



Continuity of Learning

RESOURCES AND LINKS FOR EDUCATORS AND
POLICYMAKERS IN THE WAKE OF COVID-19

MARCH 2020

What Is Continuity of Learning?

Continuity of learning is an emergency response measure to ensure students can stay on their learning pathways during an interruption, such as a prolonged school closure or absence due to illness, natural disasters, conflict, or weather events. It is an essential part of schools' emergency management planning and is guided by a host of state and local policies, such as those regulating online learning, accountability, and equity.

Continuity of Learning

COVID-19 Planning - Academic Continuity in the Face of Nationwide School Closures

- Ready or not, many districts are suddenly grappling with how to continue student learning, in an equitable fashion, in the wake of unprecedented closures.
- Anytime, anywhere learning is a needed innovation to K-12 learning that is magnified by the current pandemic. Schools can be certain in a rapidly changing, and increasingly interconnected global economy, that they will again in the future need to transition from face-to-face to different forms of learning experiences.
- Now is the time for both rapid-response to the COVID-19 pandemic and long-term planning to ensure smoother transitions and to enable innovative, student-centered learning pathways.

Immediate Resources & Information

Public Health Guidance

Federal Interagency COVID-19 Response
▪ <https://www.coronavirus.gov/>

CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs
▪ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>
▪ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html>

NIH Coronavirus Page
▪ <https://www.nih.gov/health-information/coronavirus>

U.S. Department of Education Guidance

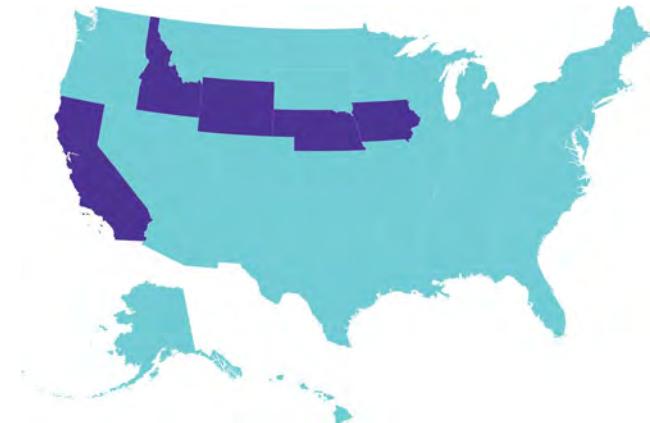
Fact Sheet: Impact of COVID-19 on Assessments and Accountability under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
▪ <https://oese.ed.gov/files/2020/03/COVID-19-OESE-FINAL-3.12.20.pdf>

Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Schools While Protecting the Civil Rights of Students
▪ <https://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ocr-coronavirus-fact-sheet.pdf>

The Readiness Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center website
▪ <https://rems.ed.gov/>

OCR Short Webinar on Online Education and Website Accessibility
▪ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCMLk4cES6A>

Coronavirus & School Closures



According to [Education Week](#), as of March 19, 2020, 44 states have closed schools. Combined with district closures in other states, at least 104,000 U.S. public and private schools are closed, are scheduled to close, or were closed and later reopened, affecting at least 47.9 million school students. States in blue have closed all districts; states in purple have close some districts.

Call to Action

Continuity of learning, in situations of crisis, provides physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection. Carrying on with one's learning journey not only ensures students progress and graduate on time with the requisite success skills, but also mitigates the impact of the crisis by offering a sense of normalcy, stability, and structure, tending to students' social-emotional needs.

As states review policies for learning continuity and as schools assess their communities' capacity for remote learning, including through online instruction, they can plan for both short-term and long-term needs by:

- **Preparing people**
- **Ensuring availability of instructional materials**
- **Accessing technology tools and platforms**
- **Conducting a readiness assessment**

Preparing People

- Teachers
 - Inventory internet access at home.
 - Train teachers on learning management systems, communication, and distance learning tools (low-tech and high-tech).
- Parents and Students
 - Inventory internet access at home in the case of a school dismissal.
 - Train students and parents to access materials and services (low-tech and high-tech).
 - Begin use of a blended environment under normal circumstances to ensure a smooth transition in the case of an emergency.
- Partners
 - Identify and/or train gap-fill tutors for online tutoring.

Ensuring Availability of Instructional Materials

What Instructional Materials Are Available?

- Create plans to consider:
 - Open educational resources (OER)
 - Syllabus and materials available via hand-out packets or over the internet;
 - Learning materials offered by third-party providers and full online courses led by schools
- Accelerate organization and access for state licensed, district licensed proprietary and open educational resources (digital, sharable, re-usable, adaptable, creative commons licensing).
- Invest in digital content and instructional materials that could be delivered at a distance and used in online learning.

Accessing Technology Tools and Platforms

Phone Conferencing

- Provide conference-calling solutions, messaging platforms like Skype.

Web Conferencing Solutions

- Provide synchronous class meeting solutions (e.g., Zoom, Google hangouts).

Learning Management System Solutions

- Provide blended learning throughout the year.
 - Provide synchronous and asynchronous class meetings with teachers and students, including live chats.
 - Allow students and parents to track progress with access to SLMS, learning objectives/units, digital lessons, modules, simulations, online discussions, and interactivity with teachers.
- Online Courses
 - Virtual Schools

Conducting a Readiness Assessment

Schools, districts and states could benefit from conducting proactive readiness assessments for remote educational activities and e-learning. An abbreviated example of a readiness assessment is below.

INVENTORY

Conduct an inventory of student and teachers' access to computers and reliable internet connections in their homes.

COMMUNICATION

Institute a plan and mechanism for quick communication with teachers, parents, and students.

LEARNING CONTINUITY PLAN

How can educational activities be equitably sustained while students are away from school?

POLICY

Review relevant policy at the local, state, and federal levels and work with policymakers to clarify open questions and gray areas.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

Assess content and curriculum resources and train students and teachers on how to use them.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Train administration, teachers, staff, students, and families on implementation of the learning continuity plan, online teaching and learning, instructional resources, and technology tools.

ONLINE PROGRAMS

Leverage state, ESA and local district online programs to serve as a resource to districts and schools. Build partnerships to support capacity during crises.

TECHNOLOGY

In addition to inventory and access, investigate critical learning transactions on different types of devices. Leverage expertise of broadband experts to expand access temporarily.

Open Issues

- Policy
 - What decisions has the state made regarding assessment and accountability issues?
 - If there is no mandate to provide instruction during the disruption, what guidance is available to resolve days of instruction, graduating seniors?
 - If online classes are offered to quarantined students, how is the online school to be reimbursed, and how will the credits be transferred?
 - Which level of government will be responsible for monitoring and administering such a program for quarantined students?
 - How would responsibilities be divided between the federal government and the U.S. Department of Education, state governments and departments of education, local governments, and school districts?
 - What union issues will need to be accounted for?

Sample Continuity of Learning Chart

STATUS	GREEN (No/Limited Student Infection)	YELLOW (Significant Student Infection)	ORANGE (Significant Student & Staff Infection)	RED (School/Campus Closure)
STUDENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lessons and exams as normalLeave of Absence students to access materials from e-learning system if available or in hard copy formatIsolate leave of absence students for assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Lectures, tutorials, and lab sessions continue as normal.Home quarantine order students access materials from e-learning system if available or in hard copy formatIsolate students who are ill for assessments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stop mass lectures and activities; replace by e-learning, if possibleTutorial via online tutorsLab sessions as normal, if possible or via online sessions, if possibleHome quarantine order students access materials from e-learning system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">E-Learning only via remote access for students from various locations, including homes.Support via online tutorsConduct assessments and evidence of work on e-portfolio and e-learning systems if possible; otherwise postpone.

Case Study: Singapore

- SARS outbreak in 2005, academic continuity
- E-learning as a key strategy for learning continuity
- Long-term e-learning plan:
 - Train every teacher to teach online.
 - Provide online learning in 100% of secondary schools.
 - All instructional materials are provided digitally and online.
 - Every teacher and secondary school uses a learning management system to deliver course materials and track student progress.
- e-Learning Week
 - Physically close schools 1 week annually to teach and learn online.



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www.aurora-institute.org



communications@aurora-institute.org



(703) 752-6216

