May districts conduct Home Visits?

A school district or charter school may provide early childhood special education services in settings documented in the child's IEP or IFSP to the extent that each setting supports adherence to current guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health.

Nothing in this guidance should be construed to encourage or require school staff, students, or families in at-risk categories to act inconsistently with public health recommendations or the advice of their doctors.

Outcome Measurement

Districts remain responsible to report outcomes for families exiting Part C after six months or more of early intervention service. Districts are also responsible to report item-level assessment data or child outcome summary ratings for each child that entered or exited Part C or preschool special education following existing reporting guidance.

Scenario 2: Hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits

District response to Part C referrals

Accept referrals and contact each family. During the initial contact explain that:

"We are currently unable to come into your home but are able to complete the initial evaluation through a combination of virtual and school-based activities. If your child is eligible for services, you will be part of a team that chooses among distance learning and school-based options. I can share information about our program with you on the phone and then either email or mail you hard copy information."

Follow up by emailing or mailing the procedural safeguards and, as appropriate:

- Prior written notice to screen
- Prior written notice to evaluate
- Authorization for release of information

If a family chooses to close the referral ask if they would like a re-referral when completely in-person instruction is allowed. If yes, make a note in your calendar/records to make contact with them when we are providing in-person services.

Part C post-referral actions

If a screening tool is warranted because there is no diagnosis, no prior screening or other data indicating a suspected disability is available, a screener completed by a parents such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE) can help determine if the team will propose an initial evaluation.

If eligibility can be established through a review of records because of a diagnosed condition or documentation of a previous evaluation, complete as much of the initial child assessment as possible through family interview and virtual observation. Propose in-person assessment activities to take place in a school setting following MDH guidelines. If the

family is uncomfortable with in-person activities due to underlying health conditions among family members and you are unable to complete the assessment without a face-to-face meeting or observation, develop an interim Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) with the family.

If screening data suggests a disability is suspected or if an evaluation is requested by a parent, complete the evaluation and, if eligibility is determined, the assessment as possible using a combination of interview, virtual observation and in-person activities in a school setting.

Developing initial and annual IFSPs, and conducting periodic reviews.

IFSP team meetings may be held electronically (audio/visual) or in-person in school settings following MDH guidelines. If the meeting is held electronically, any written information you would typically provide to a parent during an in-person meeting should be mailed or emailed to the parent in advance.

An IFSP must be reviewed at least every six months. Progress on IFSP outcomes is provided by families through the intervention period. Ongoing assessments of a child's emerging development should be conducted following the schedule agreed to in the Prior Written Notice for the initial provision of service and are to be conducted using information (verbal and video) provided by parents along with virtual and in-person observations made in school settings.

If a parent wishes to postpone services until all services can be provided in the home, document this decision in your log notes. Report the voluntary withdrawal in MARSS using status end code 26.

Delivery of IFSP Services

Early intervention services will be conducted in settings that can ensure compliance with guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, including social distancing.

Transitions from Part C for children not potentially for Part B

As with all Part C to Part B transitions, the members of the IFSP team must first consider whether the child is potentially eligible for services under Part B. If the child is not deemed to be potentially eligible for Part B, the team may convene a meeting virtually or in person following all MDH guidelines. Document transition steps and services in the IFSP. Part C eligibility and services will end at age 3.

Transitions from Part C to Part B for children who are potentially eligible for Part B

The transition conference must be held before the child is 2 years, 9 months and will be conducted electronically or in settings that can ensure compliance with guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, including social distancing. If the meeting is held electronically, any written information you would typically provide to a parent during an in-person meeting should be provided to the parent in advance.

Obtain consent and complete Part B initial evaluation through a review of records or in settings and using strategies that are accordance with MDH guidance. Plan to conduct all evaluation activities in settings that can provide social distancing.

The IEP team must meet to develop an initial IEP within 30 days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services. If the meeting is to be held in-person, follow MDH guidelines. The IEP should be in place by the child's third birthday.

Post referral actions: Part B

Accept all referrals and make initial contact with the families. Send by email or mail a copy of the procedural safeguards and the following, as appropriate:

- Prior written notice for screening
- Evaluation plan and prior written notice
- Authorization for release of information

If parents choose to close out the referral (decline consent for evaluation), ask the family if they would be interested in re-referring in a month or two. If so, make a note in your calendar/records to make contact with them at a later date.

In cases where use of a screening tool is warranted (no diagnosis, prior screening or other data indicating a suspected disability is available), a parent assessment tool such as the ASQ or ASQ-SE could be used to determine if the team will propose moving forward with an evaluation.

If a disability is suspected due to a diagnosed condition, prior screening results, or an evaluation is requested by a parent, complete the evaluation in accordance with MDE guidance.

Report membership and attendance for evaluation following MARSS guidance.

Meeting timelines within the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

The OCR/OSERS supplemental fact sheet states: "As a general principle, during this unprecedented national emergency, public agencies are encouraged to work with parents to reach mutually agreeable extensions of time, as appropriate."

Conducting IEP team meetings

The IEP team must meet to develop an initial IEP within 30 days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services and meet at least annually to review and revise the IEP. If the meeting is to be held in-person, follow MDH guidelines.

Implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

IEP services will be provided in settings that can ensure compliance with guidance provided by the Minnesota Department of Health, including social distancing. Instruction may be provided using a mix of in-person and distance learning environments.

Report attendance, membership and special education service hours following guidance provided by the MARSS team.

Reevaluations under Part B

In the event that a reevaluation becomes necessary for a preschool child, complete the reevaluation following guidance provided by the Division of Special Education and guidance provided by MDH guidance.

Reporting progress of students on IEPs

The United States Department of Education has not waived progress reporting requirement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on the district's progress reporting period, data would reflect the student's IEP, as well as progress toward goals and objectives in any IEP amendments or individualized distance learning plans developed with parental participation and consent during the hybrid learning period.

Progress data may be collected from many variety of sources, including ongoing assessment, in-person, virtual and recorded observations. For example, a parent may record a video of the child during learning time or during daily routines when intervention has been intentionally embedded. Consider designating a staff person as an observer during

an in-person or virtual classroom activity to collect data on a student's engagement in the task and classroom participation.

Transition from Developmental Delay at age seven

Complete Part B reevaluations in accordance with MDH guidance and in accordance with existing guidance provided by MDE. To remain eligible for services under Part B a student must meet initial eligibility under another disability category and demonstrate an educational need for service.

A new enrollment record must be created in MARSS that includes the student's new disability category. End the existing record with a status end code of 99.

May a district conduct Home Visits?

A school district or charter school may allow school staff to visit a student outside their home to provide ECSE services and build and preserve relationships with the student and their families. School staff should not enter a student's home. Staff, and families shall follow current MDH and CDC Guidance.

Nothing in this guidance should be construed to encourage or require school staff, students, or families in at-risk categories to act inconsistently with public health recommendations or the advice of their doctors.

Outcome Measurement

Districts remain responsible to report outcomes for families exiting Part C after six months or more of early intervention service. Districts are also responsible to report item-level assessment data or child outcome summary ratings for each child that entered or exited Part C or preschool special education following existing reporting guidance.

Scenario 3: Distance learning only

District response to Part C referrals

Accept referrals and contact each family. During the initial contact explain that:

"We are currently unable to come into your home. We will be providing services through distance learning options. I can share information about our program with you on the phone and then either email or mail you hard copy information."

Follow up by emailing or mailing the procedural safeguards and, as appropriate:

- Prior written notice to screen
- Prior written notice to evaluate
- Authorization for release of information

If a family chooses to close the referral ask if they would like a re-referral when in-person instruction is allowed. If yes, make a note in your calendar/records to make contact with them when we are providing in-person services.

Part C post-referral actions

If a screening tool is warranted because there is no diagnosis, no prior screening or other data indicating a suspected disability is available, a screener completed by a parents such as the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and the Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social-Emotional (ASQ-SE) can help determine if the team will propose an initial evaluation.

If eligibility can be established through a review of records because of a diagnosed condition or documentation of a previous evaluation, complete as much of the initial child assessment as possible through family interview and virtual

observation. If you are unable to complete the assessment without a face-to-face meeting or observation, develop an interim Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) with the family.

If existing screening data suggests a disability is suspected or if an evaluation is requested by a parent, complete as much of the evaluation and, if eligibility is determined, the assessment as possible. If an evaluation or assessment requires a face-to-face meeting or observation, the evaluation or assessment would need to be delayed until face-to-face contact is permitted.

Developing initial and annual IFSPs, and conducting periodic reviews

During any period of distance learning all IFSP team meetings will be held electronically (audio/visual). Any written information you would typically provide to a parent during an in-person meeting should be mailed or emailed to the parent in advance.

An IFSP must be reviewed at least every six months. Progress on IFSP outcomes is provided by families through the intervention period. Ongoing assessments of a child's emerging development should be conducted following the schedule agreed to in the Prior Written Notice for the initial provision of service and are to be conducted using information (verbal and video) provided by parents along with virtual observation.

If a parent wishes to postpone services until we are able to meet in-person, indicate as such in your log notes. Report this voluntary withdrawal in MARSS using status end code 26.

Delivery of IFSP Services

Early intervention services may be delivered using distance learning strategies. No services will be provided in a child's home or in any setting contrary to MDE guidance.

Transitions from Part C for children not potentially for Part B

As with all Part C to Part B transitions, the members of the IFSP team must first consider whether the child is potentially eligible for services under Part B. If the child is not deemed to be potentially eligible for Part B, the team may convene a meeting virtually. Document transition steps and services in the IFSP. Part C eligibility and services will end at age 3.

Transitions from Part C to Part B for children who are potentially eligible for Part B

The transition conference must be held before the child is 2 years, 9 months and will be conducted electronically. Any written information you would typically provide to a parent during an in-person meeting should be provided to the parent in advance.

Obtain consent and complete Part B initial evaluation through a review of records or through evaluation strategies that can be accomplished virtually, if feasible. The IEP team must meet to develop an initial IEP within 30 days of determining that the child needs special education services.

If the existing information is insufficient to establish Part B eligibility and the collection of additional essential information requires in-person contact, continue serving the child under Part C even after the child has turned 3 until the initial Part B evaluation can be completed. A new enrollment record will need to be created in MARSS documenting the child's instructional settings using one of the codes appropriate for a child age 3-5.

Post referral actions: Part B

Accept all referrals and make initial contact with the families. Send by email or mail a copy of the procedural safeguards and the following, as appropriate:

- Prior written notice for screening
- Evaluation plan and prior written notice
- Authorization for release of information

If parents choose to close out the referral (decline consent for evaluation), ask the family if they would be interested in re-referring in a month or two. If so, make a note in your calendar/records to make contact with them at a later date.

In cases where use of a screening tool is warranted (no diagnosis, prior screening or other data indicating a suspected disability is available), a parent assessment tool such as the ASQ or ASQ-SE could be used to determine if the team will propose moving forward with an evaluation.

If a disability is suspected due to a diagnosed condition, prior screening results, or an evaluation is requested by a parent, complete as much of the evaluation as possible. If an evaluation requires a face-to-face meeting or observation, the evaluation will need to be delayed until in-person contact is permitted.

Report membership and attendance for evaluation following MARSS guidance.

Meeting timelines within the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

The OCR/OSERS supplemental fact sheet states: "As a general principle, during this unprecedented national emergency, public agencies are encouraged to work with parents to reach mutually agreeable extensions of time, as appropriate."

Conducting IEP team meetings

The IEP team must meet electronically to develop an initial IEP within 30 days of a determination that the child needs special education and related services and meet at least annually to review and revise the IEP.

Implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)

IEP services will be provided using distance learning strategies. For preschool children participating in community-based programs, including Head Start or child care, the team may provide direct or indirect service in those settings using distance learning strategies.

Report attendance, membership and special education service hours following guidance provided by the MARSS team.

Reevaluations under Part B

In the event that a reevaluation becomes necessary for a preschool child, complete the reevaluation following guidance provided by the Division of Special Education and guidance provided by MDH guidance.

Reporting progress of students on IEPs

The United States Department of Education has not waived progress reporting requirement due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Depending on the district's progress reporting period, data would reflect the student's IEP, as well as progress toward goals and objectives in any IEP amendments or individualized distance learning plans developed with parental participation and consent during the extended distance learning period.

Progress data may be collected from many variety of sources, including ongoing assessment, and virtual or recorded observations. For example, a parent may record a video of the child during learning time or during daily routines when intervention has been intentionally embedded. Consider designating an observer during a virtual classroom activity to collect data on a student's engagement in the task and classroom participation.

In the event that it is time to report progress on an objective or goal that has not been addressed during distance learning, document the rationale. If you worked on an objective or goal, but had difficulty in collecting progress data, document the services provided and any attempts to collect data, taking into consideration the examples provided above, as well as data you were able to collect. The purpose is to determine what the student has been able to achieve during the extended distance learning periods, as well as areas in which the student may have made minimal progress or regressed.

Transition from Developmental Delay at age seven

If the Part B reevaluation can be completed during the period of distance learning, then proceed with the reevaluation.

If after the review of existing information the team determines that additional information is necessary to establish eligibility and collecting that information requires face-to-face assessment or observation that cannot occur during the period of distance learning, the reevaluation would need to be delayed. The student's enrollment record will need to be ended no later than the day before the child's seventh birthday. A new record must be created in MARSS with a start date on or after the seventh birthday. In the new record, report the student's primary disability to be the disability category the team believes most likely. This record can be changed if the evaluation yields different result.

May a school district conduct Home Visits?

No. All early intervention services provided through an IFSP or IEP should utilize distance learning strategies. These strategies do not include in-person activities.

Outcome Measurement

Districts remain responsible to report outcomes for families exiting Part C after six months or more of early intervention service. Districts are also responsible to report item-level assessment data or child outcome summary ratings for each child that entered or exited Part C or preschool special education following existing reporting guidance.

Early Learning Assessments

Voluntary pre-kindergarten (VPK) programs (Minn. Stat. § 124D.151) and school readiness plus (SRP) programs (Minn. Stat. § 124D.15) are required to use a Kindergarten Entry Profile (KEP) approved assessment to collect entry (fall) and exit (spring) data. VPK programs are also required to submit a Measuring Impact Report to MDE, and can do so in two ways: (A) submit their KEP-approved data to MDE so that MDE produces their Measuring Impact Report or (B) produce their own Measuring Impact Report (the format of which must be approved by MDE).

Sharing information from KEP-approved assessments with kindergarten teachers can be an invaluable strategy to support students' transition into the next grade and school year and sharing this information with families can be an effective strategy to engage and partner with families. Additionally, data from these formative early learning assessments can be used to help teachers, administrators, and families understand what students know and are able to do to support their success in school and beyond, including transitions into kindergarten. Data from KEP-approved assessments (along with other relevant information) can be used to guide continuous program improvement efforts. Collecting this data, and submitting it to MDE, can be invaluable in providing data and analysis that helps schools better understand their programs and also recognizes the diligent work by teachers to document their young student's growth and development.

KEP-approved assessments rely on teachers completing the assessment via authentic assessment. Authentic assessment relies on teachers, other educators, family members, and community partners to document what students know and are able to do via observations, work samples, and conversations with family members (regular conversations with families

build relationships that are essential to collecting this information). KEP-approved assessments, therefore, may still be utilized under all three learning models: in-person, distance, and hybrid. No matter the learning model that is executed, the requirements for VPK/SRP programs to use a KEP-approved assessment to collect entry and exit data remains in place. VPK/SRP programs, will still need to either (A) submit their KEP-approved assessment data to MDE, and MDE produces a Measuring Impact Report for the program or (B) submit their own Measuring Impact Report to MDE. Programs will notify MDE which option they are choosing via a Program Survey sent by MDE prior to the start of the school year. Regardless of which option a program chooses, all VPK/SRP programs must use a KEP-approved assessment to collect entry and exit data.

During fall of school year 2-22, the chart below summarizes which domains of learning must be completed for programs choosing to submit their KEP-approved assessment data to MDE so that MDE can produce a Measuring Impact Report for the program. Programs choosing to submit their own Measuring Impact Report to MDE may follow the guidance, below.

Required Domains of Learning* for VPK/SRP Programs Choosing MDE's Measuring Impact Report

MDE Learning Model	Language, Literacy, and Communications	Mathematics	Social and Emotional	Five Other Domains of Learning
In-Person Learning	Yes	Yes	Yes	No*
Hybrid Learning	Yes	Yes	Yes	No*
Distance Learning	Yes	Yes	No†, ‡	No*

*: The domains of learning are those included in the *Early Childhood Indicators of Progress* (or early learning standards).

†: Programs may choose to add items from these domains of learning.

‡: The social and emotional well-being of students is paramount, and should be a core component of a programs' work with children and families. Though items from the Social and Emotional domain of learning are not requested under the distance learning model (there are not the same opportunities for children to interact with other children and with adults who are not family members), we strongly recommend regular communication with children and families that ask about their health and well-being.

MDE will issue additional guidance in the upcoming month that will clarify which items from each of the KEP-approved assessment is aligned to each of the domains of learning (this information is already available in a more detailed format, for each KEP-approved assessment, on MDE's *Alignment with Standards* website). This guidance will provide programs with the details necessary for appropriate planning on how to implement a KEP-approved assessment in one of the learning models.

Note for Early Childhood Special Education Programs: Only the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has the authority to waive the responsibility of Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) programs to report outcome data on behalf of infants, toddlers, and preschool children with disabilities. ECSE programs are still required to report OSEP Child Outcome Summary (COS) ratings for children who entered or exited ECSE. This can be done one of two ways: (1) uploading an assessment data file or (2) entering COS outcomes manually for children who entered/exited special education.

Note for Other (non-VPK, non-SRP) Early Learning Programs: Other early learning programs may choose to integrate the above guidance into their programs, as appropriate, though other federal, state, and local guidance specific to their program that may supersede some or all of the guidance above.

Questions about early learning assessments should be directed to jon.vaupel@state.mn.us, Early Childhood Assessment Specialist with the Early Learning Services division at MDE.

Community Education

Community Education is a primary provider for equitable and affordable childcare, early learning, youth, and adult programming in school districts and communities across the state. In order to maintain equity and accessibility, school districts are encouraged to maintain Community Education programming levels to continue serving Minnesota communities. As this programming is implemented in fall 2020, Community Education programs must follow the corresponding Minnesota Department of Health guidelines.

Districts are encouraged to consider fund transfers to provide equity and access through community education programs to meet the needs of local communities. For more information, see Minnesota Laws 2020, Chapter 116.

Child Care and School-Age Care Programs

Equitable and affordable school-age child care programs are essential to support working families and provide critical support and care for students in school buildings. Over one hundred thousand students across the state rely on school-based child care programs as their trusted child care provider. Community Education departments are encouraged to provide care to families while implementing guidance for child care programs from the Minnesota Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and the Minnesota Department of Human Services.

Programming through community education or other programs may be available to any child as a district would typically offer. Nothing prevents school districts and charters from providing care to children outside of those in families working in critical sectors.

Districts may charge fees for the care provided. Districts may consider, if financially feasible, including a sliding fee-based scale and scholarships, to ensure children from low-income families are able to access the care.

Consistent with child care in previous years, this care may be provided to children of any age as long as districts meet licensing and other regulatory requirements. In addition, districts may continue to provide child care for families participating in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) at a program licensed or certified by the Department of Human Services.

For additional information about child care during the COVID-19 pandemic, visit mn.gov/childcare.

Early Learning Community Education Programs

See Early Learning section of this document.

Adult Basic Education

Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs serve a critical role in school districts and the state of Minnesota serving students committed to furthering their education, English language, and job skills to join and thrive in the Minnesota workforce.

ABE providers in Minnesota should plan for three scenarios and ensure adherence to MDH 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Schools.

- Provide ABE programming in-person for all students.
- Providing ABE programming using hybrid learning with strict social distancing and capacity limits.

- Provide ABE programming using distance learning only.

The main goal of programming is to help ABE programs deliver ABE services in an equitable way to all ABE students in the communities they serve, while still following public health guidelines that will limit the spread of COVID-19.

Testing Guidelines for Programming

Testing expectations have been modified, due to COVID-19. Prior to COVID-19, all ABE students were required to have a valid score on an approved assessment within their first 12 hours of service. Now, ABE programs can enter a provisional test score and level in the state ABE database in order to enter 12+ hours for a student.

Computer-based remote testing options have been approved for each official assessment used for accountability purposes. Programs are not required but are encouraged to consider the feasibility of offering remote testing.

If MDH and MDE determine that in-person methods for intake and testing are safe for our ABE students, programs should prioritize collecting information for instructional and placement purposes rather than testing solely for accountability purposes, such as measurable skill gains or testing rates. The goal of in-person programming is to allow for more equitable delivery of ABE programming.

Youth, Adult, Seniors, Aquatics, and Adults with Disabilities Enrichment Programming

Community Education is an essential provider for enrichment programming for Minnesotans across the state. Programs should follow the guidelines from MDH 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Schools and guidance within this document when planning programs, delivery styles and services. Community Education programs may charge fees for programming. Programs should consider all fee options, including scholarships and flexible funding, to enable participants to access programming opportunities.

Academic Content Area-Specific Information

MDE has developed many resources related to various academic content areas. These documents are available on the Student Instruction COVID-19 Resources page of the MDE website. Updated guidance is being developed for specific content areas–such as music and physical education–to help plan for hybrid and in-person learning in those areas. The distance learning resources from spring 2020 will remain useful as districts and charter schools develop their plans.

As plans are developed, be sure to refer to MDH 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Schools.

Career and Technical Education

As schools begin planning for fall, they should make special considerations around career and technical education (CTE) programs. Planning for the 2020-21 school year creates the opportunity to renew a shared commitment to improving outcomes for all students. CTE programs should consider the methods of instruction, application of hands-on technical skill development, career preparation and the safety measures without losing access to industry-grade equipment and quality work-based learning (WBL) opportunities. For safety, CTE programs should also review health and safety guidance for business and industry locations that students may be working in.

For Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources, review COVID guidance from:

- Agriculture (MDA)
- Natural Resources (DNR)

For Business and Marketing, review COVID guidance from:

- Employment and Economic Development (DEED)

- Labor and Industry (DLI)

For Family & Consumer Sciences and Human Services, review COVID guidance from:

- Child Care and Early Learning
- Cosmetology
- Hospitality and Culinary
- Law Enforcement

For Health and Medical, review COVID guidance from:

- Health (MDH)
- Dentistry
- Nursing

For Trade and Industry, review COVID guidance from:

- Labor and Industry (DLI)
- Occupational Safety and Health - Cleaning and Disinfecting (OSHA)

CTE courses and programs are part of the well-rounded educational system. Due to the nature of CTE coursework and the hands-on approach that is needed, considerations unique to CTE should be part of school districts' fall planning. A high-quality CTE program not only includes content-area instruction, it also engages students in career development, leadership development and participation in career and technical student organizations (CTSO), experiential learning and formal work-based learning opportunities. Districts should plan and address all these components along with high-quality CTE curriculum and instruction. Per Minnesota Statutes and Rules, districts and schools should consider:

- CTE Classroom & Laboratory Instruction (Minn. R. 3505.2500; Public Law 115-224, i.e., Perkins V)
- Career Development (Minn. R. 3505.2500, Public Law 115-224)
- Experiential Learning and Work-Based Learning (Minn. R. 3505.2500, Public Law 115-224)
- Leadership and Career and Technical Student Organizations (Minn. R. 3505.2550, Public Law 115-224)
- CTE Teacher Professional Development (Minn. R. 3505.1100, Public Law 115-224)
- Advisory Committee Engagement (Minn. R. 3505.1000, subp. 4, C, Public Law 115-224)

CTE Classroom and Laboratory Instruction

CTE provides students with the opportunity to develop specific academic, employability and technical skills to be successful in career and in life. As schools are planning for the fall, they should consider the types of instructional models that best match the CTE course and program goals and ensure students and staff are engaging in a safe manner according to the health and safety guidelines. To ensure that learning is occurring, be creative; engage industry partners, teachers, and students; and listen actively.

If distance learning is the primary model of educational delivery, or serves as part of a hybrid learning plan, school districts and charter schools should develop schedules and expectations for both students and teachers that acknowledge the importance of engagement and interpersonal interaction to quality educational performance. Education professionals recognize the importance of interpersonal interactions for their impact on student learning. Business and industry professionals seek development of these interpersonal "employability skills" as much as (and sometimes more than) specific content mastery. Instructional approaches, materials and learning activities should be prioritized that build student interest and engagement. Districts and schools should consider instructional methods and safety as they plan for the upcoming school year.

Instructional Methods:

- Plan for flexible learning lessons for courses/programs that typically require hands-on interactions in close proximity, such as woodworking, culinary, healthcare, manufacturing, auto technology, robotics and courses that interface with living plants, animals or people.
- Consider hybrid models of instruction where laboratory courses occur more often but in smaller numbers. For example, students could participate in CTE classroom and academic content online but meet for technical skills in a lab setting on opposite days or time periods in person, in smaller numbers.
- Work with business and industry partners to identify alternative methods for students to demonstrate technical skill proficiency when and where in-person performance and assessment are not possible.
- Determine which students need priority access to the building to practice and demonstrate technical skills and determine if these students have equity of access to the school building (i.e., transportation, meals). For example:
    - Students who will be completing assessments in health care and child care/early learning.
    - Seniors or students who will soon be graduating.
    - Students earning time-sensitive, industry-recognized credentials.
    - Communities who were disproportionately impacted by distance learning in the spring, including but not limited to, historically marginalized families and families experiencing homelessness.
- Consider compressing or accelerating hands-on instruction related to industry-recognized credentials. Begin by conducting formative assessments at the beginning of school year to determine students' skill levels and use this information to compress or accelerate skill development.
- Develop clear competency lists at the start of the semester. These lists may allow for an easier transition if a program needs a long-term substitute teacher or if a student is able to learn skills in a work-based learning setting.
- Consider options for students who may be unable to return to in-person instruction when other students are able to be in the classroom and ensure equitable access to curriculum.

Classroom and Equipment Safety:

- School districts should assist teachers in the development of health, safety and cleaning instructions and information for all students. Teachers should receive training on how to share safety protocols and cleaning procedures with students. Make sure that health, safety and cleaning is everyone's responsibility.
- Develop a system to clean all equipment and tools students will use as the foundation for planning. Students typically check out tools often during an instructional period and return them at the end of the class. Teachers should develop a process for cleaning tools each time students return them so that they are ready for the next student or class.
- In an instructional laboratory such as a shop, students will use equipment numerous times during a class period. Districts should sanitize tools according to the health and safety guidance. Additional time should be spent at the beginning of the course to review typical safety precautions AND additional time reviewing unique circumstances centered on cleanliness to avoid exposure to COVID-19.
- Be strategic about moving as much curriculum online as possible so that in-person instruction can focus primarily on hands-on instruction, ensuring students have the maximum amount of time in on-site learning spaces in event that distance learning is required.
- Prior to the start of school, double check the classroom inventory. Some items may not have been purchased or re-stocked last spring or other supplies and materials may have been donated.
- If schools are bussing students to CTE centers/intermediate/WBL sites—consider scheduling core content courses at the CTE center/Intermediate district.

Career Development

Career development and exploration are critical and the foundational component of career preparation and training. Many career development activities are suitable for distance learning, hybrid learning models, and in-person instruction and can provide valuable learning opportunities when hands-on options are not always available. Schools should consider the following regarding career development.

- Reviewing and updating students' personal learning plans (Minn. R. 120B.125) is a good place to begin in order to help students determine which career development activities would be most beneficial.
- Since teachers and counselors might engage with students on-site but with less face time, they may need to rely on blended instruction with both in-person direction and distance learning via a remote platform.
- Educators may also use online tools such as the Minnesota Career Information System, Project Search, and ONET Career Exploration Tools where students can engage in career exploration at their own pace.
- Course work may also be delivered by recorded instruction posted on a class web page.
- If distance learning is required, special attention should be given to ensuring seniors are able to continue to focus on post-high school plans.
- Career development is an important aspect of career and college readiness. MDE has produced a CCR Resource Guide that provides a wealth of resources for teachers to utilize in promoting career development.
- The American School Counselor Association has resources on lessons and professional development.

Experiential Learning and Work-Based Learning

Another key component of a high-quality CTE program is experiential learning and work-based learning. Experiential learning happens when students gain additional knowledge, employability skills, and technical skills through job shadowing, industry speakers and tours, entrepreneurial experiences, internships and youth apprenticeship. To ensure that students remain safe and healthy, districts and schools should consider the following:

- Work with business and industry partners to develop a plan to maintain distancing requirements while students are on site.
- Look into alternatives to on-site placement. Are there opportunities for virtual industry tours or work opportunities?
- What might industry workers be doing differently at this time with their own staff? How can programs partner in new ways?
- Develop a plan that includes strategies to supervise and monitor students who are taking part in experiential and work-based learning opportunities. Educators should consider skills students obtain along with safety and cleanliness policies.
- Document and supervise students in WBL in innovative ways, for example, online record keeping and skill journal systems, photo documentation and using video conferencing systems for visits.
- Begin conversations with employer partners now about contingency plans if the school district or business must close. Are there remote projects students can transition to for the business if the student is unable to be on-site (e.g., research projects, social media management projects)? If so, start to develop a few projects to have at the ready.
- For long-term preparation, districts and schools should explore a blended approach of virtual and in-person instruction to provide experiential learning and work experience opportunities for students.

For more information on planning considerations for Experiential and Work-based Learning opportunities, visit the MDE Work-based Learning and COVID-19 Q & A document on the COVID-19 Resources page.

Leadership and Career and Technical Student Organizations

Leadership opportunities are a requirement of CTE programs; therefore, it is important to plan for how schools can accomplish them in a safe and healthy way. Leadership development in CTE programs, including participation in a Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO), provides students with the necessary skills to be successful in any career. CTE programs/courses and participation in a CTSO provide essential employability skills such as critical thinking, consensus building, communication, teamwork and technology application.

Engage students in a planning process to provide flexibility with participation. Some considerations might include:

- Review current state and local travel policies and revise strategies as needed.
- Hold leadership organization meetings in a way that follows distancing requirements or create virtual meeting options.
- Conduct student officer and committee strategic planning in small segments spread out over time compared to retreats and large events.
- Create and provide leadership events, career development competitions and work-based learning experiences at a local and regional level that focus more on participation and learning than competition in the absence of some state and national programs.
- Encourage student participation in state and national leadership virtual programs and events, including those that may occur during the school day.
- Work with community partners to plan and safely engage in more service learning projects and experiential learning projects.
- Develop alternatives that keep the students engaged in the hands-on learning process as well as have opportunities to be social.

Minnesota Career and Technical Student Organizations (CSTO)

- BPA (Business and Information Technology)
- DECA (Business and Marketing)
- FCCLA (Family and Consumer Sciences)
- FFA (Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources)
- HOSA Future Health Professionals (Health Science)
- Skills USA (Trade and Industry)

CTE Teacher Professional Development

Teacher professional development that includes curriculum development aligned with industry standards, safety requirements and classroom instruction delivery (both in-person and distance/technology methods) are more critical than ever. Districts should consider the following:

- Encourage mentoring and induction programs, for example MDE's New CTE Teacher program and the UMN's Teacher Induction Program, for new CTE teachers to provide support during these challenging times.
- Encourage virtual professional development when possible, but support and utilize hybrid and distance professional development for technical training and laboratory skills (e.g., welding, construction, floriculture, culinary, medical).
- Professional organizations, universities, districts and consortia may need to use laboratory and shop facilities for professional development that cannot be delivered virtually, specifically for technical skills that were missed or are a priority due to lost time/canceled events from Spring and Summer 2020.
- Teacher professional development is a key component in creating an effective learning environment for students and it also ensures teachers accumulate the credits they need to keep their professional credentials. Professional development is extremely important, online or in-person, as it gives teachers the opportunity to

learn about the latest developments in their industry field and on new industry equipment; learn about new technologies and uses of technology for instruction; earn industry certifications to bring the training, curriculum and certifications to students; and ensures they keep their professional credentials up to date for renewal and/or advancement in their field. With a wide variety of teaching strategies and digital platforms used for instruction, professional development is extremely important as it provides teachers the opportunity to self-reflect and develop new skills allowing them to lead successful classrooms.

Advisory Committee Engagement

Involvement from business and industry leaders on program Advisory Committees is a requirement of CTE programs. Minnesota's "Career Program Advisory Committee Handbook" identifies a number of benefits to CTE programs and stakeholders of meaningful involvement of these business and industry leaders. As school districts and CTE programs develop plans for the possibility of hybrid or distance learning delivery in the fall, their involvement can also be instrumental in addressing personnel and technology issues which may stem from teachers and students working from different locations. MDE encourages school districts and programs to meet with CTE Advisory Committee members early in the school year planning process to utilize their expertise, as well as for development of options for quality delivery of CTE instruction to students.

Federal Funding Considerations

Many career and technical education programs are supported with federal funding through the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act, more commonly known as Perkins V. Programs that receive federal funding must continue to meet the requirements of this law regardless of the learning model schools are using because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Potential requirements include:

- Fulfilling the requirements of CTE program approval, including meeting with advisory committees and facilitating student leadership opportunities
- Submitting annual Perkins performance data via the P File
- Acquiring CTE equipment in accordance with the procedures outlined in MDE's Use of Funds Guidance
- CARES Act
    - providing classroom instruction or online learning during the summer months
    - Online learning and other educational services

Additional CTE Guidance for COVID-19

- Minnesota Summer Programming Guidance for Schools
- Use of School Buildings for Technical Instruction
- Distance Learning: Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR)
- Distance Learning: Business and Marketing
- Distance Learning: Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS)
- Distance Learning: Health Science
- Distance Learning: Trade and Industry (T&I)
- Distance Learning: Work-Based Learning (WBL)

MDE Career and Technical Education Program Pages

- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources (AFNR)
- Business and Marketing
- Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS)
- Health Science

- Service Occupations
- Trade and Industry (T&I)
- Work-Based Learning (WBL)

Other State and National CTE Resources and Professional Associations

- Minnesota Association of Agriculture Educators (MAAE)
- Minnesota Marketing, Business, and Information Technology Educators (MN MBITE)
- Minnesota Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (MAFCS)
- Minnesota Teachers of Transportation and Industrial Areas (MTTIA)
- Minnesota Technology and Engineering Educators Association (MTEEA)
- Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE)
- Advance CTE
- Minnesota State CTE (Post-Secondary)
- Minnesota State CTE Centers of Excellence

Educator Support and Professional Learning

Overview

- Maintain regular communication with labor groups (teachers, custodial, secretarial, etc.) on job description adjustments based on needs.
- Provide mental health support by activating school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists, and school nurses to develop individual and group support plans for students and families for 2020-21 school year.
- Plan for additional virtual professional development and support for staff; focus on training on effective pedagogy in virtual modalities.
- Consider how to organize teacher leaders to plan lessons, work with curriculum providers on content, and support other teachers for 2020-21.
- Identify how teacher observations will be conducted to provide feedback and support for teachers in a virtual setting.
- Determine professional development needs for teacher leaders and administrators in regards to coaching, monitoring, and supporting teachers with virtual lesson plans, delivery, assessment, and communication with parents.
- Determine options for training and supporting substitute teachers when regular teachers are ill or unable to support teaching from a remote setting.
- Provide support for principals and assistant principals to build their own understanding of the critical attributes of effective virtual learning.

Mental Health and Well-being

All employees of the district have been through a national crisis. While it is important to focus on the social emotional wellness of students, school staff have been impacted. Returning staff will have different emotions and abilities to adjust to the transition back to school, meet changing expectations, and manage increased student needs. Staff may also be dealing with their own worries and anxieties for themselves and their families. Some may be grieving losses of family members, colleagues, or students who are no longer with the school or who have succumbed to the illness. Social emotional learning and self-care starts with adults in school buildings, and leaders should consider making resources available and build well-being activities into daily routines for all staff. Staff experiencing more difficulties may need positive coping mechanisms, additional mental health services, or crisis support.

As provisions for these activities and supports become a part of your back-to-school planning, consider the following:

- How do we provide a system of supports for staff and recognize when someone needs additional assistance? What resources or services such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) and telehealth options will be available to school staff?
- What supports are available to promote staff wellness and prevent burnout, compassion fatigue, and secondary traumatic stress?
- What professional learning and training opportunities do school staff need, and what types of collegial support such as mentors or coaches are available?
- What supports are available to teachers who need assistance with classroom behavior management?
- What plans do we have to ensure staffing capacity? What policies or regulations need to be updated to support staff, and how do we protect staff who are most at risk from COVID-19?

Resources

- In addition to visiting MDE's Supporting Students and Families COVID-19 resources, consider exploring the following resources related to school mental health:

- American Academy of Pediatrics COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Return to In-person Education in Schools
- National Center for School Mental Health
- Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network Responding to COVID-19 School Mental Health
- Plan Ahead to Support the Transition Back by the Center for Mental Health in Schools at University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) highlights essential supports for the transition to schools reopening.
- Resilient Educator COVID-19 Toolkit equips teachers with actionable strategies and advice in working with and supporting children, parents, and families during these difficult times. Rich teacher wellness and self-care resources nurture teachers to become more resilient.
- Compassion Resilience Toolkit offers information, activities, and resources for school leadership and staff to understand, recognize, and minimize the experience of compassion fatigue and increase compassion resilience.
- Trails to Wellness by the University of Michigan Trails offers a menu of strategies for self-care, each grounded in empirical research.

Q Comp and Teacher Development and Evaluation

Minnesota educators acted quickly to serve students in a distance learning environment last spring. Their hard work, creativity and flexibility is appreciated and will be needed again as educators prepare for school year 2020-21.

In the spring of 2020, MDE's guidance for Q Comp and Teacher Development and Evaluation (TDE) asked local educators to *modify* certain practices to fit the emergency context and to *pause* other practices. For the coming school year, **all Q Comp/TDE activities will continue, including practices that were temporarily paused last spring**. This guidance for school year 2020-21 will continue to maximize local flexibility and will continue to call upon educators to modify Q Comp/TDE practices.

Our intent with this resource is to provide broad guidance and to respond to potential questions so that local districts and unions—in partnership—can solve implementation problems together. If applicable, nuances for various school scenarios (in-person, distance learning, or hybrid approaches) will be offered.

This document will be updated as more information is learned.

For questions about Q Comp and TDE contact Tyler Livingston at tyler.livingston@state.mn.us.

General Guidance for TDE/Q Comp

TDE and Q Comp are collaboratively developed and implemented by school districts and the teachers' unions. When needed, a joint oversight team representing both district and union should be in place to provide rapid cycle problem solving during this period. We continue to encourage charter schools to form oversight teams that include teacher representation as well. Most of the responses to the frequently asked questions in this document defer to local decision-making through the local oversight teams.

The core of TDE and Q Comp are about supporting teachers to continuously improve instruction. Consider framing any modifications to TDE/Q Comp activities around a core guiding question that is focused on supporting the professional learning needs of teachers, such as "How can we use TDE/Q Comp activities (e.g., observations, coaching, student assessment and engagement measures) to help teachers navigate the changes in instruction that distance learning or hybrid models introduce?"

Questions Specific to Q Comp

Q: Do we need to submit a "program update form" that reflects temporary changes that districts/charters are implementing based on in-person, distance, or hybrid school scenarios?

A: No, districts and charters do not need to submit a program update form to MDE to reflect *temporary, short-term changes* to their Q Comp plans during this time.

If permanent, long-term changes are being made, then a program update form is still required. Ideally, program update forms should be submitted and approved before a school year begins.

The Q Comp team is available to consult with districts as they consider ideas, options, or changes of any kind. Frequently, a dialogue on the phone or videoconference is a timesaving exercise for all involved.

Q: Last spring, classroom observations/evaluations were suspended during distance learning. Are we able to conduct our observation/evaluation cycle activities this year?

A: Classroom observations/evaluations are a core activity of Q Comp (and TDE) and must be conducted this school year.

Certainly, local leadership teams may need to modify a number of practices to reflect the school scenarios (in person, distance, hybrid) throughout the year, including but not limited to:

- *how* observations are conducted (e.g., observing live instruction via video, reviewing recorded lessons)
- *how often* they are conducted
- *what* areas of instructional rubrics/frameworks are applicable and prioritized based on school setting

The core of observation/evaluation remains focused on supporting teachers so that they can best serve students in a variety of scenarios.

Given the systemic impact of racism and the emerging evidence of the disproportionate impact of distance learning, existing supportive peer coaching focused on racial equity should be prioritized. The following questions could help center equity in the post-observation coaching conversations:

- Which student groups are disproportionately impacted by our education scenarios?
- What actions are the educators taking to mitigate these impacts?
- Does the instructional practice used in the school scenario ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences?

As a reminder, classroom observations that include coaching and feedback is a powerful practice to support teachers' instructional practices. This is also a great opportunity to check-in with and support teachers overall. Teachers are balancing a number of new demands while navigating various school scenarios, so holding strong to a student-centered vision of equity while extending lots of support, grace and flexibility is encouraged.

Q: If we are modifying classroom observation/evaluations, how does that impact things like performance pay for observation/evaluations?

A: Performance pay for observation/evaluation must occur in school year 2020-21.

While every Q Comp plan is unique, the decision to award performance pay comes down to a common question. "Does the evidence gathered during observation/evaluation activities suggest that the teacher met our expectations for performance pay?" (where "met expectations" is associated with a performance level in the local rubric/framework).

In order to answer that core question, the decision maker (often, but not always, the principal) should have evidence that is

- Sufficient—is there enough evidence to make the decision? If not, collect more.
- Relevant—is the evidence connected to our expectations for teachers and instruction as described in the local rubric/framework? If not, do not use irrelevant evidence and collect evidence that aligns to the rubric.
- Comprehensive—is there a broad enough spectrum of evidence across areas of the rubric/framework? If it is all in one category, can additional evidence demonstrating a more comprehensive picture be captured?

All of these qualifiers were core considerations before COVID and now. Local leadership teams are encouraged to modify these to reflect the three school scenarios.

Q: Many Q Comp plans tie movement on the salary schedule to teacher observation/evaluation results. What does MDE recommend here?

A: Salary schedule movement must also occur in school year 2020-21. The above answer often applies in this area as well. Please contact mde.q-comp@state.mn.us if you have questions about your local model's method for awarding salary schedule movement differs from the observation/evaluation answer above.

Q: Last spring, most standardized tests were not administered, meaning the schoolwide achievement measures (aka "Site Goals") could not be awarded in the same way as in previous years. What is the guidance for Site Goals?

A: "Site goals" is Q Comp shorthand for a legal requirement specific to *schoolwide* student achievement *gains* as measured by a *standardized test* (including but not limited to MCA, NWEA MAP, Fastbridge, and ACT). Each organizational unit in a participating Q Comp district/charter must write a Site Goal for 2020-21. These should be written using the assumption that an administration of a standardized test (selected locally) will be possible in the spring. Site goals must be submitted to MDE by October 1, 2020.

The MDE Q Comp team will soon have the site goal form published on the Q Comp website. In August, the team will provide informational webinars for coordinators to support this process.

In the event that standardized tests are not administered in spring 2021, then performance pay for site goals cannot be awarded. In this scenario where tests are not administered, local oversight teams (including representation from the teachers' union) should work together to rededicate their budgets. Options may include:

- Reinvesting in existing or new professional learning supports for teachers in this or future years.
- Temporarily changing site goal performance award amounts in future school years (e.g., double the site goal award in 2021-22). Be clear with teachers that this new amount would not be permanent.
- Reallocating the budget that was dedicated to site goals to increase the performance award for one or both of the other two areas (observation/evaluation and measure of student growth).

Q: What should we be thinking about regarding the "measure of student growth" performance pay requirement?

A: For the upcoming school year local Q Comp oversight teams should construct these measures/goals so that performance pay can be awarded.

We encourage local oversight teams to maximize flexibility for teachers during this time to demonstrate their impact on student growth. This aspect of Q Comp is dependent on assessments of student learning which may need tweaking due to in-person, distance, or hybrid school scenarios. Since we won't know which school scenario will be in place when assessments are administered, educators would be wise to select an assessment that could be accomplished in multiple settings.

In August and into the fall, MDE will provide some training on how to write student learning goals that can be responsive to in person, distance or hybrid school scenarios.

Q: Last spring, professional learning communities (PLCs) were modified or paused. What is the guidance for this school year?

A: Job-embedded professional development or professional learning community opportunities for school year 2020-21 must continue.

When PLCs are implemented effectively, they are highly valued by teachers. Potential benefits include:

- Rapid problem solving, perhaps particularly with regard to distance learning or hybrid schooling, with a local community of experts.
- Shared lesson development. For example, literacy specialists at a K-2 school could record grade-level emergent literacy lessons for a week that the generalists embed in their plans for the week.
- Sharing technology tips and tricks that are learned through experience and experimentation.
- Being in community with one another. Caring for the social and emotional needs of teachers through the intentional connections in PLCs can help mitigate the stress of new challenges in professional and personal lives.

Given the systemic impact of racism and the emerging evidence of the disproportionate impact of distance learning, exiting supporting PLCs focused on racial equity should be prioritized. The following questions from *Culturally Responsive School Leadership* by Muhammad Khalifa can help center equity in the PLC conversations:

Common driving questions of PLCs	Deeper questions to make PLCs more culturally responsive
What do we want all students to learn?	• Does what we want students to learn include minoritized communities' knowledge? Have we asked the community what students should learn? • Does the knowledge connect to the communities experiences of minoritized students? • Is what we want students to learn (i.e., knowledge) *beneficial* to minoritized communities?
How will we know if and when they have learned it?	• Are the scales and rubrics used culturally responsive? Are the questions culturally biased? • What are nontraditional ways of measuring knowledge of minoritized students? • How will the community perspective be included in how learning is measured? • What are the best ways for *our* students to show what they know?
How will we teach it?	• Are the instructional methods culturally responsive and inclusive? • How are parents and community members used to help connect instruction to student communities/lives?
How will we respond if some students do not learn? How will we respond if the students have already learned?	• How will we use critical self-reflection techniques to understand when (and why) some minoritized students are not responding to our instruction and content? • How will we take responsibility (individually and collectively) if minoritized students are not learning?

Certainly, PLCs may be meeting differently (through distance technology such as Zoom or Google Hangout) or with different frequency. Due to a variety of potential school scenarios, changes to meeting frequency, length, topic and scope are all within the purview of the local oversight team.

Some local Q Comp plans have performance pay tied to PLC work. Local oversight teams may need to amend performance requirements to reflect necessary changes due to distance or hybrid models.

Q: What are the requirements for the annual report that is due June 15, 2020?

A: Based on last spring's decisions, the local oversight should have selected one of the following options for the report due June 15, 2020:

- Provide a full annual report to the Board by the statutory deadline or at a later date,
- Provide a partial annual report (including activities that occurred prior to March 18, 2020) by the statutory deadline or at a later date, or
- Forgo the annual report for 2019-20 school year. Activities conducted in 2019-20 can be reported along with activities conducted in the 2020-21 school year and reported by the June 2021 annual report due date.

Q: What are the requirements for the annual report that is due June 15, 2021?

A: The June 15, 2021 report must happen according to statute.

Questions Specific to Teacher Development and Evaluation (TDE)

Q: Last spring, observation/evaluations for probationary teachers was paused during distance learning. What is the guidance for this year?

A: All requirements for probationary teachers should be observed during school year 2020-21.

Certainly, local leadership teams may need to modify a number of practices to reflect the school scenarios (in person, distance, hybrid) throughout the year, including but not limited to:

- *how* observations are conducted (e.g., observing live instruction via video, reviewing recorded lessons)
- *how often* they are conducted, provided minimum requirements are observed
- *what* areas of instructional rubrics/frameworks are applicable and prioritized based on school setting

The core of observation/evaluation remains focused on supporting teachers so that they can best serve students in a variety of settings. Teachers new to the profession have always needed unique mentoring and induction supports in order to thrive. As schools face new challenges, retaining and supporting our educators—new and veteran—is vitally important.

Given the systemic impact of racism and the emerging evidence of the disproportionate impact of distance learning, existing supportive peer coaching focused on racial equity should be prioritized. The following questions could help center equity in the post-observation coaching conversations:

- Which student groups are disproportionately impacted by our education scenario?
- What actions are the educators taking to mitigate these impacts?
- Does the instructional practice used in the school setting ignore or worsen existing disparities or produce other unintended consequences?

As a reminder, classroom observations that include coaching and feedback is a powerful practice to support teachers' instructional practices. This is also a great opportunity to check-in with and support teachers overall. Teachers are balancing a number of new demands while navigating various school setting scenarios, so holding strong to a student-centered vision of equity while extending lots of support, grace and flexibility is encouraged.

Q: Last spring, some tenured/continuing contract teachers were due for a summative evaluation but did not receive one due to the emergency distance learning period. How should we approach summative evaluations this coming year?

A: Per statute, all teachers must have a summative evaluation at least once every three years. This requirement is still in place for school year 2020-21.

A summative evaluation is a determination of a teacher's performance based on evidence. MDE has found that a great guiding question for the summative evaluation is, "What is the *minimum threshold* of **relevant**, **sufficient**, and **comprehensive** evidence needed to accurately evaluate teachers?" The summative evaluator's job is to collect evidence

that is relevant, collect sufficient evidence to have enough to make an evaluative judgement, and to collect a comprehensive picture of evidence so that the evaluation is not based on a single element of professional practice but a comprehensive look at the whole educator.

This job can be accomplished in a variety of school scenarios, though certain activities may need adjustments based on the scenarios. Local oversight teams should revisit these concepts to allow for as much flexibility as possible. For example: Summative evaluations may not collect evidence across every single element of an instructional framework or rubric during distance learning or hybrid scenarios.

Most local systems attempted to spread the workload of summative evaluations across three years, and with the disruption to plans last year, school principals (the summative evaluators) may be faced with an increased workload. If summative evaluation activities were postponed until the fall of the 2020-21 school year, summative evaluators should work with teachers whose evaluations were postponed to schedule all remaining activities as soon as possible in the fall.

Q: Last spring, districts were unable to administer standardized assessments. Since 35% of teacher summative evaluation results are based on student academic growth, what are our options for this missing data?

A: Local oversight teams have some options and things to consider when to address this issue.

First, a summative evaluation must occur once every three years. If one year of evidence is missing, summative evaluators could use evidence from the other two years. This ties back to the concept discussed in the previous answer, "What is the *minimum threshold* of sufficient, relevant and comprehensive evidence **of a teacher's impact on student academic growth** needed to accurately determine 35% of a teacher's summative evaluation?"

Second, though the law explicitly states that "state and local measures of student growth" be used, there is no explicit requirement to use standardized tests that were interrupted in spring 2020. Local oversight teams can craft student learning goal practices that allow for classroom assessments, common assessments or both. While the disruptions to standardized assessments removes a data set from this conversation, teachers can and should be assessing student academic growth, regardless of which school scenario(s) we face this school year.

In August and into the fall, MDE will provide some training on how to write student learning goals that can be responsive to in-person, distance or hybrid school scenarios.

Q: Last spring, some peer review/coaching activities were paused and some were allowed. What is the guidance for this school year?

A: Peer review/coaching activities and professional learning community opportunities for school year 2020-21 must continue.

When peer review/coaching and PLCs are implemented effectively, they are highly valued by teachers. Potential benefits include:

- Rapid problem solving, perhaps particularly with regard to distance learning or hybrid schooling, with a local community of experts.
- Being in community with one another. Caring for the social and emotional needs of teachers through the intentional connections in PLCs can help mitigate the stress of new challenges in professional and personal lives.
- Sharing technology tips and tricks that are learned through experience and experimentation.
- Shared lesson development. For example, literacy specialists at a K-2 school could record grade-level emergent literacy lessons for a week that the generalists embed in their plans for the week.

Given the systemic impact of racism and the emerging evidence of the disproportionate impact of distance learning, exiting supporting PLCs focused on racial equity should be prioritized. The following questions from *Culturally Responsive School Leadership* by Muhammad Khalifa can help center equity in the PLC conversations:

Common driving questions of PLCs	Deeper questions to make PLCs more culturally responsive
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How will we know if and when they have learned it?	• Are the scales and rubrics used culturally responsive? Are the questions culturally biased? • What are nontraditional ways of measuring knowledge of minoritized students? • How will the community perspective be included in how learning is measured? • What are the best ways for *our* students to show what they know?
How will we teach it?	• Are the instructional methods culturally responsive and inclusive? • How are parents and community members used to help connect instruction to student communities/lives?
How will we respond if some students do not learn? How will we respond if the students have already learned?	• How will we use critical self-reflection techniques to understand when (and why) some minoritized students are not responding to our instruction and content? • How will we take responsibility (individually and collectively) if minoritized students are not learning?

Certainly, peer reviewers/coaches and PLCs may be meeting differently (through distance technology such as Zoom or Google Hangout) or with different frequency. Due to a variety of potential school scenarios, changes to meeting frequency, length, topic and scope are all within the purview of the local oversight team.

Q: We have teachers who are in a teacher improvement process due to previously being identified as not meeting standards in our TDE system. What are the implications for teachers in a teacher improvement process this year?

A: While the school scenario may require modification(s) to teacher improvement processes, this function of TDE systems will continue without limitation this school year.

A teacher improvement process includes a support plan that identifies the area(s) of performance concern, clear performance expectations for the teacher, the methods of support for the teacher, and a timeline that specifies when activities will happen, including when the teacher will be evaluated again to determine if performance improved as a result of the TIP.

With a significant transition from face-to-face to virtual delivery (or hybrid delivery) of instruction, a teacher in a teacher improvement process may need a modified support plan. This should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis based on how instruction is being delivered during the school year and what new supports a teacher might need to improve practice.

New Staff

Identify a plan for onboarding new staff virtually.

- How will new staff be on-boarded virtually including introductions to platforms, resources, and peers?
- How will new staff be trained and supported throughout the year in delivering high quality virtual learning?

Technology Use

Consider both a long-term vision within the buildings and potential short-term vision to allow equitable access for all students. All stakeholders should be involved with setting the plan or vision. In engaging these stakeholders, it is essential that the superintendent, school board, technology director, and principals include teacher, student, family and community voices. This vision should include pedagogy training, student outcomes and learning goals, materials that strengthen learning, infrastructure needs, and underlying belief statements about the value of technology for learning.

- Leadership Self-Assessment: A self-assessment for leadership to consider in developing a digital vision.
- Promising Practices: A webinar from MDE outlining promising practices for acquiring and effectively using technology.

Professional Learning

Ongoing Learning for Staff

- Based on the feedback collected and the district or charter school's plan for the school year, identify professional learning areas of focus for specific types of district and school staff.
- What types of professional learning have teachers, teacher leaders, school administrators, and school support staff (e.g., school nurses, counselors) requested?
    - What areas of need are revealed in teacher and school leader observations and effectiveness data?
    - How will teachers be supported in continuing to grow their instructional pedagogy for in-person and virtual teaching?
    - To what extent will all teachers receive training on delivering virtual learning? Will all teachers receive in-depth training on delivering virtual learning, or will all teachers receive foundational training on delivering virtual learning with additional training provided if teachers are asked to deliver virtual learning?
    - Consider if all teachers need foundational virtual learning knowledge
- Based on the identified areas of focus, identify a plan for delivering professional learning opportunities for different staff members.
- What structures should the district and schools put in place to deliver ongoing professional learning–i.e., coaching, PLCs?
- Who will be responsible for delivering ongoing professional learning – i.e., teacher leaders, school leaders, district leaders, vendors?
- How will identified structures operate during in-person and virtual learning?
- Based on the professional learning plan, identify guidance for how professional learning structures will operate during in-person and virtual learning. How will teachers engage in professional learning structures–leadership team meetings, PLC/cluster meetings, etc. – while maintaining social distancing?
- Should meetings take place in-person, virtually, or a mix? Do all participants need to join through the same modality (i.e., all in-person or all virtually)?
- How will professional learning opportunities be scheduled and what are the expectations of teachers to participate and engage in these opportunities?

Professional Learning for Student Support Staff

- Identify training and resources for providing professional learning to student support staff (e.g., counselors, nurses).
    - What resources will be available to counseling staff and/or school nurses in providing support to staff, families, and students?
    - What professional learning opportunities will be available to counseling staff and/or school nurses in improving support plans and supports provided?

Training on New/Revised Operating Procedures

- Based on new procedures identified in the operations plan related to preventing the spread of the virus, identify training and resources for all school staff.
    - How will the district and schools provide training to school staff on expectations around cleaning procedures, entering and exiting school procedures, self-reporting exposure procedures and any other procedures in place to reduce the spread of the virus?
    - How will bus drivers be trained in the additional procedures related to bus transportation?
    - How will school staff tasked with conducting health checks be trained?
    - What additional counselor-level support (positions or training) will be needed to meet the needs of the students, educators, and community?
    - What opportunities will school staff have to ask questions regarding new procedures and who will such questions be directed to?
- Identify a process and training for onboarding new or temporary staff throughout the year.
    - What will the expectations be for engagement in operational procedures by temporary staff?
    - How will new or temporary staff be trained and supported on the expectations around operational procedures in place at the school?

Additional Resources

MDE Best Practice Resources/Toolkits

- Additional resources and MDE sponsored professional development opportunities will be added to this section.

State of Minnesota and Partner Resources

- State of Minnesota COVID-19 Page
- Minnesota Department of Health - COVID-19 Information for Schools
- Department of Labor and Industry - COVID-19 Updates
- Children's Cabinet - COVID-19 Response Page
- Department of Human Services - COVID-19 Page
- Minnesota State High School League (MSHSL)

Contact Information

COVID-19 Questions

- Health questions about COVID-19: health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us
- Education questions related to COVID-19: COVID-19.Questions.MDE@state.mn.us

Divisions at MDE

- Academic Standards: mde.academic-standards@state.mn.us
- American Indian Education: mde.indian-education@state.mn.us
- Assessment: mde.testing@state.mn.us
- Career and College Success: mde.ccrresource@state.mn.us
- Early Learning: mde.els@state.mn.us
- Equity and Opportunity: mde.esea@state.mn.us
- School Support: mde.schoolsupport@state.mn.us
- Compliance and Assistance: mde.compliance-assistance@state.mn.us
- Food and Nutrition: mde.fns@state.mn.us
- Special Education: mde.special-ed@state.mn.us
- Charter Center: mde.charterschools@state.mn.us
- State Library Services: mde.lst@state.mn.us