



Learning Continuity Readiness Assessment

This readiness assessment was developed for schools and districts planning for academic continuity in the case of a pandemic or natural disaster causing school buildings to be shut down. Online learning can be a solution for learning continuity when institutions are planning for pandemics, times of crises, weather, and school closings. The questions below should be considered to plan for learning to continue outside of the classroom in the case of a school closure. Aurora Institute can serve as a resource for learning continuity planning.

Management

These questions help leadership determine which technologies are available outside of the school for both staff and students. The questions support staffing arrangements and planning, as well as communication with media, families, and the public. They also assist in the development of a learning continuity plan, so everyone knows their role in ensuring learning continues.

Access Inventory

1. Conduct an inventory of student and teachers' access to computers and reliable internet connections in their homes.
 - Do you know which teachers have home computers?
 - Do you know which teachers have internet?
 - Do teachers know how to deliver a lesson online and collect student work?
 - Do teachers have all home phone numbers and backup cell numbers for every parent and student?
 - Do you know which students have a computer and internet at home?
 - What will you do for students who have no computer or internet?
2. Based on the inventory, is there a plan to get computers/hardware to each of the students who do not have access to them?
3. Is anyone dependent on having an internet connection, and how will you provide that in a natural disaster?
4. How can quarantined students be given access to computers?



Communication

1. Do you have a plan and mechanism in place for quick communication with teachers, parents, and students?
2. Can you transmit student records and/or transcripts?
3. Is your school communication dependent on dial-in phone lines that may go down during natural disasters?
4. Do your managers have contact data for all their employees in hard copy?
5. How will you keep parents informed (methods, frequency)?
6. Who will deal with media questions?
7. If your school is not functional, who will inform the community about the changed communication methods? Who will update your website and social media outlets? Who will change your school phone message? Who will push a broadcast message to parents?
8. Do you have an emergency call tree, and have you tested it?

Learning Continuity Plan

1. How can educational activities be sustained while children are away from school?
2. Are you practicing and reviewing your learning continuity plan regularly, when it fails or when personnel change, and do you regularly test their functionality?
3. Should any prioritization for graduating seniors be considered?
4. What determines when a disaster is over? Who determines that?
5. Simulations to predict the pattern of infection of COVID-19 and the duration of school closings. When will schools close (% of sick students and staff)? Develop predictions state-by-state (average # of students per week absent, CDC data). Differing levels of severity may trigger differing responses.
6. What is the time frame for transition to internet-based instruction for a segment of the student population at a school and for the whole school?
7. Are your staff and substitutes familiar with your process for handling disaster situations, and do they know their role?
8. Do team members know they are in a critical role and understand what they should do if there is a disaster?
9. Are your students and parents familiar with your process for handling disaster situations, and do they know their role?
10. Do you know the critical roles that must be filled, and who can fill them?



11. Does every person in a critical role at a minimum have a full copy of your learning continuity plan at home in hard copy?
12. Do you have a consistent plan for backups of important information from personal computers to a common location?
13. Do you know the threshold of affected people before you must close your school?
14. Have you considered partnering with community leaders, organizations, and businesses in planning for delivery of instruction to ensure learning continuity during pandemic or disaster situations?
15. If social distancing is enacted, or your school becomes a temporary medical clinic, how will your school:
 - Provide meals for students
 - Deliver instruction
 - Communicate with parents
 - Communicate with media
 - Keep IT structures running
 - Ensure students are supervised at home
 - Deliver required services to students with exceptional needs
 - Provide counseling needs
 - Provide class schedule changes
16. Do you have a plan for hiring on a temporary basis if necessary?
17. What will you do if an employee becomes sick while traveling and cannot return home? How will you cover their roles until travel resumes?
18. What are the pay policies for people preparing for or affected by a natural disaster?
19. How will you maintain payroll?
20. What are the pay policies for a sick or quarantined employee or one caring for a family member?
21. Can quarantined employees work from home?
22. What will you do when a significant number of instructors are affected in a department so coverage cannot be easily arranged?
23. What is the return-to-work or return-to-class policy for sick employees or those caring for sick family members?
24. How will non-exempt employees clock in and out?
25. Can you stagger work shifts to reduce the number of employees and students in contact?



Policy

Policies at the local, state, and federal levels need to be reviewed before implementing a learning continuity plan. School and district leaders should work with local policymakers to ensure these questions have been addressed.

1. If online classes are offered to quarantined students, how is the online school to be reimbursed, and how will the credits be transferred?
2. Which level of government will be responsible for monitoring and administering an e-learning program for quarantined students?
3. 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?
4. What union issues could emerge and require consideration?

Instructional Resources

Content and curriculum resources should be in place, and teachers and students trained on how to use them before a plan is implemented. Working with these resources will ensure a smooth transition into the learning continuity plan.

1. What content is available in a digital format to provide to students from a distance?
2. Do you have an online repository of all district curriculum offerings?
3. How is digital content/curriculum created or selected? How is it organized and aligned to individual state standards?
4. How is the digital content/curriculum managed, housed, updated, and delivered?
5. What types of assessments are provided?
6. How are assessments created or selected?
7. What other tools will be needed to deliver instruction in the short term? Long term?
8. Vendors and partners could assist with enrolling and tracking students in e-learning programs. Should they be organized nationally, regionally, by state, district, or school?
9. What type of technical support will be needed for thousands of users new to online learning systems?
10. Is there availability of online courses through the school and/or through partnerships?



11. What types of course design/instructional design is appropriate for elementary, middle, and high school?
12. What is the lead time for teachers to have their course curriculum online before students begin? Should the curriculum mirror what is being taught in the face-to-face classroom?
13. Should educational activities be sustained for all courses or limited to core courses?
14. What is the role of textbooks? Should policy require that all content be available digitally?
15. What student support strategies are appropriate for elementary, middle, and high school students?
16. Do you have emergency lessons prepared for students for short-term school closures? How will students receive the lessons?
17. Are teachers aware of what their team members are teaching in the event that they must temporarily take over a class?
18. How will you deliver instruction to a child who is quarantined or socially distanced?
19. How will teachers deliver and collect student work?
20. Do students have a backup syllabus or lessons available in print form in a safe location at home?
21. How will you decide what lessons to make available for an immediate continuity need, given you will not know where you are in your teaching plans if a disaster strikes?
22. Do you know what happens if social distancing takes place during a state or school mandatory testing period?

Professional Development

Professional development for all people involved in the learning continuity plan should be provided. This includes administration, teachers, staff, students, and families. Training should be provided but not limited to the implementation of the plan, instructional resources, and technology tools.

1. Does your staff currently incorporate online instruction in their face-to-face classrooms so that teachers and students become comfortable with this type of content delivery?
2. Has your staff received at least basic training in the creation and delivery of online content?
3. Does your staff have access and training relating to web conferencing tools?



4. What is the role of the teacher during a school closing? Administrator? Other school personnel?
5. What professional learning/training will be needed for teachers? Administrators? Other school personnel?
6. Can teachers be transitioned into an online course (content from an online school or online program) or create their own courses?
7. Online schools have online training programs in place for their new teachers. Could these resources be used to train face-to-face teachers before a need arises?

Role of Virtual Schools

State and local district online learning programs can serve as a resource to school districts and individual schools. Finding the schools and building partnerships can help ensure a smooth transition into learning continuity for all students.

1. What is the role of state virtual schools? What is the role of district-level online programs? Investigate the capability of existing virtual entities to serve larger numbers of students quickly for a limited time.
2. Create a transition plan for state virtual schools and district level online programs to serve middle school and high school students. State virtual schools may be limited by degree of automation of processes and budgets.
3. What is the cost of creating course shells at state virtual schools or district level online programs for use by face-to-face teachers? What is the cost of enrolling students and teachers?
4. Differing models will need to be developed for K-5 (one teacher/student) and 6-12 (multiple teachers/student)?

Technology

Technology tools should be in place, and teachers and students trained on how to use them before a plan is implemented. Working within these tools will ensure a smooth transition into the learning continuity plan.

1. Does your staff have access to a distance learning platform/learning management system (LMS)?
2. Is there an inventory of computers and mobile devices that are accessible to students/teachers/administrators outside of school to



develop a 1:1 computing environment using a combination of student-owned and school-owned devices?

3. Have you conducted an analysis of critical learning transactions that can be carried out on mobile devices vs. computers?
4. Investigate the role of wireless, WiMAX, and satellite internet providers to provide access to all stakeholders as well as the ability to increase capacity rapidly.
5. Leverage expertise of broadband experts, telecommunications providers, and others, such as Connected Nation, to increase the number of households with internet access.
6. Provide recommendations for purchasing educational technology hardware that will facilitate portability (i.e., laptops vs. desktop labs)
7. Should SIS and ERP systems be integrated with LMS?
8. Have you developed standards for acceptable levels of technology, internet, transfer of information, service levels, training, etc. for an academic continuity initiative?

Website Capabilities

- Ability to quickly publish information to the web
- Ability to broadcast emergency messages to teachers, students, and parents through email, SMS, and other technologies (preferably integrated with state and federal emergency alert systems)
- Online collaboration tools to help facilitate planning and response for teachers and administrators
- Remote hosting with disaster recovery services.
- Capability to electronically report school absences and closures to CDC

About Aurora Institute

The mission of the Aurora Institute is to drive the transformation of education systems and accelerate the advancement of breakthrough policies and practices to ensure high-quality learning for all.