

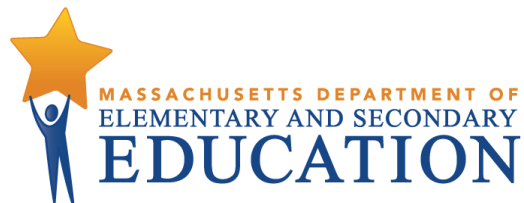


Strengthening Our Remote Learning Experience

Guidance for Massachusetts districts and schools

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

April 2020



Introduction from Commissioner Jeffrey C. Riley

Superintendents, Executive Directors, Principals, Educators, and Staff:

It is hard to overstate the societal and educational challenges that confront us as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Let me begin with wishes that you and your loved ones are safe and healthy in these unprecedented times.

When schools closed on March 17, 2020 by executive order, we said that our first priority throughout this crisis would always be the health and wellness of our students and staff.

That first week – what I call “Phase I” – we prioritized student and staff safety, nutrition, and other foundational needs. We helped districts set up over 1,300 meal distribution centers; began work to expand technology and internet access; secured a partnership with WGBH to provide academic programming for all students, particularly those without access to technology; and encouraged districts to continue to pay their hourly staff.

On March 26, in parallel with the Governor’s announcement that school closures were extended until at least May 4, we began “Phase II” with the release of initial guidance on remote learning. That initial guidance was built in close collaboration with stakeholders to provide a strong and aligned coalition for the challenging work that lay ahead. We established guiding principles and broad outlines of our state’s remote learning strategy and addressed the most pressing questions facing districts and schools.

We are gratified that this collaborative effort has been recognized by other state education agencies, some of which have adopted our language, and by independent entities like the [MIT Teaching Systems Lab](#), which gave Massachusetts the second highest score of any state for the strength of our guidance. We recognize, however, that this crisis demands that we continuously improve our guidance in support of our educational community.

We know that the shift to remote learning is challenging. I am impressed and grateful at how quickly districts, schools, educators, and support staff rose to the challenge and launched updated remote learning plans. While much work remains, students are connecting with educators and learning remotely, families are supporting this work, and all of us are adjusting to a new and evolving reality.

Superintendents and principals have had the challenge of responding to those who say there is not enough remote learning and others who say the volume of lessons and assignments is overwhelming. Educators, many of whom are also navigating personal challenges caring for their own children and other loved ones, are doing their best to move learning forward while supporting students’ social emotional needs, often well into the evening hours. And parents and caregivers are navigating the instructional experience with teachers and students, all while balancing their own work and personal responsibilities. As this crisis continues, we must all pull together to reduce the pressure on each of us in our respective roles.

Here at the state level, we have been working to provide relief to schools. We sought and were approved for waivers from the federal government which allow districts to more easily feed our children. We sought and were approved for waivers that allow districts greater flexibility in carrying over dollars to spend next year. We asked for and were granted permission by the Governor to extend license

renewals for 90 days until after the state of emergency ends. And we applied for and received a waiver from the federal government and worked with the state legislature, enabling us to cancel MCAS testing for grades 3-10 this spring.

With these initial weeks and decisions behind us and with the Governor's extension of school closures through the end of the school year, we are publishing a second round of remote learning recommendations to help districts and schools begin "Phase III."

In Phase III, I am looking for districts and schools to continue to enhance and refine their remote learning plans. I know districts and schools are already moving down this path based on their own experiences in these initial weeks, and the hope is that this guidance can both affirm work already underway and provide some additional ideas and strategies.

This document builds on the [initial guidance released on March 26](#) (*download*), with a deeper focus on two areas:

- **Further defining the recommended elements of a quality remote learning program, including a focus on teaching the content standards most critical for student success in the next grade level.**
- **Encouraging districts to move all students towards successful engagement in remote learning, with a focus on addressing fundamental needs.**

The first bullet may be the key ingredient in our new guidance. While we are not expecting teachers to cover all grade level standards this year, we are now asking you to go further than before. We think a focus on the prerequisite standards most critical to student success in the next school year will best support our students' learning.

In short order, districts and schools should also expect to see separate guidance around critical operational matters related to closing out the school year remotely.

All of this will help us prepare for our final phase of this work – "Phase IV" – when students and staff will re-enter school. In that phase, we will also need to support students with unfinished learning and prioritize additional supports to help catch them up.

Finally, I want to stress the importance of completing the 2020 Census. With fiscal headwinds likely ahead, we as a community must remind families and our communities how critical being counted is to the future funding of our schools.

As always, thank you for your extraordinary efforts on behalf of our Commonwealth's children and families.

Jeffrey C. Riley
Commissioner

Beyond the guidance: How DESE will continue to support remote learning in the Commonwealth

The release of this updated guidance is just one of many steps we are taking at DESE to enhance remote learning across the Commonwealth. In the coming weeks, you will see us take the following steps in collaboration with stakeholders:

- **Continuing to listen and learn from stakeholders' experience with remote learning:** We will conduct surveys and interviews with educators, principals, superintendents, families, and students to better understand the day-to-day successes and challenges. We will identify best practices and new supports DESE can provide based on the ongoing experiences of our stakeholders.
- **Continuing to address students' and families' technology needs:** We are collecting data and convening stakeholders to identify the most efficient and effective plan to make necessary technology available to our students and families across the Commonwealth, including devices, internet connectivity, and technical support and training with technology for students and families. We will share additional information in the coming weeks.
- **Best practice sharing and professional development for educators:** We will be organizing opportunities for educators to network and share expertise and resources around remote learning, including engaging projects and tasks that could be provided to students in both online and offline formats. We will also make opt-in, statewide professional development opportunities on online learning available for educators and administrators.
- **Creating an updated guidance document for families:** We will create a more family-friendly version of this guidance.
- **Planning for school re-entry:** As we listen to public health experts, we must confront the possibility that re-entry into school might require social distancing and hygiene measures to ensure the safety of students and staff. We will work with health experts, the education community, and stakeholders to begin preparing for re-entry possibilities and will share more information in the coming weeks.
- **Building out remote learning resources:** We update the DESE homepage (<http://www.doe.mass.edu/>) on a rolling basis with additional resources and links to useful information. We recognize that the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are fast moving, and we will need to continue to issue guidance on various facets of remote learning in the coming weeks and months.

Overview of guidance

As we prepare to continue remote learning through the end of the school year, this document:

- **Further defines the recommended elements of a quality remote learning program, including a focus on teaching the content standards most critical for student success in the next grade level.**
- **Encourages districts to move all students towards successful engagement in remote learning, with a focus on addressing fundamental needs.**

This is not a comprehensive guide to designing and implementing a remote learning model. Districts and schools in Massachusetts have already established structured remote learning models based on their local needs and guidance that DESE released on March 26, 2020. Instead, the hope is that this guidance can both affirm work already underway and provide some additional ideas and strategies. **We recommend that districts and schools take time to process this guidance and work to enhance their remote programs by early May.**

We deliberately called this document “Strengthening **our** remote learning experience.” While we focus primarily on students’ remote learning experience, we know that the student experience is tightly connected to the educator and family experience, as remote learning has been a paradigm shift for the entire educational community. Therefore, this document also provides recommendations intended to support teachers, staff, and families.

Building from initial guidance issued in March

Review of guiding principles

In our March 26, 2020 guidance, we committed to a set of guiding principles focused on the holistic needs of our educational community, with an emphasis on supporting our most vulnerable learners. **These principles must continue to guide our work:**

- **The safety and well-being of students, families, and staff has been and must continue to be our top priority as an educational community.** We are focused not only on physical health, safety, and nutrition, but also on social-emotional and mental health needs, which could intensify during this time.
- **This crisis disproportionately affects our most vulnerable students in terms of their physical and mental health and also academically. Equity needs to be a top consideration in local planning efforts, especially as districts and schools make plans to manage an extended closure.** To support these efforts, DESE has issued further guidance on how best to support special populations, including [students with disabilities](#) and [English learners](#).
- **Maintaining connections between school staff, students, and families is paramount, particularly for the most vulnerable members of our school communities.** These connections will help guide districts and schools in addressing students’ specific needs.

Features of remote learning

What is remote learning? Remote learning takes place when a student and teacher are separated by time and/or physical distance. It is important to note that remote learning in a pandemic is different from remote learning in a non-emergency environment.

In our initial guidance, we noted the following definition and scope of remote learning:

- **Remote learning can encompass a wide variety of learning opportunities.** While technology can be a supportive tool, districts and schools should also consider ways that student learning can continue offline. This could include exploring the natural world, activities to support students' local communities (with appropriate social distancing), and engaging hands-on projects and artistic creations that stem from students' own passions and experiences.
- **Examples of remote learning tools include large group video or audio conference calls, 1:1 phone or video calls, email, work packets, projects, reading lists, online learning platforms, and other resources to effectively engage with students.** These tools could be used to deliver lessons, provide individual student support, provide resources (including instructional material and student assignments), connect students to each other and the teacher, and provide feedback on student work. Districts and schools should ensure all online learning platforms meet confidentiality and student privacy standards.

In our initial guidance, we recommended that students should engage in meaningful and productive learning for approximately **half the length of a regular school day** through a combination of educator-directed learning and student self-directed learning. At the same time, we affirmed that the individual student experience would vary based on factors including student age, individual and family needs, and critical wellness and readiness factors like student and family health, technology, and internet access.

We further specified the following essential components of a remote learning model: the importance of **connections** with educators, access to **academic content** with an emphasis on applying and deepening previously taught skills, and time each day for **exercise** and **enrichment** activities.

Grading and promotion

Finally, in our initial guidance, we recommended that **academic content be graded as "credit/no credit"** so as to incentivize continuous learning while acknowledging the challenging situation we face. Specific high school guidance on grading and graduation will be forthcoming.

With the extension of remote learning through the end of the school year, **we want to expand on this recommendation to encourage districts and schools to promote students to the next grade level**, an action supported by research.

Goals and actions for remote learning's next phase

Our initial guidance, particularly the guiding principles, provides clear direction to keep equity at the forefront of our efforts to improve remote learning and to maintain focus on our most vulnerable students. We must continue to work towards an effective and equitable learning experience for all. With this in mind, **we recommend districts and schools focus on the following goal through the end of the school year:**

Move all students toward consistent engagement in remote learning, with a focus on connectedness and on the content standards most critical for success in the next grade.

To do this, we recommend that districts and schools take the following steps:

Strengthen the remote learning program for all students. We recommend that districts and schools focus on the following elements to ensure a strong baseline remote learning program. Please note, the only area where we are materially modifying our initial recommendations is the focus on covering the prerequisite content standards (#2 below):

- 1. Prioritize meaningful connections with educators and peers.**
- 2. Provide engaging core instruction focused on the prerequisite content standards that are most critical for student success in the next grade.**
- 3. Offer opportunities for enrichment, exercise, and play.**
- 4. Ensure programming is accessible and secure and communication is streamlined for students and their families.**

Develop a system for identifying and supporting students not effectively engaged in remote learning. We recommend that districts and schools:

- 1. Collect information to understand each student's level of engagement in remote learning.**
- 2. Provide supports to further engage all students, with a focus on meeting foundational student needs.**

We also encourage districts and schools to:

Consider the strategic collaboration, teaming, and differentiated roles that remote learning makes possible. Rethinking traditional responsibilities and eliminating duplicative work can ease the pressures on educators and make the best use of their unique skills.

The rest of this guide provides concrete recommendations, best practices, and resources to strengthen the remote learning experience and accomplish the work outlined on the previous page of this document. It is organized into two parts:

- Part 1: Strengthening the remote learning program for all students**
- Part 2: Developing a system for identifying and supporting students not effectively engaging in remote learning**

Throughout these pages, we will also provide several “working together” tips, quick ideas for making this work manageable for school teams.

Part 1: Strengthening the remote learning program for all students

In this section, we provide further guidance on elements of a quality remote learning model.

Strong remote learning programming should*:

1. **Prioritize meaningful connections with educators and peers**
2. **Provide engaging core instruction focused on the content standards most critical for student success in the next grade**
3. **Offer opportunities for enrichment, exercise, and play**
4. **Ensure programming is accessible and communication is streamlined for students and families**

*We acknowledge that foundational student wellness and readiness is a critical prerequisite for students to engage in remote learning. This is discussed at length later in this document.

1. Prioritize meaningful connections with educators and peers

It is [well-documented](#) that meaningful relationships can insulate children from the effects of trauma and serve as a buffer against toxic stress. **Particularly for students who value their relationships with educators and peers at school, maintaining regular connections that provide an opportunity for supportive two-way interaction is critical.**

A quality remote learning program will ensure that opportunities for connection are woven throughout core instruction and enrichment opportunities. Separate group or individual check-ins focused on students' social-emotional health and well-being are also highly encouraged for all students.

Examples of strategies that facilitate these connections include:

- **Starting blocks of synchronous (“live”) lessons with “morning meeting” or “opening circle” activities** designed to build connection.
- **Synchronous weekly advisory group meetings** led by an advisory teacher or student leader.
- **Regular teacher “office hours”** when students can drop in via computer or phone to get help with assignments and/or check in with their teacher.
- **Individual calls to students from educators and staff** to check on students' well-being or to review feedback on student work.
- **Opt-in, interest-based peer groups**, such as a book club, drawing workshop, sing-along group, etc. led by educators, paraprofessionals, or students.
- **Counselor-facilitated peer support groups** organized around a common need.

2. Provide engaging core instruction focused on the content standards most critical for student success in the next grade

NEW: Focus on the prerequisite content standards that are critical for success in the next grade

In our March 26 guidance, we urged districts and schools to focus on reinforcing previously taught content. We are updating this guidance based on further direction from the U.S. Department of Education and in light of schools remaining closed through the end of the school year.

While we are not asking teachers to cover all standards this year, we are asking educators to go further than reviewing material previously covered.

When planning future remote learning lessons, we recommend districts and schools focus on those standards that are the most critical prerequisites for student success in the next grade. Since many standards will already have been covered prior to the closures, we anticipate that some time would still be spent on reinforcement.

We have compiled an elementary and a secondary guide to the prerequisite content standards critical for success in the next grade for math, English language arts, science, and history/social studies. This resource is only to be used during school closure due to COVID-19. These guides are available as separate attachments that accompany this document and will soon be posted on DESE's website.

Emphasize student engagement in core instruction

In a remote learning context, making core instruction engaging for students is more important than ever. There are multiple methods administrators and educators can use to prioritize engagement when creating or curating remote learning content.

In Appendix A, we have curated a remote learning resource list for English language arts/literacy, math, science, history/social studies, and digital learning as well as resources for English learners, to make this process as easy as possible for educators.

There are many ways to maximize student engagement through remote learning, including:

- Curriculum that provides **real-world applications for learning**,
- Gamified, **self-paced learning platforms** that provide frequent feedback,
- **Frequent feedback** on student work, with celebrations of progress,
- **Project-based learning** on an engaging, socially relevant topic, with clear links to standards and supports for students. This could be provided via online platforms or mailed packets.

In addition to the resources listed in Appendix A, we will be working to create a repository of project-based learning examples, including digital and non-digital projects.

One of these methods is not necessarily better than the other; school communities should choose strategies that work for their students and staff.

[Ensure supports and scaffolds for students with disabilities and English learners](#)

Special education and English as a second language (ESL) teachers should ensure appropriate supports and scaffolds are in place for students with disabilities and English learners.

Please click [here](#) for our guidance on special education.

Please click [here](#) for our guidance on English learners.

Working together: Consider co-planning and co-teaching opportunities among content teachers, special education teachers, and ESL teachers.

- **Remote learning opens up new possibilities for regular co-planning and co-teaching given various technological formats**, including larger whole class instructional formats and the ability to create breakout groups assigned to specific teachers.

[Provide a manageable number of lessons and assignments](#)

Administrators and educators should treat time that students are spending on core instructional work as precious, particularly in elementary grades where student attention spans are shorter. We encourage schools and educators to coordinate across each grade level so that students receive a manageable number of lessons and assignments each day.

As stated in the March 26 guidance, the overall student remote learning day is expected to last roughly half as long as a normal school day. **However, academic time on task should appropriately vary by grade level**, with enrichment opportunities filling in the remaining remote learning time.

Working together: Consider encouraging educator collaboration and differentiating responsibilities over components of the learning process.

- For example, in a larger school, **one content area teacher could be responsible for planning curriculum and recording remote lessons. Other content area teachers could take responsibility for following up with students in small groups** and providing feedback on student work. Roles could be assigned based on educators' strengths and interests.
- **District leaders could also connect smaller schools to encourage teachers to share curricular resources and duties** (e.g., teachers rotate responsibility for planning curriculum and recording lessons). Reducing the planning load would allow each teacher to spend more time on personalized engagement with their students.

3. Offer opportunities for enrichment, exercise, and play

A quality remote learning model also provides students with access to enrichment, exercise, and play-based activities that support their mental and physical health. We recommend that districts and schools offer students a menu of opportunities for enrichment, exercise, and play. **Schools should include suggestions for activities the student can engage in independently at home, as well as opt-in opportunities to participate in structured activities with a teacher and/or peers.** Engagement in either independent or school-provided opportunities should be acceptable.

Examples of **opt-in**, school-provided enrichment opportunities include:

- **Daily physical education class** (e.g., yoga or calisthenics) provided by a physical education teacher synchronously (“live”) and also posted asynchronously (e.g., recorded)
- **Workshops or lessons** provided by specialist teachers in art (drawing, singing, or musical instruments), sports clinics (footwork, skill development), etc.
- **Interest-based workshop lessons** provided by educators or support staff in their own areas of interest or hobbies (e.g. origami, cartoon drawing, speech/debate, etc.)

4. Ensure programming is accessible and secure and communication is streamlined

The degree of accessibility and quality of communication from the school to students and families is critical for a quality remote learning program.

[Streamline communication to help students and families organize their remote learning](#)

To support students and families in structuring their remote learning, administrators and educators should consider the following:

- **Plan and communicate remote learning content in weekly doses.** Planning and organizing lessons, assignments, and meetings one week at a time instead of day-by-day will allow students and families to plan time for schoolwork within their own daily routines and needs.
- **Send out one communication with assignments and meeting times before the week begins.** Aim to post all assignments and meetings for the week no later than the Friday before the upcoming school week. Unless appropriate based on context, do not send out meeting invitations the day of the meeting.
- **Provide sample daily schedules** to suggest ways that students can organize their time, including an approach for dividing up their work across the days of the week.
- **Provide a weekly checklist** of all assignments. If the checklist will be submitted, be sure to provide an option for students to either: verify they have completed the assignment; note that they will complete the assignment at a later date; or acknowledge they have not completed the assignment and provide a reason.
- **Clearly differentiate between required and optional assignments and meetings.** Ensure there is an easy way for families and students to quickly zero in on the lessons and assignments that are required.
- **Coordinate efforts between districts and schools to align on communication to families** to ensure families are receiving a manageable number of emails and/or calls.

- **Provide an (opt-in) opportunity for families to meet regularly with the teacher/teaching team** to address any issues a student may be having accessing or completing remote learning lessons, meetings, or assignments.
- **To the extent possible, streamline the platforms, web tools, logins, and passwords** used across a school and district.

It is also critical that districts and schools ensure all technology tools, products, and resources meet legal requirements for student data privacy and security. Please see **Appendix B** for more information.

[Prioritize asynchronous \(e.g., recorded\) lessons for remote learning](#)

We generally recommend that schools and educators deliver instructional lessons intended for all students in an **asynchronous format** (e.g., record a video of the lesson as opposed to asking students to tune in at a specific hour to watch it “live”). Benefits of this approach include:

- Freeing up educator time during the school day to provide synchronous (“live”) support to students who may need extra support.
- Accessibility for all students and families who may have conflicting commitments or responsibilities during the school day.
- Ability for students to watch lessons multiple times as needed while completing assignments.

If synchronous (“live”) lessons are preferred based on local needs or preferences, we recommend:

- Offering the lesson in multiple time slots if possible.
- Separately recording and posting the lesson asynchronously (this must be done separately to ensure no students are recorded).

Part 2: Developing a system for identifying and supporting students not effectively engaged in remote learning

Across our communities, many students are effectively engaging in the core remote learning program. But what about students who aren’t being reached? What about students who only engage intermittently? What about those who need additional mental health or other foundational supports?

We can only move all students toward consistent engagement in the core remote learning program by identifying and addressing the specific barriers students are facing. This requires a system for collecting information about student and family needs, piloting potential supports, and assessing their impact. While such work is time-intensive, we have a moral obligation to do all we can to reach and engage all of our children.

One option to consider is using a tiered support model, through which districts and schools regularly review student needs to 1) inform the program provided to all students and 2) develop targeted supports where needed, both for specific student groups and individual students. For more information about using a tiered support model in remote learning, please see **Appendix C**.

Below are some recommendations and examples districts and schools may find useful regardless of the system they choose to adopt.

1. Collect information to understand each student’s level of engagement in remote learning

Because of the specific and diverse challenges students are facing, some of this information will likely need to be collected through individual calls with families. Other information could be collected from teachers or monitored through student work.

Working together: We recognize that collecting this level of personalized information about student needs takes time and effort. Enlisting a variety of staff can lighten the workload.

- **With appropriate training, schools could assign a variety of staff members (teachers, paraprofessionals, and student support staff, including counselors and others) to a small group of students.** This would allow for frequent outreach and routine points of connection while reducing the student caseload for educators.
- **Think creatively when assigning staff to reach out to families and students.** So long as effective training is provided that emphasizes the supportive nature of outreach, support staff who may have built positive relationships with students could be especially effective in reaching certain families.

All members of the outreach team should be clear that the purpose of collecting this information is for support, not compliance. Students should never be shamed or disciplined for lack of engagement. Instead, the purpose of the calls is to understand the needs that are preventing the student from engaging in schoolwork, with the goal of ultimately providing support to meet those needs. In addition, staff should receive training and a sample script to use when contacting families (please see **Appendix D** for an example script). Staff should be available to place calls in a family’s home language if needed.

Below is a sample process for collecting information and providing follow up support.

Plan and prepare:

- **Collect and review existing information:** Gather existing information from teachers to understand current student engagement and potential student needs (e.g. teacher reports being in contact with a student about a recent assignment or knows that a student lacks internet access). It can be helpful to collect this information in a central and secure location.
- **Identify students/families for targeted outreach:** Identify students who are not engaging regularly and flag the need for additional information to find out why.
- **Assign staff to each student/family:** Split up responsibility for individual student/family contact across the school leadership team, student support team members, guidance counselors, teachers, paraprofessionals and/or other staff.

Connect and follow up:

- **Connect with students/families to identify barriers to engagement:** Call each student/family to identify barriers preventing students from engaging in core lessons and assignments.
- **Determine next steps** to support each student, potentially in consultation with the student support team and/or administrator. This could include making the baseline remote learning program more accessible to all students based on trends, a follow up call from a school counselor, or connecting the family with other resources.

- **Follow up** with each student and family over the next few days/week. If appropriate, set a goal with the student for increasing engagement in remote learning and celebrate successes, even if small.

2. Provide supports to further engage all students, with a focus on meeting foundational student needs

Collecting data is essential; however, the most important thing is how districts and schools respond to this information. With that in mind, districts and schools should consider the questions below when reviewing progress:

- **What are the biggest trends as to why students are not engaging?** (e.g. foundational needs, academic skill gaps, communication challenges, social emotional connection needs, etc.)
- **How might we improve the baseline remote learning programming provided to all students based on these trends?** (What additional supports should be built into the core program?)
- **How can we best address the foundational needs of students who are currently disengaged?**
- **Are there specific student groups** (e.g., gender, age, race/ethnicity, etc.) **who are disproportionately disengaged?**

Focus on foundational wellness and readiness for all students

We must continue to prioritize the **foundational wellness and readiness for all students to engage in remote learning**. Supports to address individual student needs may include:

- **Direct 1:1 support provided by school staff**, for example:
 - Support from a school counselor for a student experiencing mental health challenges.
 - Hands-on technology support from a teacher or paraprofessional for a student or family member navigating new technologies or programs.
- **Referral to a community agency or district-wide program, for example:**
 - Support to address household challenges such as food insecurity.
 - Help obtaining technology, including devices and internet access.

Districts should provide school staff with resource lists that they can use to connect families to community organizations and other groups that can provide support. Examples of such lists include:

- Greater Boston: [Wellness Idea Bank](#)
- Merrimack Valley: [Lawrence Resource Guide](#)

Some wellness and readiness gaps may present fundamental barriers to student participation in remote learning with no simple solutions. This could include students who need to work to generate family income or students who need to care for younger siblings or a sick family member. School personnel should reach out frequently to check in on students facing these structural challenges and gently support possible entry points to a more robust connection to school.

Conclusion

We know how hard educators, administrators, students, and families are working to get remote learning right. The recommendations in this document build on our initial guidance with a focus on two areas: enhancing existing remote learning and engaging all students.

We are asking that districts and schools refine their remote learning models by early May to prioritize connectedness, shift to teaching the content standards most critical for student success, build in time for enrichment, and make programming accessible for students and families.

We are also asking districts and schools to focus on engagement, both for students who are currently disengaged and for those who are only partially engaged. We know this means first and foremost a strong focus on meeting foundational student needs.

Through the upcoming actions we note at the beginning of this document, DESE is committed to partnering with districts, schools, educators, families and students as we strengthen remote learning across the Commonwealth. Thank you again for all of your efforts on behalf of our students.

Appendix A: Resource list for remote teaching and learning during COVID-19

A note about resources:

If schools, districts, and educators are currently using a particular curriculum, they should first see what resources they have set up to support remote learning.

ELA/Literacy

Grade(s)	Resource name	Description	Link
K-2	Heggerty	Free videos and lesson plans to support development of phonemic awareness in English and Spanish.	Heggerty
K-5	Flyleaf Publishing Decodable Text	A library of digital decodable texts organized by a Phonics Scope and Sequence , ideal for reading practice either independently or with an adult.	Flyleaf
K-8	Wit & Wisdom	Free access to the Wit & Wisdom curricular materials and daily video lessons delivered by Great Minds teachers.	Great Minds
3-12	CommonLit	A free resource of texts, tasks, and tools for grades 3-12.	CommonLit
PreK-5	CKLA	A comprehensive preschool–grade 5 program for teaching skills in reading, writing, listening, and speaking, Core Knowledge Language Arts (CKLA) also builds students’ knowledge and vocabulary.	CKLA
K-2	EVERFI’s WORD Force	One of 100+ of EVERFI’s interactive, game-based lessons, WORD Force: A Literacy Adventure for K-2 Students helps students develop budding literacy skills through 15 skill-building literacy games.	EVERFI
K-8	EL Education	Remote learning guidance and necessary implementation resources for conversion of EL Education, the comprehensive, standards-aligned core literacy curriculum centered on real world content.	EL Education

Math

Grade	Resource name	Description	Link
K-12	Khan Academy	Free diagnostic tools, video tutorials, practice problems, and teacher monitoring dashboard facilitated through gamified platforms. Content is organized by grade level, course title, or specific curriculum programs: Eureka (grades 3-8), Illustrative Mathematics (grades 6-8), AP courses, and SAT prep.	Khan Academy
K-12	Eureka Math (EngageNY) - Great Minds	Free access to the Eureka Math (EngageNY) curricular materials and daily video lessons delivered by Great Minds teachers.	Great Minds
K-8	ST Math	Free access to ST Math, a visual instructional program that teaches concepts visually as students solve mathematical problems. Without language barriers, the problem is accessible to all students, regardless of skill level or language background.	ST Math
K-5	ZEARN Math	Free access to the ZEARN Math curricular materials including digital lessons with on-screen teachers and supportive remediation.	ZEARN Math
6-12	Illustrative Math	Free access to Illustrative Math (IM) 6-8 and 9-12, including student and teacher materials (available with free registration). The materials can also be accessed through three IM certified partners LearnZillion (instructional videos), Kendall Hunt (Google Classroom interface; Spanish-language materials), and McGraw-Hill .	Kendall Hunt LearnZillion McGraw-Hill
6-12	Carnegie Learning	Carnegie Learning provides free access to lesson videos, student practice, and MATHia software for adaptive, student-centered learning.	Carnegie Learning

Science, Technology, and Engineering

Grade	Resource name	Description	Link
K-12	National Science Teaching Association	Collection of lessons and resources that can be sorted by standard. Each day, they share a sensemaking task teachers and families can use to engage students in authentic, relevant science learning.	NSTA Daily Do and NSTA/NGSS Classroom Resources
1-12	Next Generation Science	Collection of open-source NGSS-aligned units reviewed by Achieve.	Quality Examples of NGSS Units
3-12	Concord Consortium	A library of simulations, models, and lessons. Educators can create a class and assign resources to students.	Concord Consortium
K-5	Mystery Science	An elementary curriculum of NGSS-aligned units and lessons (temporarily free)	Mystery Science

History/Social Studies

Grade	Resource name	Description	Link
K-5	KidCitizen	Interactive episodes in which children explore civics concepts via primary sources and a KidCitizen Editor tool for teachers to create their own interactive learning experiences	KidCitizen
K-12	C3 Teachers	Inquiry units sortable by topic and grade level created using the Inquiry Design Model from the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework. Each unit is framed around one compelling question and several supporting questions with accompanying primary source activities and tasks.	C3 Inquires
6-12	Facing History	Collection of educator resources covering a range of history topics with a focus on addressing racism, antisemitism, and prejudice. There is a weekly updated page on coronavirus-related resources.	Facing History
6-12	Stanford History Education Group (SHEG)	Reading Like a Historian offers primary source investigations lessons on world and U.S. history. Civic Online Reasoning offers lessons for evaluating online content.	Stanford History Education Group

6-12	iCivics	Engaging civics content for grades k-12 in the form of games, lesson plans, and complete units.	iCivics
K-12	Teaching Tolerance	Learning plans, lessons, student texts based around the social justice domains of identity, diversity, justice, and action on a range of subjects including digital literacy, geography, and history. Resources are searchable by grade band and topic.	Teaching Tolerance

English Learners

In order to maximize learning opportunities for English learners and ensure equitable access to academic content, educators are encouraged to a) explore various grade-appropriate delivery methods, b) offer daily activities to enhance oral language and literacy as well as comprehension, c) consider culturally relevant text and content to facilitate connection, d) engage parents as collaborative partners and problem solvers in a language that they understand, and e) be cognizant of the amplified social emotional needs of many English learners and their families, particularly newcomers.

Below is a list of the three sites that provide support for English learners. However, educators are encouraged to review the previously published [Guidance on Remote Learning for English Learners](#) for further support.

Grade	Resource Name	Description	Link
2-12	Listenwise	Curated podcasts and lessons on engaging topics, plus comprehension quizzes and a variety of accessibility features and embedded supports for English learners. They have made their premium service free for schools during this crisis. Easily integrated with Google Classroom. (LISTENING)	Listenwise
K-12	NewsELA	Engaging texts across content areas (including current events) and text sets, standards-aligned skills practice and assessments, great embedded English learner supports, and ability to adjust the Lexile level of a text. Teachers can easily adapt assessments and writing tasks for each text and easily integrate with Google Classroom. (READING / WRITING)	NewsELA
K-12	Flipgrid	Allows teachers to post prompts and students to respond orally through voice recording. Teachers and students can have a virtual discussion by responding to one another, and teachers can give students feedback on their recordings. (LISTENING / SPEAKING)	Flipgrid

Digital Literacy and Computer Science

Grade	Resource name	Description	Link
K-12	Code.org	Provides resources that help students learn about computer science. Offerings include: Computer Science Fundamentals for K–5 and CS Express , CS Discoveries , and CS Principles for middle and high school. Curriculum in over 25 languages.	Code.org
K-12	Common Sense Media: Digital Citizenship	Ready-to-teach lessons to help students take ownership of their digital lives. Curriculum in English and Spanish.	Digital Citizenship

Appendix B: Information and resources on student data privacy and security

School districts should be sure the technology tools, products, and resources that they use meet legal requirements for student data privacy and security. This section provides a brief overview of key laws in this area. Districts should also refer to their own technology standards and guidelines and consult with their legal counsel for specific advice.

COPPA

The Federal Trade Commission has provided helpful [guidance](#) for schools and districts relating to the federal Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), 15 U.S.C., §6501 *et seq*; [16 CFR Part 312](#).

COPPA limits the gathering of personal information from children under the age of 13 on the internet. The FTC’s guidance includes:

Schools or school districts should decide whether a particular site’s or service’s privacy and information practices are appropriate, rather than delegating that decision to the teacher. Also, the school or district should give parents a notice of the websites and online services whose collection they have consented to on behalf of the parent. In deciding which online technologies to use with students, a school should be careful to understand how an operator will collect, use, and disclose personal information from its students. Among the questions that a school should ask potential operators are:

- What types of personal information will you collect from students?
- How do you use this personal information?
- Do you use or share the information for commercial purposes not related to the provision of the online services requested by the school? For instance, do you use students’ personal information in connection with generating targeted advertising or building user profiles for commercial purposes not related to the provision of the online service? If so, the school cannot consent on behalf of the parent.
- Do you let the school review and, if desired, have the company delete the personal information collected from their students? If not, the school cannot consent on behalf of the parent.
- What measures do you take to protect the security, confidentiality, and integrity of the personal information that you collect?
- What are your data retention and deletion policies for children’s personal information?

Please see <https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/blogs/business-blog/2020/04/coppa-guidance-ed-tech-companies-schools-during-coronavirus> for more details.

FERPA

The federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) applies to schools that receive federal education funds. This law **requires schools to protect the privacy of personally identifiable information about students contained in education records and gives parents and students rights, including inspection and review of education records**. The FERPA statute is found at 20 U.S.C., §1232g. The FERPA regulations are found at [34 CFR Part 99](#). The Massachusetts Student Records Regulations, [603 CMR 23.00](#), are consistent with the FERPA statute and regulations. The U.S Department of Education’s Student Privacy Policy Office has posted information on [FERPA and Virtual Learning](#) at <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/?src=fpc>

PPRA

Districts must ensure that education service providers comply with the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA), 20 U.S.C. §1232h; [34 CFR Part 98](#). **The PPRA protects student privacy by, among other things, restricting the administration of surveys that ask personal questions and restricting the collection of personally identifiable information about students for marketing purposes.** Data collected about students must adhere to the requirements of the PPRA. Information about the PPRA is at: <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/content/ppra>.

Additional Resources

- [Massachusetts Student Privacy Alliance](#): The Massachusetts Student Privacy Alliance (MSPA) is a collaboration of Massachusetts school districts that share common concerns about student privacy. The alliance offers a searchable database of student data privacy agreement (DPA) information from across the state.
- [TEC Student Data Privacy Alliance](#): **The Education Cooperative (TEC) Student Data Privacy Alliance** has developed a successful collaborative model to provide member schools and districts with administrative and legal support to negotiate privacy terms with software vendors. See: [TEC SDPA Flyer](#). The Education Cooperative is a member of the Massachusetts Student Privacy Alliance and posts their data privacy agreements (DPAs) there. When a district joins, they can sign onto any of TEC's agreements (over 450) with one document. If there isn't a DPA for a vendor, TEC can negotiate one on behalf of the district.
- The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office on April 10, 2020, issued a [memo on video conferencing safety](#). The memo has broad guidelines for any video conferencing platform and specific recommendations about Zoom.

This information is provided as of April 24, 2020.

Appendix C: Using a tiered support model to increase student engagement in remote learning

Overview of the tiered support model

Most educators are familiar with the concept of a [tiered support model](#) (also sometimes referred to as a “response to intervention” model). We believe this model is well-suited to the remote learning context and can provide concrete steps that schools and districts can take to strengthen remote learning for all students.

Within a traditional school context, **the goal of a tiered support model is to support all students to access the school’s core instructional program and master grade-level standards.**

The baseline instructional program and supports offered to all students are commonly referred to as “**Tier 1.**” Examples of traditional Tier 1 instruction and programming may include effective whole class and small group classroom instruction, universal free breakfast in the classroom, and classroom or school-wide positive behavior intervention systems. Special education and English learner services and scaffolds are also considered Tier 1 support for these student populations.

Some students may struggle to meet grade level standards within the core Tier 1 program. In this case, small groups of students facing common skill gaps may be offered additional, targeted support. Supports offered to help these small groups successfully meet grade level standards are referred to as “**Tier 2**” support.

If students struggle to meet grade level standards even with Tier 2 supports, or if the presence of an exceptional need necessitates it, a more personalized support plan is created targeted to an individual student’s needs. This is referred to as “**Tier 3**” support.

Critical to the successful implementation of a tiered support model is collecting information to identify the barriers preventing students from meeting grade level standards. Once gaps are identified, the school can then organize and deploy Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions to effectively support each student to access Tier 1 content. School teams meet frequently to review data, identify gaps, formulate support plans, deploy plans, and then revisit student performance to determine if the support plan is working or needs to be revised.

The traditional tiered support model will not look exactly the same in a remote learning context, as students are likely to need very different supports in this context than in the traditional school environment. However, this framework can support forward-looking enhancements to remote learning and in how to engage as many students as possible.

Adopting a tiered support model for remote learning

The tiered support model begins with the data collection efforts outlined earlier in this document. Once school staff have gathered information on the needs of students, they should review this information to understand whether barriers are faced by larger or smaller numbers of students in the school community.

Typically, about 85 percent of students should be well-served by Tier 1 instruction and supports (supports available to all students). In the current emergency remote learning context, it is likely that the Tier 1 program is effectively engaging fewer than 85 percent of students, and in that case, it is important for schools and districts to work to address common barriers within the overall remote learning program.

For instance, if only 3-5 percent of students do not have computer access, then a district may employ small group support to provide those students with access to curricular resources. However, if more than 20 percent of students do not have computers, then the school or district should develop a Tier 1 strategy to address the need. For example, district or school-wide systems could be created for mailing packets home or distributing computers.

In addition to strengthening the overall Tier 1 program, districts and schools can set up specific Tier 2 and 3 supports for students based on their individual needs. Below are some examples of Tier 2 and 3 supports districts and schools could consider in a remote learning context:

To address social emotional needs:

- Run regular virtual social emotional groups where students can connect with peers and support staff (e.g. a counselor, social worker, paraprofessional, aide, etc.).
- Set up a phone call buddy system where students are matched up to support each other with academics or to connect.
- Have a teacher or staff member communicate with families (or families and students together) who need Tier 2 or 3 support for a quick check in at the beginning of the week to set goals for work completion and engagement. Celebrate student progress toward goals with a call or text at the end of each week.
- Set up an advisory system where each student is assigned to an adult in the school, including ancillary staff beyond core teaching staff to decrease the student-staff ratio.

To address academic needs:

- Provide regular feedback on student work, identifying multiple positives and one area for growth. Loop back on that area for growth in the next assignment to note progress and celebrate successes, even if small.
- Schedule synchronous and asynchronous gradual release “workshops” to help students navigate remote learning assignments through an “I do, we do, you do” model
- Teach strategies that help students persevere through a task (e.g., breaking down elements in a task, chunking a complex reading, using color-coded highlighting to navigate important elements in a text or word problem).
- Schedule regular “study halls” for students to complete assignments at the same time while on a group phone call or video conference platform with their teacher.

Appendix D: Sample script for outreach to families to identify barriers to student engagement

Hi [Family Name],

This is _____ from _____ school. I wanted to check in on [child's name] and your family. Do you have a minute to talk? I know things are hectic right now.

[Family responds]

If able to talk now: How is your family holding up? I know you are managing a lot.

[Family responds]

I want to make sure that [child's name] is able to practice the skills he's learned this year, even though we aren't able to have our regular school day. I've noticed that he turned in a few assignments and had some difficulty completing them. Can you tell me a little more about how he's doing right now and if there are other ways we could provide support to help him?

[Family responds; staff member takes notes]

[Staff member repeats back/summarizes what the family shared]

Does that sound right?

[Family responds]

If possible/needed: [Staff member makes additional suggestions and family and staff member discuss together]: I wonder if we could try [suggestion]...

[Staff member takes notes]

If quick solutions are not apparent or require the expertise of another staff member or other resources: Thanks for sharing with me. I want to share this information with [principal, school support team] so we can find a solution for you. Is that okay?

Thanks for your time. I'm glad we had a chance to connect so we can support [child's name]. I'm going to call you back soon. Is there anything I can do to support you between now and then?

[Family responds]