



## Digital Inclusion Toolkit

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## About:

The COVID-19 pandemic has drawn increased attention to the disparities faced by students and families who lack sufficient in-home access to technology. This toolkit provides information and resources to support schools, districts, public libraries, and community organizations in achieving digital equity among the students and families they serve. The toolkit addresses a broad scope of access barriers that students and families commonly face including but not limited to affordability of adequate internet service, availability of enough devices for everyone in a household, digital literacy, and English language skills.

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## Digital Inclusion

**“If our children are to excel in a fast-changing, global society, we must harness the technology resources they need to function in a digital age. We must remember our commitment to their future as we set priorities and establish policies on their behalf.” – National Education Association (NEA) President Dennis Van Roekel**

The phrase “digital divide” is often used to describe the gulf separating those who have access to broadband and devices from those who do not; however, this either-or perspective fails to express the complexity of the digital access landscape. As articulated by the [National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#) (NDIA), “digital equity” is “a condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participant in our society, democracy, and economy.” Digital inclusion—that is, “intentional strategies and investments to reduce and eliminate historical, institutional, and structural barriers to access and use technology”—is the path toward digital equity. Whether before, during, or after the COVID-19 pandemic, digital inclusion is necessary for education, employment, social connection, civic engagement, and access to essential services.

The challenges of student and family connectivity cannot be considered as isolated, singular points. They are part of larger systemic inequities [disproportionately affecting](#) Black communities, Indigenous communities, and communities of color. This project strives to move beyond addressing the digital divide to instead focus on the full spectrum of factors—geographic location, socioeconomic status, English language fluency, housing instability, etc.—affecting students’ and families’ ability to access and use technology.

Several systems work in conjunction to realize full digital equity. These factors include but are not limited to the availability of a broadband connection and equipment; the affordability of technology; and the skills, knowledge, and understanding to utilize these tools.

## How might we include all families?

Consider the method of communication. While online tools like surveys or emails may reach a significant portion of families, these methods exclude families who do not have sufficient access or levels of digital literacy. Often, teachers, coaches, and frontline library staff have strong relationships with the families you need to hear from. Leverage these relationships and collect information through back-to-school activities, conferences, and other conversation opportunities.

### For organizational and school leaders:

- Engage diverse cultural and linguistic communities by partnering with respective community-based organizations, cultural institutions, and advocacy groups to develop a plan that will allow your team to continuously learn about the unique circumstances around families' technology needs.
- Education Superhighway's Home Access Needs Assessment Playbook is a comprehensive, step-by-step guide to help school districts identify students who lack a home Internet connection or a dedicated learning device.

### For teachers:

- [The National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations Handout](#) provides a sample phone script educators can use to reach out to families and identify issues they may be facing.
- [The University of Nebraska-Lincoln's resource on Building Community-School relationships](#) identifies potential partners, such as municipal agencies and service groups, that educators and schools could reach out to connect with families that face barriers to navigating traditional digital platforms.

## Community Partners

These groups may be useful partners for schools and libraries looking to better serve families with digital inclusion efforts.

- The [Blandin Foundation Community Broadband Program](#) has engaged at local, state and federal levels to ignite and sustain policies that support rural access to robust broadband.
- [Connected MN](#) is a public-private partnership working to bring tech devices, internet access and programmatic support to students across the state.
- [Minnesota Education Telecommunications Network](#) are regional organizations that provide broadband access, digital resources, cybersecurity services, and distance learning opportunities for schools.
- This mapping tool helps identify [local broadband providers](#) who can help support in-home broadband access.
- [Public Libraries](#) in Minnesota can partner to support community digital literacy and access.

These groups can help schools, districts, and libraries facilitate and broaden community education and outreach efforts. They are trusted by their respective communities and can offer valuable insights about cultural, linguistic, and economic challenges that face recently arrived immigrant and refugee-experienced communities.

- Partners specific to Latino-American communities:
  - [LatinoLEAD](#)
  - [Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs](#)
  - [Amigos Del Mercado](#)
  - [Comunidades Latinas Unidas En Servicio \(CLUES\)](#)
  - [Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research \(HACER\)](#)
  - [Latino Chamber of Commerce](#)
- Partners specific African immigrant communities:
  - [Oromo Community of Minnesota](#)
  - [Isuroon](#)
  - [Reviving the Islamic Sisterhood for Empowerment \(RISE\)](#)
- Partners specific to Asian-American communities:
  - [Hmong American Partnership](#)
  - [The Southeast Asian Diaspora Project \(SEAD\) Project](#)
  - [Karen Organization of Minnesota](#)
  - [India Association of Minnesota](#)
  - [Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans](#)
  - [Hmong Cultural Center](#)
  - [Minnesota Hmong Chamber of Commerce](#)
  - [Korean Association of Minnesota](#)
  - [Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota](#)
  - [Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota](#)
  - [Coalition for Asian American Leaders](#)
  - [Bhutanese Community of Minnesota](#)

## Internet and Device Access

### How can we collaborate with internet service providers?

Internet service providers are often willing to work with schools and districts to ensure that students are able to access distance learning. You may work through a Minnesota Educational Technology Network (METN) representative ([map](#)) who can support you, or you may contact service providers directly and ask the following questions:

- What service options are available?
- Are data caps in place? Can they be increased or eliminated?
- How might the school or district pay the internet costs for specific families?
- How might we work together to provide technical support for families experiencing connectivity problems?

Utilize data from your learning management system, teachers, and library service information to identify underserved students and families. Work with the family and the internet service providers serving their addresses to ensure adequate access. The Office of Broadband Development at the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) maps broadband availability in Minnesota. Using their

[interactive map](#), you can enter an address to find out which companies report having service available at that location. The map also provides links to those companies' websites so you can check to see if a discounted service offering is available.

- **Resources to help locate discounted internet service:**
  - [Digital Inclusion](#) resources from the Office of Broadband Development include information on internet service providers offering reduced rates for internet service.
  - The Office of Broadband Development is gathering links and contact information for companies with [service options related to COVID-19 response](#). This list is updated as the office receives new information.
  - [Digital Bridge K-12 from Education SuperHighway](#) offers a location-based guide to internet providers for students without internet access at home.
  - [EveryoneOn](#) provides location-specific information on low-cost internet service.
  - [The National Digital Inclusion Alliance](#) has a list of free and low-cost internet plans.
- **Minnesota companies offering discounted internet service:**
  - [Internet Essentials](#) from Comcast is a low-cost internet service. Families may be eligible for the program if they are also eligible for other public assistance programs (National School Lunch Program, Housing Assistance, Medicaid, SNAP, SSI, and others).
  - [Lifeline Support](#) is a federal program that offers discounts on internet services through participating internet service providers.
  - [PCs for People offers low-cost internet](#) for people who meet their low-income eligibility criteria.
  - [Comcast Lift Zones](#) are designed to provide a space for students to connect to internet for virtual education. More than 20 community centers in the Twin Cities will be Lift Zones for the next three years.

## How can families get access to devices?

Low-cost devices are available to those who qualify from organizations listed below. Some internet providers partner with customers who are already receiving low-cost internet services to provide them low-cost devices as well.

- [EveryoneOn](#) provides location-specific information on low-cost devices.
- [Internet Essentials from Comcast](#) offers laptop and desktop computers at discounted prices for individuals and families that are already Internet Essentials customers.
- [PCs for People](#) offers low-cost devices (prices ranging from \$0-150) for eligible recipients.
- Local public libraries also provide access to computer labs. [This map](#) shows public library locations in Minnesota regions.
- [Education Superhighway](#) provides more information and resources around connectivity and navigation.

## Assessing Inclusion

### What are the community needs?

Successful digital equity work depends in part on strategy. Taking the time to assess community needs in full, whether through surveys, focus groups, or other forms of research, can lead to better outcomes. The assessment tools below address four research questions related to digital equity.

- **Who lives in your service area?**
  - [Minnesota Compass](#) is a social indicators project that measures progress in our state and its communities. It provides nonpartisan, credible information and tracks trends in topic areas such as education, economy, workforce, health, housing, and a host of others.
  - Minnesota's Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System ([ECLDS](#)), combines data about children birth through pre-K collected by the state departments of Education, Human Services, and Health into one online, interactive database.
  - [Minnesota Report Card](#) is designed to provide easy access to important information about schools to help stakeholders make decisions and be engaged in education.
- **How ubiquitous and robust is internet service in your service area?**
  - [BroadbandNow](#) searches by zip code to prepare a summary of internet service providers available in that area, including their speed and pricing estimates.
  - [Speedtest](#) by Ookla is a definitive way to test the speed and performance of a user's current internet connection.
- **What are the digital literacy needs in our area?**
  - [Northstar](#) provides free digital literacy skills assessments in 12 areas, including basic computer skills, email, and Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and Excel. These assessments are useful in determining in which areas an individual may need additional digital literacy support.
  - [Privacy.net's](#) Analyzer uses a simple five-step assessment that can help users learn how to better guard their privacy and online security.

### What language access needs exist?

Language access is a civil right guaranteed and protected by [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) and the U.S. Department of Justice [Executive Order 13166](#). All recipients and conductors of federal funds must have a plan to provide timely and accurate language assistance to limited-English proficient individuals.

[The United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) recognizes that language inclusion in cyberspace is needed to improve digital access for communities experiencing language and cultural barriers. Possible solutions should include digital learning apps that operate in different languages, offer a simultaneous audio interpreting option, and utilize various strategies like the use of images and plain language to convey information.

Language access for limited-English speaking parents is not the same as language development instructions for parents with children who are English learners (EL). It is important to recognize this difference because each situation require its own set of solutions. In the context of distance learning:

- A parent must understand how to access and navigate the internet to support their children’s learning experience from home; whereas a child’s goal is to understand instructions that facilitate learning activities.
- Providing effective language assistance services is also a strategy for organizations to build meaningful relationships with stakeholders. In practice, however, one dimensional communication strategies such as translation and interpretation services are not sufficient to the scale of language assistance needs in linguistically diverse communities. The role of language involves much more than words used on a daily basis to navigate the world; language also embodies a people’s perspective of the world, collective lived experience, and values and beliefs.
- In the context of digital inclusion, the absence of linguistically diverse and robust supports prevent limited-English proficient parents from effectively navigating the internet, districts’ virtual learning apps, and using technology to support and enhance their personal and children’s learning experience. Multilingual support is also needed to improve connectivity, cyber security, and device usage.
- Since many immigrant and refugee-experienced communities are limited-English proficient, illiterate in their native language, and had little to no formal educational experiences prior to resettlement in America, using video and audio recordings are more effective engagement strategies for these particular groups.
- Seeing one’s native language and cultural identity represented in a meaningful way on any given platform is one of the most effective strategies to social engagement. For example:
  - [Common Voice](#) is a voice database designed to provide engineers with tools they need to build programs in different languages.
  - [Google Translate](#) is another effort by a tech company to promote language access and inclusion.

## Digital Literacy and Internet Safety

This section includes resources to help parents, teachers, students and library staff with digital literacy and internet safety. These resources include some beginning information for anyone just learning to use a computer, school-specific information, resources to practice safe internet usage, as well as helpful tools for online learning.

### Computer and Application Use:

Computers and mobile devices change rapidly. Knowing how to use them is an important skill that opens up opportunities. These resources cover basic computer and mobile device skills, including how to set up a new computer, download apps, and type using a keyboard.

#### Resources for adults (teachers and parents/guardians):

- **Basic Computer Use**
  - [Literacy MN Class Search](#) is a tool provided by Literacy MN that can help adults find organizations offering computer classes.
  - During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, [Northstar](#) is offering several online courses that teach about computer skills, ranging from basic skills to job searching.
  - [Getting Started with your Computer](#) by GCF Global offers computer basics lessons, including key vocabulary and pictures.
  - [How to use a Computer](#) by Computer Hope gives basic explanations of several computer functions, and links to similar articles.
  - [What is an Application?](#) by GFC Global is a basic explanation of how to use applications on a computer.
  - [How to use a Computer Keyboard](#) by Digital Unite is an explanation of common keyboard keys and their functions.
  - [Typing Academy](#) offers typing practice including tests, lessons, and other activities.
- **Mobile Devices**
  - [Android Help](#) by Google explains how to use mobile applications on Android devices.
  - [Download apps and games from the App Store](#) by Apple is an explanation of how to buy apps for Apple devices through the App Store.
  - [How to use and download apps in Windows 10](#) by Digital Unite gives an explanation of how to buy and download apps on devices running Windows 10.

#### Resources for K-12 students:

- [Typing Club](#) offers typing lessons and practices that are great for students that are just learning to type, or want to enhance their skills.

### School-Specific Software:

Schools use many different software to communicate with parents and students and deliver instruction to students. Knowing how to navigate the different programs in use will help insure students are receiving support at home and at school.

## Resources for adults (teachers and parents/guardians):

- [Learning with Technology](#) by Commonsense Media answers common questions from parents around children's technology use.
- [Wide Open School](#) by Commonsense Media offers resources and activity suggestions based on grade for effective online learning. This resource is great for teachers, or parents trying to help teach from home. [Disponible en Español](#)
- [Digital Tools to engage parents to support children's learning](#) from the Office of Head Start: Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center are guides created for early childhood professionals and explore digital tools designed to encourage parents to talk with their infants and children.
- **Schoology**
  - [Schoology for Instructors](#) offers a series of instructional videos that explain how instructors can effectively use Schoology.
  - [Parent Guide](#) by Schoology is a guide for parents that explains the many features and tools available on Schoology.
  - [Getting Started on Schoology for Instructors](#) is a guide for instructors on how to effectively use Schoology.
- **Canvas**
  - [Canvas 101 for Parents](#) is a guide for parents as to how Canvas is used by teachers and students.
  - [Canvas for Beginners](#) offers a basic introduction on how to use Canvas for parents, students, and instructors.
  - [Canvas LMS Tutorial](#) by Technology for Teachers and Students is a YouTube video about how to use the Canvas modules feature.

## Resources for K-12 students:

- [Canvas for Beginners](#) offers a basic introduction on how to use Canvas for parents, students, and instructors.
- [Canvas LMS Tutorial](#) by Technology for Teachers and Students is a YouTube video about how to use the Canvas modules feature.

## Internet Usage:

This section provides resources that can help you better understand common online phrases, internet connection set up, and navigation capabilities to ensure you get the most out of your experience.

## Resources for adults (teachers and parents/guardians):

- **Connectivity**
  - [How to set up a Personal Hotspot](#) by Apple offers an explanation of how to set up a Personal Hotspot on Apple mobile devices.
  - [Share a mobile connection by hotspot or tethering](#) on Android by Google explains how to set up a hotspot on Android mobile devices.
  - [Getting started with the Internet](#) by GFC Global is an article describing beginning information for using the internet, including connecting to WiFi.
- **Usage**

- [Northstar](#) offers self-guided modules that discuss the basics of using the internet, including information literacy.
- [How to Use the Internet](#) by LiteCast Media is a YouTube tutorial about the basics of internet usage.
- **Common Internet Phrases**
  - [Is your internet vocabulary up to par?](#) by OWDT is an explanation of common internet-related phrases and vocabulary.
  - [What do you know? Computer and Internet Vocabulary](#) by Internet Keep Safe Coalition is a vocabulary list of common computer and internet related words that are very helpful for beginners.

### Resources for K-12 students:

- Usage
  - [Databases vs. Search Engines: What's the Difference?](#) by College Library Services offers an explanation of how databases and search engines differ, and how to use each one.
- Connectivity
  - [How to set up a Personal Hotspot](#) by Apple offers an explanation of how to set up a Personal Hotspot on Apple mobile devices.
  - [Share a mobile connection by hotspot or tethering](#) on Android by Google explains how to set up a hotspot on Android mobile devices.

### Communication Tools:

This section offers resources and strategies to enhance communication with students and parents.

- [6 Tech Tools for Enhancing Communication in the Classroom](#) by Schoology Exchange is a list of helpful tech tools to use for online learning, that is great for instructors and parents.
- **Videoconferencing**
  - [Zoom for Teachers](#) by Learnit Training is a YouTube tutorial that teaches educators how to use Zoom for online classes.
  - [Tips and Tricks: Teachers Education on Zoom](#) offers helpful tips and information for instructors about how to use the Zoom platform for classes.
  - [Teachers' Essential Guide to Zoom](#) by Common Sense Education is a guide that answers common questions about utilizing Zoom for online learning.
- **Messaging**
  - [Remind](#) is a helpful messaging application targeted at easing communication between teachers, parents, and students.
  - [4 Communication Tools](#) by WGU is a list of communication tools that help teachers maintain contact with parents.
- **Google Apps**
  - [How-to Videos](#) by Metro South Adult Basic Education (ABE) CTEP is a YouTube playlist of how-to videos, mainly focusing on Google Meet and other Google programs used for online learning. This is a great resource for non-English speakers.

- [How to Use Google Drive](#) is part of the Google help center, and gives a brief overview of what Google Drive is, and how it works, and provides many links to helpful pages that discuss the many Drive functions.
- [How to Use Google Drive](#) by Digital Trends offers step-by-step directions for how to use Google Drive, and create new documents, slides, or sheets on this platform.

## Internet Safety

The internet is a valuable tool. Unfortunately, predators, identity thieves, and other bad actors online may try to cause harm. In order to be safe online, it is important to be aware of potential hazards.

### Resources for adults (teachers and parents/guardians):

- **Personal Safety**
  - [Cyber Safety](#) by InformED is a kid-friendly, interactive guide to staying safe on the Internet that addresses common pitfalls.
  - [Stay Safe Online](#) from the National Cyber Security Alliance contains information on staying safe online, online safety basics, theft, fraud, and cybercrime, key accounts and devices, and managing your privacy.
- **Responsible Internet Use**
  - [Google Digital Literacy and Citizenship Curriculum](#) with iKeepSafe is an interactive, discussion filled curriculum that educators can use in the classroom to teach what it means to be a responsible digital citizen.
  - [How To Be A Good Digital Parent](#) by Family Online Safety Institute is a comprehensive toolkit designed to teach parents and other caregivers to confidently navigate the web with their kids.
  - [Online Safety](#) by Microsoft has information and tips about internet safety and work to prevent and combat online bullying and harassment.

### Resources for K-12 students:

- **Personal safety**
  - [Safe Online Surfing](#) from the FBI is a fun, informative program that educates students in third to eighteen grade on the essentials of online security. Available in Spanish.
  - [Faux Paw the Techno Cat](#) by iKeepSafe are fun books, e-books, and videos that teach rules to promote the safe and healthy use of digital devices.
  - [NetSmartzKids](#) has videos, games, and activities that teach children about online safety with NetSmartz characters.
  - [OnGuardOnline](#) from the Federal Trade Commission has online security tips and resources, including videos and games for kids.
  - [Internet Safety for Kids](#) from GCFGlobal has tips and strategies to keep kids safe from hackers, predators, and cyberbullies.
  - [NetSmartz](#) by National Center for Missing and Exploited Children is an online safety education program that provides age-appropriate videos and activities to help teach children to be safer online.
- **Responsible Internet Use**
  - [InCtrl](#) by TeachInCtrl is a series of free standards-based lessons that teach key digital citizenship concepts for students in 4th-8th grade.

- [Be Internet Awesome](#) by Google is an online Safety curriculum that teaches kids the fundamentals of digital citizenship and safety through an online adventure called Interland.
- [Digital Citizenship Curriculum](#) by Common Sense Education has K-12 interactive lessons and activities to address timely topics and prepare students to take ownership of their digital lives.

## Recognizing Scams

Sometimes, it can be difficult to determine the validity of an online registration form, retail space, or other request for personal identifying information. It is essential to err on the side of caution and only share personal identifying information when the source is legitimate.

### Resources for adults (teachers and parents/guardians):

- [Online Safety](#) by USAGov has information about online safety and security, Internet fraud, and phishing and vishing.
- [Common Credit Card Scams](#) by GCFGlobal outlines the different types of credit card scams and what can be done to lessen the risks of having your information stolen.

## Security and Privacy

While some internet dangers—like scams cyberbullying—are visible and direct, other dangers—like privacy and security breaches—can happen without the user’s immediate knowledge. Anti-virus software and other security measures can provide broad protection.

### Resources for adults (teachers and parents/guardians):

- **Anti-Virus Software**
  - [Antivirus Software Buying Guide](#) by Consumer Reports outlines the different types of antivirus software, computer safekeeping features, and tips and safety measures for shopping.
  - [What to Look for in an Antivirus Software](#) by Kaspersky outlines the factors to consider when choosing antivirus software and includes common pitfalls and recommendations.
- **Security Strategies**
  - [Families’ Guide to Privacy Rights](#) from Commonsense Media provides resources for families to learn more about privacy and security.
  - [Online Security](#) by the Federal Trade Commission has information on how to protect your computer, your information, and your online files.
  - [Keep your computer secure at home](#) by Microsoft outlines ways to help reduce your online risk when you use your computer at home.
  - [What is Targeted Advertising?](#) by GCFGlobal contains information on targeted advertising, including how it works, invasion of privacy, and how to stop the advertisements.

## Information Literacy

The internet is a dynamic space for creating, sharing, and saving information. It is important to think critically about information found on the internet to determine whether or not it is from a credible source.

## Resources for adults (teachers and parents/guardians):

- **Thinking Critically About Information**
  - The Reference and User Services Association, a division of the American Library Association, provides a guide titled [“Primary Sources on the Web”](#) to help students find and evaluate primary source material.
  - [Civic Online Reasoning](#) by Stanford is a curriculum designed to help educators teach students the methods that fact checkers use to evaluate the trustworthiness of online sources.
  - [FactCheck.org](#) by the Annenberg Public Policy Center is a nonpartisan, nonprofit “consumer advocate” for voters that aims to reduce the level of deception and confusion in U.S. politics.
- **Identifying Misinformation in the News**
  - [News Literacy Project](#) is a nonpartisan national education nonprofit that provides programs and resources for educators and the public to teach, learn and share the abilities needed to be smart, active consumers of news and information and equal and engaged participants in a democracy.
  - [Informable](#) by News Literacy Project is a mobile app that tests and strengthens your news literacy knowledge.
  - [Checkology](#) by News Literacy Project has lessons and other resources that show you how to navigate today’s challenging information landscape.

## Supporting Distance Learners

### How might we help families navigate learning from home?

The experiences individual families have supporting students who are learning from home varies widely. Some families are working outside of the home and may not be able to provide support for students during school hours while other families may have one or more adults trying to work from home.

- [Supporting Learning from Home](#) (ISTE, National PTA) contains tips and tools to help you feel confident in supporting learning from home. [APOYANDO EL APRENDIZAJE DESDE LA CASA](#) (ISTE, National PTA)
- [Parent and Family Digital Learning Guide](#) (U.S. Department of Education, ED) aims to help all parents and caregivers, including those who have limited experience with digital tools, those who are expert with these tools, and anywhere in between. Each section starts with foundational pieces and builds from there.
- [Distance Learning Solutions](#) (UNESCO) list of educational applications, platforms and resources below aim to help parents, teachers, schools and school administrators facilitate student learning and provide social care and interaction during periods of school closure. Most of the solutions curated are free and many cater to multiple languages.
- [Supporting Learning During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) (IRIS) provides modules to help position parents to support their child’s learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- [Tips for Parents from Parents: Supporting Our Children with Online Learning](#) (National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations) includes a few tips from parents for parents on how to support children and yourself during online learning experiences
- [At Home Teaching and Learning](#) (National PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Center) provides guidance about how to best support at-home learning, focusing on two fundamentals of effective teaching and learning in the early grades: child development and equity.

## Effective Instruction

### What should instruction look like during distance learning?

Distance learning provides students the opportunity to continue to receive public education when they and their teachers can't be together in the same physical space at the same time. The role of the teacher, though it may look quite different in some ways, is crucial to the success of distance education. Every student deserves to have instruction and support of highly-qualified, licensed professionals in a public school. Instruction that includes **RIM**: regular, teacher-initiated interactions with each student that are meaningful to the academic and social-emotional learning goals provide a framework to build upon when developing a distance learning program. Though technology enables a broader variety of interactions, providing RIM is possible in any setting.

### Is there regular interaction between the teacher and student?

Students learn best when there is predictable, ongoing interaction with their teacher. This is especially important early on as trusted relationships are being formed. Both synchronous (same time/space) and asynchronous (different time/space) interactions can be useful to best suit the needs and circumstances of the student along with a variety of communication tools including telephone, web video or audio conference, instant messaging, discussion forums, threaded comments, and email. The duration and intensity of the interaction can vary based on the needs of the student and their demonstrated understanding of the topic or skill being developed but at minimum, there should be at least a checkpoint every day the course is scheduled to meet or while the competency is not met.

### Is the teacher initiating interaction with the student?

Independence and self-advocacy are desirable skills for learners to develop and teachers should scaffold their interactions with students so that they have opportunities to learn and develop these skills. However, core responsibilities for the teacher include explaining, assessing learning, providing feedback and care for every student in their class. During distance learning, teachers should initiate interaction with their students and follow up to provide further support for students who are not present or don't respond. Hosting "office hours" provides additional opportunities for students to interact with their teacher but this cannot be the primary mode of interaction.

### Is the interaction meaningful to the academic and social-emotional learning intentions?

Academic and social-emotional learning (SEL) goals should drive instruction. Meaningful interactions related to these goals support student learning development. Five key strategies for formative assessment (Leahy, Lyon, Thompson, Wiliam, 2005) provide some good examples of meaningful interaction that work at all grade levels:

1. Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and success criteria.
2. Engineering effective classroom discussions, activities and learning tasks that elicit evidence of learning.
3. Providing feedback that moves learning forward.

4. Activating learners as instructional resources for one another.
5. Activating learners as the owners of their own learning.

## Resources for course design and effective instruction

- [Teacher Development: Starter Kit for Teaching Online](#) by Edutopia offers beginning tips and tricks for teaching online.
- [10 Free Training Courses for Online Teachers](#) by GetEducated offers links to free online training courses for teachers switching to online teaching.
- [Verizon Innovative Learning Institute and Digital Promise](#) offer free micro-credentials for educators transitioning to distance learning.

## Connect with Professional Organizations

Many national and statewide content specific professional educator organizations have developed or curated instructional resources. MDE has also provided planning guidance and student instruction resources.

- [MDE 2020-21 Planning Guidance for Minnesota Public Schools](#) - The Academic Guidance section has instructional resources.
- [Minnesota Department of Education Student Instruction COVID-19 Resources](#) - Includes resources for academic content areas, career and technical education, multilingual learners, early learning, gifted education, and more.
- [Minnesota Department of Education Special Education COVID-19 Resources](#) - Includes resources for instruction, services, programming, and resources for families.
- [Minnesota Department of Education Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center COVID-19 Resources](#) – Includes resources for early childhood education providers.
- [Minnesota Science Teachers Association](#) - Resources for teaching remotely including lesson sharing, webinars, weblinks, and a remote resource forum.
- [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics](#) - Joint statement from NCSM and NCTM that provides guidance for mathematics teachers and leaders to make informed decisions including resources for effective mathematics teaching practices.
- [Minnesota Society of Health and Physical Educators](#) - Online and analog resources for physical education during distance learning.
- [Minnesota Music Educators Association](#) - Resources to support continued learning during school closures.
- [Art Educators of Minnesota](#) - Vetted list of resources for online schooling.
- [Perpich Center for Arts Education](#) - Perpich's arts education specialists have collected and created resources for Minnesota educators to use for distance learning.
- [Minnesota Arts and Museum Digital Resource Hub](#) - Digital learning materials, resources and content from cultural and arts organizations across the state of Minnesota.
- [Minnesota K-12 Arts and Museum Digital Resource Hub](#) - Digital learning materials, resources, and content from cultural and arts organizations across Minnesota.
- [Minnesota Council for the Social Studies](#) - Distance learning resources compiled by MDE in collaboration with social studies specialists.
- [National Council of Teachers of English](#) - Resources for virtual instruction and online learning.
- [Minnesota Reading Association](#) - Resources that support students instruction via distance learning.
- [Computer Science Teachers Association](#) - Resources for virtual teaching.

- [Information and Technology Educators of Minnesota](#) - COVID-19 resources.
- [Association for Career and Technical Education](#) - COVID-19 planning guide.
- [Minnesota Technology and Engineering Educators Association](#) - List of links for distance learning.
- [Minnesota Association of Family and Consumer Sciences](#) - Distance teaching and learning resources, COVID-19 resources, and e-learning professional development.
- [Minnesota FFA Association Teacher Resources](#) – The Distance Learning Drive is a shared folder with resources for distance learning instruction.