

# REMOTE LEARNING RECOMMENDATIONS

## DURING COVID-19 EMERGENCY

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FINAL DRAFT



Illinois  
State Board of  
Education

# Executive Summary

This document provides information and clarification to districts, schools, leaders, teachers, students, and parents as they design and implement remote learning in response to the COVID-19 emergency, which is different from statutory e-learning plans. ISBE acknowledges that all students, families, schools, and districts are diverse, and supports remote learning that meets local needs and, to the greatest extent possible, minimizes the negative impact this unprecedented moment has on our students' educational trajectories.

The documents linked below are companion documents to support the remote learning recommendations:

- [Joint Statement of the Office of Governor JB Pritzker, Illinois Education Association, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Illinois Association of School Administrators, Illinois Principals Association, and Illinois State Board of Education](#)
- [Joint Dual Credit Guidance During Suspension of In-Person Instruction](#)
- [Executive Order 2020-15](#)
- Emergency Rules:
  - [Part 5 - Remote Learning Days](#)
  - [Part 235 - Early Childhood Block Grant](#)

This executive summary presents essential recommendations for districts to consider as they refine existing plans and develop new ones as the COVID-19 health emergency continues. The introduction and overarching recommendations that follow provide suggestions to help districts, schools, and educators grapple with the challenges of delivering remote learning to meet the needs of all students across Illinois. Finally, the sections outlining recommendations for Multilingual Learners, special education, and specific grade bands provide even more recommendations and considerations that are especially applicable to educators who work directly with students. We recommend that you begin with this summary and the introduction and overarching guidance and then move to the later sections that apply to your work.

The U.S. Department of Education has released guidance for implementing Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Act and Section 504 during the COVID-19 outbreak. All decisions regarding special education must comply with guidance from the [U.S. Department of Education](#).

Districts should consider these recommendations in consultation with local counsel.

As educators work to implement these recommendations, we call upon everyone to assume flexibility and grace for all. At this moment, we will all need to model resilience, critical and creative thinking, thoughtful responsiveness, and empathy to ensure that students continue to grow personally, academically, and linguistically.

Remote learning is learning that happens outside of the traditional classroom because the student and teacher are separated by distance and/or time. Remote learning can be real-time or

flexibility timed, and it may or may not involve technology. It cannot be assumed that every family or every student has access to the necessary devices and appropriate internet connection at their home. In many cases, students categorized as “at risk” by schools are the ones without access to devices or reliable internet. Local Education Agencies (LEAs) should investigate the technological landscape of the community and determine what type of remote learning makes logical sense in the context. Real-time, technology-infused remote learning may be appropriate for District A, while flexibly timed instruction without technology is the right choice for District B. District C might find that a plan including a blend of real-time, flexibly timed, technological, and non-technological options is the best fit for its students and families.

We recognize these recommendations may need further refinement as districts across the state seek to implement remote learning and respond to a fluid situation. While the parameters of what is set forth in this document will not change, ISBE commits to providing further clarification, examples of innovation and success, and suggestions regarding additional resources.

### **Essential Instructional Recommendations**

We strongly encourage:

- Planning for remote learning that respects the needs of all students and staff
- Implementing remote learning that attends to the diversity of each community to ensure that all students have access to equitable educational opportunities
- Meticulously documenting the best efforts possible being made under the current emergency conditions with regard to students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and Section 504 Plans
- Structuring active student engagement with learning in accordance with the age-appropriate thresholds presented on page 17
- Selecting content for remote learning that is aligned to standards, relevant, and appropriate for each student
- Practicing consistent communication with students, families, and staff to understand how the health emergency is impacting them

### **Essential Grading Recommendations**

- The emphasis for schoolwork assigned, reviewed, and completed during the remote learning period is on **learning**, not on compliance
- Grading should focus on the continuation of learning and prioritize the connectedness and care for students and staff. All students should have the opportunity to redo, make up, or try again to complete, show progress, or attempt to complete work assigned prior to the remote learning period in that time frame. A focus on keeping children emotionally and physically safe, fed, and engaged in learning should be our first priority during this unprecedented time.
- Local districts should develop alternate methods of assessment for career and technical education course work, where appropriate, including use of video, electronic submission, etc.
- Dual credit policies should be developed in conjunction with partner institutions

- More broadly, nothing in this recommendation is intended to replace or supersede federal or state law, contracts, or collective bargaining agreements or established past practice

Note: School boards may need to reconvene to amend board policies and administrators may need to revise administrative procedures to address the circumstances created by the COVID-19 outbreak. School districts should work with their legal counsel and, where applicable, in consultation with relevant collective bargaining entities to address remote learning needs in policies and procedures. School districts must pay particular attention to any issues impacting the work conditions of employees, including the framework of any remote plans, acceptable use policies, and use of personal devices.

# Acknowledgements

It is with deep gratitude that we acknowledge the tireless efforts of the educators and students from across Illinois who worked together in these turbulent times to craft these critical recommendations for their colleagues and partners.

The willingness of this group to engage in thoughtful, candid, and purposeful discourse about how to best meet the needs of all students in Illinois schools in these unprecedented times resulted in a document that reflects the incredible diversity of our state and our unwavering commitment to do what is best for our children.

This team of phenomenal educators and students serve as an inspiration to those in their schools and now, across Illinois. It is with heartfelt thanks that we recognize their work, experiences, and perspectives in developing recommendations that balance clear direction with the need for flexibility, grace, and understanding in this extraordinary moment in time.

We wish to especially acknowledge the contributions of the student members. They were invaluable; their unique perspectives informed the group's collective thinking and improved the work.

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# Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide information to educators for implementing remote learning, focusing on two key dimensions: instruction and grading. These recommendations honor local control and acknowledge that each school community is unique. The goal is to support educators in minimizing, to the extent possible, any negative impact these unprecedented circumstances have on our students, staff, and communities.

For the purposes of these recommendations, a remote learning day is defined as an educational program designed to provide continuation of learning for students under conditions that prohibit the learner and instructor from being in the same physical space.

These recommendations should assist educators as they develop a remote learning approach that is inclusive of, and equitable to, all students regardless of age, location, background, and available resources. This recommendation document accomplishes these goals by:

- Providing transparent access to information for all education stakeholders (families, districts, students, etc.)
- Ensuring all parties have a common understanding of terminology and best practices necessary to provide all students with equitable and continued access to high-quality education while acknowledging the diversity of contexts for schools/families/students throughout the state
- Suggesting minimum thresholds of what should be offered for all students from an equity standpoint
- Promoting innovation and outside-of-the-box thinking
- Providing examples of success and possibilities to serve as models and catalysts for districts/teachers to prepare and implement remote learning

## **Commitment to Local Control**

These recommendations are grounded in a commitment to local control. The information presented is meant to support districts and schools in making decisions that honor their local needs. Each district will need to decide how to implement these recommendations. Districts should weigh these recommendations in light of the reality of their local contexts, such as the opportunity for professional development, access to technology, and the needs of their unique student populations.

This document should not be interpreted to override the mutual obligations of the educational employer and the representative of the educational employees to plan at reasonable times and bargain in good faith with respect to wages, hours and other terms and conditions of employment that may need to be addressed in order to effectuate instructional remote learning.

## **Role of Advisory Group**

These recommendations were developed by ISBE's Remote Learning Advisory Group, consisting of students, teachers, paraprofessionals, related service personnel, principals, district



superintendents, and regional superintendents. The role of the advisory group was to bring diverse voices from across the state to create a document that provides a clear path forward for all school districts and families. The advisory workgroup was intentionally created to represent geographic, role, experience, and content expertise diversity. Given the unprecedented nature of this moment, the advisory group was tasked with synthesizing its best thinking around what is possible for the students of Illinois.

## Ultimate Aim

The ultimate goals of these recommendations are to provide direction, information, and resources to ensure that:

- All students have opportunities for continued learning that focuses on critical standards
- Districts work to minimize instructional loss
- Students and families are given routines and structures to ensure they stay connected to schools and learning

To accomplish these goals, we uphold the following principles in this document:

- **All students and families** should have access to quality educational materials and to the supports needed to successfully access those materials
- Given the reality of the digital divide, most schools may need to provide digital and non-digital access to content
- It is still possible and imperative that students access meaningful/high-quality educational materials that align to state standards
- It is imperative that students and schools/teachers maintain a personal connection that supports necessary, rigorous academic work in a manner that is respectful of students' contexts (their mindset, feelings, responsibilities, etc.)
- Simplicity is best during this time -- simplicity of the framework, of communication structures, of expectations
- Support the whole child -- their mental health, nutritional needs, and safety needs
- Parents will need access to clear information and ample resources
- Teachers may need support, encouragement, and compassion to ensure their success and resilience

Finally, consider:

- All means all. Districts must seek to implement remote learning that addresses the needs of all students and families by taking into consideration language, diverse learning needs, home living situation, legal status, access to technology, access to parental support, and access to transportation. Our most vulnerable student populations still need us most.
- Underpinning these recommendations is the need for resilience, critical and creative thinking, thoughtful responsiveness, and empathy to help ensure that students continue to grow personally, academically, and linguistically.

# Overarching Recommendations

## Instruction

This section provides a general overview of all instructional considerations that districts, schools, and educators should make in developing a remote learning framework. Along with key questions, we provide minimum thresholds that should be met to help protect equitable experiences for all students. Finally, we end this section with examples of how districts in the State of Illinois have answered these critical questions to cohesively address remote learning.

The Illinois student population is diverse. This diversity is what makes Illinois a unique, vibrant, and innovative state in which to teach and learn. When designing and implementing remote learning, districts must be especially attentive to the diversity within their community to ensure that all students have access to an offering of high-quality educational opportunities that are tailored to students' needs. Proactive decisions made by carefully considering the students' needs will make remote learning a more equitable experience in which all students can flourish.

## Establish Consistency for Remote Learning

A school community can be connected and thriving even if the physical school building is closed. Remote learning that emphasizes interaction and authentic and differentiated learning opportunities will help students stay connected to teachers and classmates and ease the transition from traditional to remote learning. Developing consistency for remote learning on which students can rely is key as they and their families adapt to unprecedented changes in education and society, in general. Successful, consistent remote learning includes:

- Clearly articulated goals
- Cross-curricular collaboration to focus instruction
- Options for students that tap into students' interests, readiness levels, and learning styles while providing families flexibility
- A mix of real-time, flexibly timed, technological, and non-technological options, that avoids penalizing students for their choice
- A common platform where students can access work and find support and resources (for both online and non-online work).
- A clear plan of communication involving the school, teachers, students, and families.
- Genuine interest and effort in supporting students' social, emotional, and academic growth.

## Consider Family/Home Context

It is not only access to technology that must be considered. Since home will be the new classroom, it is critical that remote learning must work in a multitude of family and home contexts. In this time of rapidly changing public health and economic uncertainty, districts must ensure that their method of remote learning accounts for:

- Students who are home alone while adults are working

- Students who are caretakers for siblings or ill family members
- Students who work to help support their family
- Students who speak a language other than English and have language needs
- Students whose parents speak a language other than English and cannot assist with homework
- Students who have special education needs (e.g., children with an IEP, twice-exceptional students)
- Students who are coping with the illness or loss of a family member
- Students who are struggling with anxiety or depression
- Staff who are working remotely and simultaneously planning and delivering remote instruction while also providing care for their families and, in many cases, their own children

## **Stakeholder Engagement**

ISBE understands that the creation of viable remote learning processes -- under significant time constraints -- is a daunting task. Mandatory school closures were likely not on the planning agendas for districts last summer, so scaffolding how to plan for this unprecedented educational situation may prove useful guidelines. Therefore, please consider including the input from multiple stakeholders and identifying implementation leaders as districts finalize their remote learning plans.

## **Communication**

Districts, schools, and teachers must have a clear, consistent, concise, and accessible communication plan that prioritizes student connection to trusted school personnel. Family access to information is imperative in a remote learning context. The guidelines below provide considerations that schools should review in communicating to families about remote learning. All expectations for staff communication with students during remote learning should be determined in accordance with local policies and agreements.

## **General Guidelines**

- If possible, use communication platforms stakeholders are already familiar with and that currently exist in the system
- Be clear, consistent, and concise
- Ensure that materials and communications are provided in a way that is accessible to students with language needs
- Encourage/maintain ongoing two-way communication
- Clearly define terms/ideas to avoid miscommunication
- Set guidelines for expectations related to response time from educators and students and communicate these expectations to all stakeholders

### **Communicating with Students**

- Maintain classroom customs and norms as much as possible
- Remind students how to best communicate with the teacher and, when appropriate, peers (a social-emotional learning opportunity)
- Ensure all students have access to information through at least one form of communication (mail, packets dropped off by bus driver or picked up, phone, video, email)
- Set guidelines for teacher response times
- Maintain regular communication and set a minimum threshold for contact

### **Communicating with Families**

- Avoid educational jargon and define terms to ensure understanding
- Survey families to identify needs and follow through to provide for those needs.
- To the extent possible, communicate with families in the language they are most comfortable
- Provide recommendations on how to support the whole child
- Solicit actionable feedback
- Provide timely information

### **Communicating with and Among Staff**

- Establish norms for communication
- Include all relevant staff members, especially paraprofessionals and related service providers
- Develop and follow a communication plan:
  - Address educational issues
  - Provide professional support

### **Language of Communication**

Utilize paraprofessionals, multilingual staff, translation services, and other resources as appropriate to ensure elimination/reduction of language barriers.

### **Social-Emotional Learning and Relationships**

It is imperative during this time that districts create remote learning that attends to student social and emotional needs. Some ways to ensure that all school community members feel connected and informed are:

- Encourage ongoing communication among all stakeholders
- Provide opportunities for positive feedback/connection between students and teachers
- Acknowledge students' current situation and context
- Provide students with appropriate supports to process events
- Utilize trauma-informed practices, when possible
- Utilize school and community resources to provide mental health supports

## Health and Wellness

The health and wellness of all Illinois staff and students is the fundamental priority at this time. Health and safety concerns are paramount in all work that must be done in person or in a specific place. With remote learning and work schedules for many adjusted, health is an even more important foundation for adults and children to be ready to engage with the world. Below are some recommendations districts can provide to their stakeholders to support the health and safety of district staff members, families, caregivers, and students:

- **Underlying Health Conditions:** Talk with staff and families of children who have medical diagnoses (chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, immunocompromised, undergoing cancer treatment, severe obesity, diabetes, kidney failure) to reinforce the importance of checking in with their primary doctor about health maintenance at this time and emphasize the importance of having enough of their prescription medications available.
- **COVID-19:** Encourage parent communication with primary care providers about how COVID-19 may impact their child's health. Should parents suspect a Covid-19 infection, they should review with their provider the signs, symptoms, and treatment for their child, including what constitutes a medical emergency where immediate 911 attention would be warranted.
- **Primary Care Givers:** If the family's child doesn't have a primary care provider, they should contact <https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/MedicalPrograms/AllKids/Pages/default.aspx> or 1-866-ALL-KIDS (1-866-255-5437).
- **Diet:** Students and staff should eat three healthy meals a day that include fruits, vegetables, and protein. Families that are having difficulty getting sufficient meals should look to possible resources from schools or local government. Avoid unhealthy snacking to alleviate stress. Teachers should encourage parents to allow their children to participate in meal preparation to encourage healthy eating habits.
- **Sleep Guidelines:** Students aged 3 – 5 years old need 11 to 13 hours of sleep. Students aged 5 – 10 years old need 10 to 11 hours. Students aged 11 – 18 years old need 9 to 10 hours
- **Exercise:** Gross motor movement is more important now than ever but can also be more difficult to achieve with an adjusted schedule and social distancing. Children and adolescents age 6 and older need at least an hour a day of physical activity. Most of the hour should be either moderate or vigorous aerobic activity. Vigorous activity should be included at least three days a week. Parents should keep social distancing in mind when arranging for physical activity, and some may not have access to a safe place to do this. At the very least, a vigorous walk around their neighborhood where active conversation occurs about their immediate environment (houses, trees, animals, neighbors) or a developmentally appropriate conversation about what is going on in the world and why it's so different from the norm. Other examples of moderate activity are sweeping the floor, walking briskly, dancing, vacuuming, washing windows, yardwork. More vigorous activity could involve a bike ride, playing tag with siblings or parents, and taking the family dog for a run.
- **Hydration:** An altered schedule and environment where students aren't walking by a drinking fountain several times a day mean that it is more difficult for them to stay

hydrated. An easy rule to follow would be for a child to drink an 8 oz. glass of water for every year they are old, with a maximum of eight glasses of water for ages 8 and up. This is in addition to whatever else they are drinking. It is important to remember that sugary drinks (soft drinks, cans of ice tea, “sport” drinks) should be minimized, as they are not healthy and actually create more thirst.

- **Practicing Good Hygiene:** Routines are out of sort but practicing good hygiene should not go to the wayside. Teachers should encourage parents to promote independence with these activities, so children can set themselves up for a lifetime of healthy hygiene habits. Many dental offices are closed, so brushing your teeth twice a day is even more important. Hand hygiene is important to practice, especially whenever returning from outside -- wash hands for 40 seconds with soap and water. Regular bathing, changing clothes, and involving children in cleaning the house are all good ways to have children make the connection between hygiene and health.
- **Stress Management:** It goes without saying that this is a stressful situation for all of us. Being mindful of the overall heightened stress level is important because the goal of remote learning is not to add stress, but to maintain learning, to the extent that this is possible under current circumstances. Everyone has different tools to manage stress, and it is important to prioritize healthy mechanisms (e.g., exercise, mindful breathing, talking about feelings, adequate sleep) over less healthy ones (e.g., denial of circumstances, stress eating, escapism via excessive video gaming or binge watching shows).
- **Resources:** There are many resources for families to use and explore in terms of health maintenance in this time. They should seek credible information from their primary care provider, local government, [Illinois Department of Public Health](#), or the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

## Planning for Possible Illness

First and foremost, follow the guidance, policies, and procedures of your local county health department/local health officer. The most current information always resides at the community level. These are recommendations that should never supersede local bargaining agreements, labor laws, and or local policies and procedures:

- **Staff Illness:** If a staff member becomes ill, districts can consider leveraging substitute teachers, grade level leaders, course team leaders, department chairs, and/or administrators to provide support to students. Clear substitute procedures during remote learning should be determined at the local level in collaboration with relevant bargaining units. Students should not be expected to complete learning tasks if content-specific certified teachers are not able to provide support to students; in addition, teachers who fall gravely ill should not be negatively impacted.
- **Student Illness:** A student who becomes ill should either be excused from the assignments provided during that time or given ample time to make up the work. Students cannot be negatively impacted during the remote learning period, and districts should provide emotional support for grave illnesses.
- **Family Illness for Teachers or Students:** If the family member of a student or teacher becomes gravely ill, compassion and support for the student or teacher are the first

priority of the district. Districts should provide emotional support services to the extent possible, and student cannot be negatively impacted.

## **Ongoing Staff Development**

Educators should be provided ongoing support to develop their capacity to meet the remote learning goals for each district. Districts have myriad ways in which to support staff and should focus on essential skills needed for daily success. Ideas to get started are:

- Survey educators to understand their needs during remote learning and, subsequently, create tiered, small-group, virtual professional development workshops to build the capacity and meet the needs
- Provide educators with an annotated hyperlinked bibliography of accessible, free resources to help them shift from a face-to-face teaching model to a remote one
- Update acceptable use communication guidelines and re-educate parents, students, and staff on them
- Provide training on the impact of trauma and stress to remind teachers how children may be responding during this time
- Remember, we are in this together. Our best resource is each other! Consult or collaborate with other districts to provide professional development (PD) on remote learning tools
- Establish teacher leaders to create podcasts, videos and other materials that demonstrate ways in which teachers can develop effective and engaging remote learning lessons that engage all learners. Teacher leaders can also host virtual professional development workshops, virtual Q&As, and offer other supportive strategies to engage and develop staff capacity to accomplish each district's remote learning goals.
- Make available video examples of model remote learning lessons at varying grade levels for the spectrum of learners in a school (e.g., English Learners, children with IEPs, gifted and talented students), and across disciplines

## **Content Selection/Prioritization**

Districts will need to work together to determine what critical standards will be prioritized for the duration of the remote learning. For example, some districts may ask their educators to analyze their course sequences from the beginning of the year through the date of school closure, identify the most important standards and learning targets that were taught, and create content to “shore up” that learning to help students improve mastery of all skills previously covered. Content could then be mapped over the span of each week with specific targets for students. Educators could continue to do this until they have created a map that covers through the planned end of the school year.

## **Content Delivery**

ISBE understands that remote content delivery will be a new and challenging endeavor for many districts and their educators, and that it involves more than just printing non-digital materials, uploading files, and sharing links to media content. Delivering remote content is a skill that must be developed, and districts should provide the support, resources, and professional

development needed for educators to accomplish remote learning. These recommendations provide support across the continuum from printed instructional materials to fully online curricula.

### **Content Delivery Best Practices**

- Be present and fully engaged as the instructor. Short, daily or weekly videos or phone calls can help the instructor connect with, reassure, and provide students with encouragement.
- Work within grade-level and or content-specific teams to support the development of remote learning. Remote teaching, if not done collaboratively, can become burdensome and tedious. Teachers should be encouraged to leverage the expertise and insight of novice and veteran teachers to fully support the creation of engaging, effective lessons for all learners (e.g., twice-exceptional children, Multilingual Learners, etc.).
- Focus on engaging and accessible learning materials and techniques. Prioritize mini-lessons and short mini-lectures to keep students engaged. Incorporate mixed media content, such as television clips, newspapers, maps, and political cartoons and interactive web-based, free software tools, etc., to keep students engaged and excited about learning.
- Remain flexible with pacing and student assignments. Students with non-traditional schedules and diverse learning styles can stay engaged, connected, and abreast of learning expectations if all assignments and accompanying resources offer student choice and are posted at the beginning of the week and are due by the end of the week or before the start of the next week.

### **Non-Digital Remote Learning**

- Non-digital learning materials should include information that, when possible, includes multiple modes of representation of content (e.g., text, diagrams, graphic organizers, large print, manipulatives, maps and illustrations), in color and black and white, to help students and parents grasp previous content. There should be multiple ways for children to demonstrate their developing understandings.
- Instructions for projects and activities should be provided in clear language free of jargon to support parents as they support their children at home.
- Remote learning resources and materials, including library books, etc., to the extent possible, should be made available at food pickup sites, delivered by school bus, etc. Another method of distribution of academic materials is the use of drive-thru lines, in which parents and guardians are given learning materials by essential staff members when they drive to the school building.
- If possible, districts should collaborate with internet service providers and local governmental agencies to attempt to provide cellular devices and free Wi-Fi to all households.
- Leverage the district's mass communication resources to text students and families with links to content that is accessible by cellphone, when possible.



## **Digital Remote Learning**

- If digital learning is viable within your district or with specific groups of students, provide the various resources, with explanations on when and how to use those resources.
- Resources should help teachers use a combination of technology and media in the creation and delivery of content. The selection of digital platforms and tools is a local decision dependent on local acceptable use policies. Educators are encouraged to consider ways to use available technologies to increase the number of homogeneous and heterogeneous discussion groups in which students can collaborate and respond to one another's ideas. Teachers can monitor, prompt, and cue the students' work and provide ongoing feedback.

## **Supporting Student Engagement During Remote Learning**

The amount of student engagement districts should aim for is inclusive of digital interaction and assigned work. This is not inclusive of non-graded enrichment opportunities, which ISBE encourages teachers and families to provide. The thresholds in the table below could be inclusive of project time that spans multiple days, independent work, and direct teacher engagement. The thresholds do not represent expectations of engagement with educational products or web-based platforms.

When planning, districts should consider:

- Students may or may not have a consistent caregiver who can work with them every day. Ensure that instructions are written so that the student can understand them independently.
- Using headings, bullet points, appropriate text size, boldness, and color to create a clear workflow for students to follow.
- These questions when designing remote learning experiences:
  - How will a student know where to start?
  - How will a student know what to do next?
  - How will a student know when the work is successfully completed?
  - How will the district know a student completed an activity?

The following recommendations and guidelines are presented as suggested minimum and maximum times of engagement by each student in remote learning activities.

| Grade Level | Minimum   | Maximum   | Recommended Length of Sustained Attention |
|-------------|---|---|---|
| <b>PreK</b> | 20 minutes/day                                  | 60 minutes/day                                  | 3-5 minutes                               |
| <b>K</b>    | 30 minutes/ day                                 | 90 minutes/day                                  | 3-5 minutes                               |
| <b>1-2</b>  | 45 minutes/day                                  | 90 minutes/day                                  | 5-10 minutes                              |
| <b>3-5</b>  | 60 minutes/day                                  | 120 minutes/day                                 | 10-15 minutes                             |
| <b>6-8</b>  | Class: 15 minutes/day<br>Total: 90 minutes/day  | Class: 30 minutes/day<br>Total: 180 minutes/day | 1 subject area or class                   |
| <b>9-12</b> | Class: 20 minutes/day<br>Total: 120 minutes/day | Class: 45 minutes/day<br>Total: 270 minutes/day | 1 subject area or class                   |

Further, we encourage teachers to give additional optional work, engagement opportunities, and enrichment opportunities (e.g., independent research projects) as long as it is made clear to students and families that the work is optional and will not negatively impact a student's grade. Additional engagement is especially important for primary grades, where it is not developmentally appropriate to expect a student to attend to academic tasks for a long period of time. Instead, students and families should be supported in having access to varied enrichment opportunities. In addition, students and families are encouraged to support academic skills and social-emotional health through activities that extend beyond assigned remote learning work.

| Suggestions for Additional Activities  |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|
| Mind   | Body  | Sprit   | Environment   | Family  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading, e.g., independent reading, listening to someone else read, audiobooks</li> <li>• Puzzles, Word Searches</li> <li>• Write a story or in a journal</li> <li>• Count money</li> <li>• Draw a map of your neighborhood</li> <li>• Building with blocks or Legos</li> <li>• Listen to a podcast</li> <li>• Watch a documentary</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a walk</li> <li>• Dance</li> <li>• Exercise</li> <li>• Fine/gross motor activities</li> <li>• Stretch or do yoga</li> <li>• Play a sport</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to music or sing</li> <li>• Playing (inside or outside)</li> <li>• Creative arts</li> <li>• Coloring or drawing</li> <li>• Imaginative play</li> <li>• Meditate</li> <li>• Do something you've been avoiding</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clean up your room</li> <li>• Do age-appropriate chores</li> <li>• Gardening</li> <li>• Fix something broken</li> <li>• Take care of pets or plants</li> <li>• Cook or bake</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Write a letter to someone</li> <li>• Play board games with a family member</li> <li>• Tell jokes or riddles</li> <li>• Build a fort and tell stories in it</li> <li>• Offer to help someone</li> </ul> |

|   |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practice another language</li> <li>• Invent something</li> </ul> |  |  |  |  |
|---|--|--|--|--|

Subsequently, districts should consider outlining district, school, teacher, student, and family responsibilities to further support student engagement. Sharing these responsibilities with the school community will create stability and relieve anxiety as everyone is aware of their role within the larger context.

| <b>Example Responsibilities</b><br>This is not an inclusive list of recommended responsibilities.<br>Responsibilities should be appropriate for the context. |   |
|--|---|
| <b>District Responsibilities</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop thoughtful, accessible remote learning plans using stakeholder input, when possible.</li> <li>• Support schools in planning and implementing remote learning plans.</li> <li>• Help schools identify needed resources in the community (academic, health, social, emotional).</li> </ul>   |
| <b>School Responsibilities</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement remote learning plans</li> <li>• Communicate regularly with all stakeholders.</li> <li>• Support teachers in planning and implementing remote learning plans.</li> <li>• Help families find needed resources in the community (academic, health, social).</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Teacher Responsibilities</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make remote learning activities available in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Be available at scheduled times to answer student/caregiver questions.</li> <li>• Provide timely feedback on student work.</li> <li>• Communicate regularly with students.</li> <li>• Provide a range of meaningful learning opportunities that meet the needs of all learners during the period of closure.</li> <li>• Provide regular feedback to students on progress related to learning activities.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Student Responsibilities</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review assigned work.</li> <li>• Complete your assigned work by the due date.</li> <li>• Ask clarifying questions when you need help or don't understand</li> <li>• Be respectful to yourself, teachers and peers.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Parent/Caregiver/<br/>Family Responsibilities</b>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review work assigned to the student.</li> <li>• Reserve a space for students to complete remote learning work.</li> <li>• Encourage students to get enough sleep.</li> <li>• Set sensible time limits for technology use.</li> <li>• Talk to students about their work every day.</li> <li>• Help students establish and follow regular daily routines.</li> </ul>   |

# Grading

## General Recommendations

During these unprecedented times, we prioritize the connectedness and care for our students and one another as we maintain a continuity of learning. We recognize the importance of providing feedback, assessing student progress, and learning; and communicating this to students, parents, and teachers in the form of grades. **To that end, we further identify a focus of keeping children emotionally and physically safe, fed, and engaged in learning.**

### Grading Is Defined As:

- Meaningful feedback
- Assessment of learning (summative)
- Assessment as learning (self-assessment)
- Assessment for learning (formative)
- Student/teacher partnership (home)
- Criteria for work and expectations (exemplars)
- Confidential
- A dialogue
- Part of the learning process
- Reflective
- Coaching
- Purposeful
- Supportive
- Focused on student growth
- Individual
- Differentiated

(Bailey & Heritage, 2008; Brookhart, Guskey, et al., 2016; Chapman & King, 2005; Costa & Kallick, 2013; Davies, 2011; Earl, 2013; Gomez, 2008; Gottlieb, 2016; Gottlieb, 1995; Guskey & Bailey, 2001; Guskey & Bailey, 2010; Guskey & Brookhart, 2019; Heritage, 2010; Marzano, 2010; Moss & Brookhart, 2009; Muñoz & Guskey 2015; Popham, 2008; Stiggins, 2006)

The recommendations on grading are based upon the principle of *no educational harm to any child*. This pandemic and the statewide suspension of in-person instruction – the first in modern history – has impacted our entire society. The recommendations on grading during this period of unprecedented crisis offers direction to school leaders for pass/incomplete options (not pass/fail). The advisory group expects that student learning continues during the remote learning period. The group does not want a negative impact on students. In place of an “F,” for example, the recommendation is for an “incomplete” that can be made up when the remote learning period ends. Individual student engagement or disengagement will be addressed locally. There are factors outside of the control of the school system with learning being moved off site; therefore, the aim is that student grades are not lowered as a result of remote learning. ISBE recommends that a student who is not able to be engaged, or who chooses to disengage, in remote learning should receive an incomplete or no grade. Document every attempt made to engage the student; it is very possible the student is experiencing circumstances out of their

control. Where possible, the content from remote learning should be made up after the transition back to regular in-person school attendance resumes (summer school, August school, other).

Assessment is ongoing and related to student learning and growth. The advisory group, in collaboration with ISBE, states that flexibility and responsiveness to our students' needs are incumbent upon the grading of student learning during this new remote learning context.

Remote student learning during this pandemic may be formatively assessed (where possible and practical). We acknowledge that it may need to be assessed during the transition back to in-person instruction. Remote learning is designed to support student learning and continuity of education. Grading is feedback and communication in a snapshot of time to students and parents. The aim, emphasis, and focus for schoolwork assigned, reviewed, and completed during remote learning is on learning, not on compliance.

All students should have the opportunity to redo, make up, or try again to complete, show progress, or attempt to complete work assigned prior to remote learning. The emphasis for schoolwork assigned, reviewed, and completed during the remote learning period is on learning, not on compliance.

Ideally, all Illinois students will pass their assignments during remote learning as this is a new and unprecedented set of circumstances. This is not a time for failing students or adversely impacting student learning progress. Students are expected to continue with the learning activities assigned during remote learning. We call on educators to be mindful of the impact of time on task, time on screens, and time on reflection during this pandemic; grading should be used for coaching.

Districts are encouraged to deploy specialists and educational support personnel to help students in need of intervention. All students are encouraged to complete all of the work assigned and reviewed during the remote learning period. If students cannot or do not complete the work, there may be an incomplete grade assigned and a return to work incomplete remediation period.

In this Recommendation document, each of the specific grade band sections and special area sections includes commentary, suggestions, and recommendations for different age bands or student designations (e.g., grades 1-2, grades 3-5, middle school grades 6-8, special education, multilingual students, high school grades 9-12, and birth through age 5 preschool).

# Multilingual Education

## Instruction

Multilingual Learners refers to all children and youth who are, or have been, consistently exposed to multiple languages. It includes students known as English language learners, English learners (ELs) or dual language learners; heritage language learners; and students who speak varieties of English or indigenous languages<sup>1</sup>.

Students who are Multilingual Learners come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and include students with varying levels of proficiency in English and their home language. This section aims to provide educators with recommendations on how to build on families' culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by providing students with authentic language activities that allow them to participate and access material in both English and their home language.

## Language of Instruction

Educators must be thoughtful and explicit about the language of instructional activities in which that students are being asked to engage in. Multilingual Learners should be provided with opportunities to utilize their home language whenever possible. Multilingual Learners should also have daily opportunities to engage in activities in both English and/or the home language within the four language arts domains of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. When designing activities for multilingual students, educators should be aware of the language proficiency level of the students, both in English and the home language.

When designing activities for Multilingual Learners, educators need to consider students' levels of language proficiency that would allow them access to materials and tasks while also providing students with opportunities to practice both their receptive (listening and reading) and expressive (speaking and writing) language skills. Educators may find it helpful to plan for language and content activities within the four language domains through the key uses of academic language: recount, explain, argue, discuss<sup>2</sup>. These help multilingual students leverage the use of high levels of language to communicate content learning.

## Engaging Families

In addition to providing activities appropriate to students' language proficiency levels, it is recommended that educators consider how to leverage the culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds of the families. To the extent possible, communication with families of multilingual students should be shared in the home language as well as English.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://wida.wisc.edu/sites/default/files/resource/Guiding-Principles-of-Language-Development.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do>

## **Oral Language Use**

Instructional activities for multilingual students should engage the entire family whenever possible. Families of Multilingual Learners are a resource for exploring one's linguistic and cultural heritage. For example, educators can take into consideration how students might engage in authentic language through conversation with family members. Oral language<sup>3</sup> activities are as equally important as literacy-based activities at all grade levels.

Oracy-based activities, whether via online platforms or paper-based, should always be included. Oracy-based activities include deliberate and explicit instruction of speaking and listening<sup>4</sup>. Multilingual students can benefit from expressing their reading and writing comprehension through activities that incorporate oracy. Educators may consider how oracy can be incorporated into their remote learning activities for students.

## **Thematically Designed Learning**

Educators should always include appropriate scaffolds and supports when designing oracy and literacy-based instructional activities for Multilingual Learners. Designing activities around thematically based topics is suggested for Multilingual Learners. Additionally, allowing opportunities for Multilingual Learners to practice their bilingual or multilingual abilities is appropriate. Rich, authentic oral interactions will deepen students' learning, whether in English or the home language. Educators can consider how students' home language can be incorporated into thematically designed activities and how students might participate within these activities without technology for families that may not have access to devices and/or internet.

## **Students' Needs**

Most importantly, when it comes to the education of Multilingual Learners, it is important that educators are mindful that students' essential needs are met prior to asking them to engage in instructional activities. These essential needs include physical safety, nutrition, and emotional care. Educators should ensure that students are physically and emotionally able to engage in the designed learning activities prior to assigning them to students.

The following section contains options and opportunities to help educators meet the remote learning needs of Multilingual Learners.

## **Instructional Options and Opportunities for Multilingual Learners**

### **Uplifting Family and Community**

There are great funds of knowledge<sup>5</sup> within multilingual families and communities that are often overlooked or undervalued as sources to inspire and support learning. We have the opportunity to highlight the skills and knowledge that already exist within students' homes -- particularly the

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/oral-language-development-and-ells-5-challenges-and-solutions>

<sup>4</sup> <https://voice21.org/oracy/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://blog.tesol.org/tap-into-funds-of-knowledge/>

language practices and cultural understandings -- as valuable and enriching to their education. With this in mind, educators can:

- Encourage and affirm parents/guardians in their roles as children's first and most important teacher, but without creating undue pressure. Families should recognize the intrinsic educational worth of their home experience but should not worry about trying to re-create a classroom experience or take on the role of a classroom teacher.
- Encourage families to spend time with one another to bond and talk. Teachers can create prompts that help elicit conversations within the home through storytelling (e.g., generational lore, family history) or making meaning of stories together (e.g., watching and discussing movies or favorite shows).
- Remind families that their language practices in the home are rich and worthy. All opportunities to use, make meaning through, and play with language -- ANY language -- are valuable to students' cognitive growth and language development.
- Encourage finding meaning in real life experiences in the home together with family, while integrating necessary tasks with learning opportunities. Teachers can prompt student inquiry, observation, and reflection around everyday activities (e.g., making meals, collaborating on chores, problem solving, fixing things together, reducing waste by reusing and recycling)
- Take the lead on setting up "mutual aid" groups -- networks for families to both say what they need and say what they can offer -- to provide support to each other or set up swaps (e.g., exchanging recipes, books, games)

### **Taking on a Universal Design for Learning (UDL) Approach**

Though we are very accustomed to a certain amount of conformity in how learning takes place in our classrooms, there can be very little expectations for conformity in how learning happens while students are learning at home. We have the opportunity to embrace the principles of UDL and provide multiple ways for students to access, engage with, and demonstrate their learning. With this in mind, educators can:

- Take the opportunity to make time and space to get to know students even better. Connection with our students right now is essential, and the opportunity to build rapport and obtain deeper knowledge of various dimensions of their identities will help teachers be culturally and linguistically responsive and design more meaningful learning experiences.
- Create modules that are structured by goals and essential questions but are also flexible and offer multiple options to accomplish and address such goals. These modules can thus maximize opportunities for students to engage in ways that are most appropriate, interesting, and authentic for them.
- Create hyperdocs or learning kits that contain resources in multiple formats and languages and/or prompt students to choose a format and language for their work product. Even when teachers cannot understand student work in languages other than English, there is intrinsic value for the student while articulating their thoughts, ideas, stories, and learning.



### **Integrating Learning in Authentic Ways**

Many of our school schedules are compartmentalized around educator specialization. While learning remotely, our students might not be able to adhere to comparable schedules. Learning modules that integrate various kinds of content and learning can make organizing students' at-home schedules more feasible, while aligning to strong pedagogy for English Learners. Keeping this in mind, educators can:

- Use thematic approaches to make connections across content. Multilingual Learners will benefit from learning that is integrated around a theme, rather than disparate topics that each require specific vocabulary, disciplinary language, or background knowledge.
- Encourage the arts as much as possible. Music, song, storytelling, drama, crafts, textile arts, and visual arts all provide enormous cognitive, emotional, and cultural benefits and can happen in any language.
- Embrace inquiry, problem, and project-based learning. Prompt students to brainstorm the questions they genuinely want to pursue, and prompt them to engage in authentic inquiry-based learning in the context of their everyday life. Invite students to find ways to address the problems they identify as needing their attention. The experiences they are having or creating for themselves in this current context can become part of the inquiry process. The more we ground learning expectations in questions and actions that are relevant to their lives, the more they will feel engaged and empowered by the experience.

### **Finding Natural Opportunities for Language Development**

Multilingual Learners benefit from and develop language by using, practicing, playing, observing, thinking about, and discussing language. Encouraging any and all language use will help them sustain their home language practices and contribute to their development in English. With this in mind, educators can:

- Encourage students and families to have conversations, tell jokes and stories, sing, and play with language! Teachers can also guide families to observe and talk about how they use language in their home and community.
- Prompt students to watch programming and listen to the radio or podcasts in English and creatively use English closed-captioning or home language subtitles.
- Invite students to notice language in their environment (e.g., do cognate scavenger hunts on signs, ads, and other environmental texts while out walking [6 feet from others] in their community).

### **Home Language Support**

- Paraprofessionals: Many schools have paraprofessionals/teacher aides who are skilled or fluent in the home language of the students. Educators can consider how support staff might be able to help students with remote learning activities and also act as a resource when communicating with families.
- Tutors: There are college students and others who share our K-12 students' native languages, so this could be a time where native language tutoring could happen - whether via phone, internet, or other means. Native language tutoring is an opportunity

for students to build deeper content knowledge. For example, a tutor who speaks Dari can help a relative newcomer from Afghanistan, also a Dari speaker, understand technical science content more deeply than someone who can only speak to that language learner in English. We encourage districts to connect older and younger students or other members of the community so that ELs can acquire knowledge through their home language during this time.

### **Games and Play**

- Using games to advance learning is another way to engage students in a remote learning setting. Games can be open-ended and universal enough to work for families who speak various languages other than English.
- “Gamifying” learning can lend an element of fun that may be helpful during these times. This includes word games in various languages, math games, science investigations, and the like. For instance, students who speak Spanish at home would benefit from games where cognates and Latin-based academic language are featured since those are words that are prevalent in English. We also want to encourage teachers to facilitate games in students’ home languages as well.
- Other activities with words, such as sorting and vocabulary investigations, can also elevate students’ learning. This is a time when students can increase confidence in their ability to understand and use words in various contexts, especially in academic terms.

### **Exploring Content**

- This time is a perfect opportunity for students and their families to engage in building knowledge of science content. ELs sometimes end up receiving more language and math instruction with little time left for science or social studies. There is ample evidence<sup>6</sup> that students with broader and deeper background knowledge navigate school better since they can apply that background knowledge to their learning. Resources that suggest topics and activities for students at all ages to engage in science investigations and activities in physical, life, earth, and other sciences, such as engineering, can be shared with parents and students. These are also activities that can be shared by family members of different ages.
- Sharing family stories can add to students’ content knowledge, as well as learning about current or historical figures in American history and in the history of students’ home countries or cultures. These stories could also serve as the basis for student’s to creating projects in which students could research and create presentations. Again, this type of project-based approach to learning would serve the needs of students at varying levels of language development and formal schooling.
- Section 228.30 of the Illinois School Code indicates that “...program components include: instruction in the history and culture of the country, territory, or geographic area that is the native land of the students or of their parents and in the history and culture of the United States....” Students who do not have access to the internet may have limited access to materials, but they do have access to parents and perhaps other family

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/54470/why-content-knowledge-is-crucial-to-effective-critical-thinking>

members who can share information about the history and culture of their home country/native land. Here again is a learning opportunity that could engage ELs -- whether in English or their home language. This information could eventually be shared with the rest of the class so that everyone broadens their learning horizons.

### **Keeping Existing Guidelines in Mind**

It is worth reiterating highlights of the clear guidelines previously issued from ISBE regarding EL instruction<sup>7</sup> at this time:

- First, teachers need access to students' ACCESS or screener scores so that they can differentiate their instruction <sup>8</sup> so teachers know what students can do at various levels of language development and can differentiate the English they are expecting students to consume and produce.
- Buildings with Transitional Bilingual Education programs need to ensure that students are receiving instruction from teachers who have bilingual endorsements. Those teachers should provide instruction in both English and the native language other than English so that students' learning continues to take place in both languages.
- Buildings with Transitional Programs of Instruction need to ensure that English Learners are being taught by teachers with English as a Second Language (ESL) endorsements so that differentiation is taking place in such a way that students gain access to grade-level content while the expected language is differentiated for their level of English language development.

### **What Multilingual Learners DO NOT Need and Research Does Not Support**

Some students might benefit from some practice of certain skills they have not yet mastered, but we do not recommend a deluge of worksheets and practice sheets for students to practice subskills in a decontextualized, rote format. A small portion of the day can be devoted to skills such as increasing sight words, practicing math computation, etc. Most students will most likely find too much of this type of rote work as tedious, and it will not motivate them to engage in more learning.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/228ARK.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <https://wida.wisc.edu/teach/can-do/descriptors>

## Grading

### **Guiding Principles to Help Meet the Assessment Needs of Multilingual Learners**

#### **Students' social-emotional well-being is a priority in assessment.**

- Make sure all feedback affirms growth and acknowledges difficult circumstances.
- Ask students what format and type of feedback is helpful to them.
- There should be NO failing or unsatisfactory grades as a result of performance during the remote learning period as that would be inappropriately high stakes, undermining to social-emotional well-being, and punitive in effect.
- Everything should be viewed as a formative assessment.

#### **Attention to growth and development of language and literacy in addition to content is essential.**

- Praise and acknowledge effective communication of ideas.
- Guide students to one or two new understandings about academic language without worrying about correcting all errors.

#### **Students' home and community language practices are a natural and essential part of how they make meaning and are thus an important vehicle to demonstrate learning and knowledge.**

- Validate and give credit for student work using a mix of English and the home language(s).
- Invite students to draft/complete work in languages other than English. This may be accompanied by a summary or reflection in English, so the teacher can access and give feedback.

#### **Distinguishing between assessment of academic language development and assessment of content knowledge (in all of the students' languages) will assure culturally and linguistically responsive grading.**

- Use two different assessment tools for a single student work product – one to examine demonstration of content and another to give feedback and support on language use.
- Separate language from content objectives in rubrics.

#### **Collaborative assessment practices between educators with bilingual/ESL expertise and general educator practitioners allow for more equitable assessment of Multilingual Learners' work.**

- Administrators establish digital professional learning communities that include bilingual/ESL/dual language educators across grades and content areas.

## **Recommended Actions to Support the Assessment of Multilingual Learners**

### **Develop digital and/or nondigital student portfolios to document content and language development over time.**

For example, students and families collect/self-select writing samples, recordings of themselves speaking and explaining an idea in home language and/or English, photos of artistic projects, science projects, posters, and diagrams.

### **Develop teacher-student and individual learning goals.**

For example, provide opportunities for teachers and students to check in virtually or via phone to set goals and action steps for a particular time frame (connect via phone, email, online platform, text periodically).

### **Create authentic assessments based on actual experience and in current context.**

- For example, social studies and language arts students could conduct family interviews to gather historical information about their families' experiences guided by a rubric or checklist of elements.
- Recognize the value of learning communicated/demonstrated in ANY language. Even if we can't understand or read the language, there is intrinsic value in the student expressing it.

### **Utilize more general learning and language rubrics.**

- For example, a general writing rubric can be used across grade levels and content areas.
- Provide options of multiple tasks or projects for students to meet the unit objectives.
- Describe criteria broadly so that it can be demonstrated in multiple ways.
- Use flexible structures and rubrics that allow for a huge variety of experiences and resources. Rubrics do not have to be task or language-specific.

### **Place student reflection and self-assessment at the center of feedback.**

- For example, students (with families) take the time to organize and design their learning portfolio (digital and/or paper).
- Students have a personal journal/learning log/interactive learning log with dated entries to document their learning, impressions, and feelings about the experience of learning under these new conditions.

### **Establish community among staff and between staff, students/ families, and peer-to-peer groups.**

- The emphasis should be on documenting and processing learning, reflection, and self-evaluation.
- Teachers can guide, collaborate on rubrics or criteria, and offer feedback.

**Use assessment practices that promote engagement and let students know that they are heard.**

- For example, creating bilingual books, family interviews, journaling, learning logs, identity text creation.
- Use Universal Design for Learning as an overarching approach for giving feedback and assessing student learning/progress.
- Students should be offered multiple modalities and means for expressing/demonstrating learning.

## **Language Development**

- English language development is a process that can be looked at through the WIDA standards/Can Do descriptors and Name Charts for different grade-level clusters.
- Invite students to use all their bilingual language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) across the curriculum.
- Bilingual and biliteracy development can be assessed through authentic projects, publications, and performances.
- Build in opportunities for students to interact with parents, such as interviews, storytelling, and creating, in the home language.

## **Content Knowledge**

- It is important to give students the opportunity and freedom to show what they know in content areas in multiple ways (projects, products, and performances).
- Make certain that students have ways to show their understanding separate from their level of English language development.
- Encourage students to choose one particular area within a content area to investigate more deeply and/or to work on clarification.

# Special Education and Related Services

## Instruction

Students with disabilities are particularly vulnerable during times of disruption and change. To ensure ongoing growth and progress, districts should focus their planning efforts on how to continue serving these students to the greatest extent practicable by tailoring remote learning that provides educational benefits to students with disabilities. All decisions regarding special education must comply with guidance from the [U.S. Department of Education](#).

The basic guidelines and options/opportunities are based on the following core beliefs:

- IEPs remain in place and should direct students' remote learning. Be mindful that a student's program may require commencing a team meeting.
- Adhere to local procedures and leverage local leadership.
- Emphasize structure and consistency for students with special needs.
- Students with special needs benefit greatly from ongoing motivation and excel when relationships with adults and peers are strong.
- Resources should be viewed broadly and include leveraging local associations, professional organizations, government agencies, and more.
- Affirm that all students can achieve growth in all capacities. Learning opportunities should occur 24/7 and should be tracked, when applicable.

## Training, Development, and Supporting Staff

It is essential that training, development, and support continue for staff who serve students with IEPs.

Districts may want to consider the following when providing support to special education staff:

- Create and share inventories of what technology is available to students/families with special needs.
- Identify what technology platforms will best serve the various needs of the special education population.
- If available, utilize clinician-created documents for public consumption.

## Content Delivery

Assisting students in accessing the curriculum during remote learning should be a collaborative effort, just as it is in a typical school environment. Districts should be sharing resources and ideas with each other as much as possible.

## New Content and Review/Practice

The focus of instruction should be individualized and based on the students' IEPs, their goals, the modifications, and accommodations within the IEP. To ensure this differentiation occurs, there should be communication between special and general education teachers (including bilingual/ESL and dual language teachers), case coordinators, teacher assistants, and clinicians to support students in accessibility and in meeting their IEP benchmarks and goals.

Districts and educators should also ensure the curriculum is accessible and multi-sensory in its nature to support all learning styles and language proficiency levels for Multilingual Learners.

Any changes to programs or goals should be made in conforming with federal and state required procedural safeguards.

Social-emotional learning strategies are integral to students' learning and well-being. Many of our students have clinician services and intense social-emotional needs documented in their IEPs. This pandemic can exacerbate some of those needs. Special educators should collaborate with the students' clinicians to work on activities that support students with stress/anxiety reduction and other SEL activities.

### **Communication Processes and Structures Needed to Support this Work**

Students with special needs require additional effort that ensures messaging and communication are effective. The standard methods of communication may include district webpages, district social media, automatic calls, utilizing community organizations groups/shelters, news media outlets, and internal school data platforms that can allow daily, weekly updates regarding academic progress. Further explanations and recommendations may be needed to ensure everyone responsible for the efficacy of the IEP is receiving correct and ongoing information. Scaffolding, communication, and breaking up assignments into more manageable parts would be helpful in this regard. We encourage direct communication from trusted and known faculty members for delivery. The following are considerations for family and student communication:

- Special ed listserv-targeted emails to families of special needs students
- Phone calls on a regular schedule from case managers
- Use of appropriate staff to overcome need and language barriers
- Communication from all professionals that interact with students, including, but not limited to, social workers, speech-language pathologists, paraprofessionals, school psychologists, and counselors

### **Roles of Related Service Professionals and Paraprofessionals in Delivering Instructional Services**

Related service professionals and paraprofessionals play a vital role in the daily instruction of students with IEPs. It is essential during remote learning that these professionals are a part of the continued learning of our students. These individuals should be working in collaboration with other educators to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

- Assist in contacting families (in accordance with district policies) and helping with work.
- Chunk activities; provide students with work schedules and other more structured ways to approach their learning goals.
- Provide resources for families in need of assistance, such as mental health resources, crisis lines, suicide prevention.
- When possible, clinicians can conduct check-in calls, and clinicians (such as Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy) could consider creating videos on exercises, etc.

### **Options and Opportunities**

During this time, students with special needs and IEPs should be given the opportunity to continue with learning that is consistent for all students. This learning will be based on the individual IEP.



## **Instruction**

- Identify realistic, individualized time frames for task completion. Be mindful of extended time accommodations outlined in IEPs.
- Provide specific instruction and mini-deadlines/benchmarks for assignments, especially those with multiple-tasks.
- Create opportunities for students to demonstrate progress and receive feedback related to assignments and IEP goals.
- Use student interest profiles to inform lessons and activities.
- Provide alternative options for participating in virtual class discussions
- Create video modeling of how you expect something to be done or what has been successful in the school setting, such as hand-over-hand assistance in the classroom.
- Use built-in accessibility features in learning management systems, albeit on an individualized basis according to student need, for example:
  - Use heading styles that allow screen reading software to navigate from section to section.
  - Use font, size, and text formatting to distinguish between items or to navigate. Ensure no information is conveyed solely by color or sound.
  - Use Alt-Text to allow users with screen readers or with slow connection to identify your images, graphs, and charts.
  - Enable tooltips so that descriptions appear when users hover over images, graphs, and charts.
- Provide transcripts of any pre-recorded audio or video used with students. Use closed captioning on videos.
- Use descriptive titles, headers, and captions to provide additional context and information for students.
- Use descriptive text in hyperlinks so students clearly know where the link will take them. Avoid phrases like “click here” or “read more” without additional descriptors.

## **“Hands-On” Options for Remote Learning**

- Use non-digital resources of work. (Where possible, coordinate this effort with the case manager and/or assistance of paraprofessionals.)
- Incorporate life skills essential for students with IEPs. This includes, but is not limited to, cooking, ratios, chores, cleaning, hygiene, etc.
- Have students track activities with photos or videos and submit to teachers.
- Keep meditation logs and providing links to meditation apps and YouTube videos.
- Encourage journaling.
- Utilize ground activities (e.g., choose five objects that are around you and describe them in detail).
- Utilize virtual museum tours and video demonstrations.

## Grading

All directives from the U.S. Department of Education for students with disabilities should be followed in relation to the school closure for COVID-19.

The IEP team must convene before any changes to students' IEP required assessments and/or grading policies are made for the duration of the school closure.

### Options and Opportunities

It is important to note that districts should have local control in guiding staff to meet the needs of their school community and students' IEP needs.

### Alternative Grading/Assessment Suggestions

When grading/assessing student work, it is important to note the priority is to assess in a manner that supports motivation and participation in remote learning. The assessments or grading should not be punitive in any manner.

Every effort should be made for collaboration between case managers, service providers, and general education staff when determining a summative grade for the quarter.

Assessments should be as inclusive as possible. Suggestions for assessments and grading practices that most benefit students with disabilities include:

- Rubrics
- Standards-Based Grading
- IEP Goals and Objectives-Based Grading
- Competency-Based Grading
- Evidenced-Based Grading
- Portfolio-Based Grading
- Contract/Negotiation-Based Grading (Effort to improve current assignment to raise letter grade.)
- Narrative Feedback for Video Observations or Family Anecdotal Reports
- Narrative Feedback for Written Work or Projects
- Pass/Incomplete (Although usually not recommended for students with disabilities, it may be appropriate during school closures.)

When developing individualized grading/assessment practices for students with disabilities, the following factors should be considered:

- Student need and present levels of performance
- IEP Goals and Objectives
- Kinds of accommodations/modifications/services that are provided
- Capacity of support in the remote learning environment
- Social-emotional response to the COVID-19 crisis
- Access to needed resources to participate in learning

- Student's past performance
- Current grades
- Transition and postsecondary goals

# Early Childhood (Birth - 2nd Grade)

## Instruction

We recognize that the family is the child's first teacher. Therefore, this document reflects the importance of each family member's expertise in determining what works best for their children and other family members during this unprecedented time of change. We are not creating or replacing the teacher; rather, we are supporting families in a partnership for learning<sup>9</sup>.

## General Recommendations/Best Practices

We are seeking to strengthen the already existing partnership between teachers and families and assisting families as they embrace their role as their children's first teacher in a new and evolving way. To do this, families may be asked to, when possible, spend time with their children, play with their children, share their unique talents and interests, and engage in suggested learning opportunities. The goal is that, over time, the family interactions touch on each learning domain of a child's development. The emphasis is on play-based family learning experiences, not on the mastery of a finite list of skills.

## Communication

Teachers, related service providers, specialists, and paraprofessionals need to work together to communicate learning opportunities for families that address the needs of all students. At the same time, it is critical that consistent messages are delivered to families by each educator or staff member who encounters that family. For instance, every educator needs to consistently message that family members should interact with children in their strongest language(s), even if that language is not English. This is true for all families, whether or not the child is identified as an English Learner.

When working with families with children ages birth to age 8, educators can provide suggestions and resources to help them support their children. Suggestions for working with young children may include:

- Create a consistent, but responsive, daily routine and share it with children. Children learn best and are more adaptable to change when they know what to expect and have consistency in their daily life. This is not intended to advise parents to create a regimented daily schedule that mirrors the daily school schedule, but rather, a consistent flow of the day that fits into the family routine.
- Each family member should interact with children in their strongest language(s), even if that language is not English and even if that means their children may be hearing multiple languages each day.
- Spend time with their children each day talking about how they are feeling.
- Spend time with their children each day playing games (invented or purchased), telling stories, and/or reading books in any language.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://nationalp-3center.org/resources/at-home-teaching-and-learning-in-prek-3rd-grade/>

## **Leadership Recommendations**

- Less is more. Districts should seek to implement a few high-quality, intuitive solutions for communication lines, teaching and learning, and student support.
- Time assigned to task allotments should be developmentally appropriate. It is not appropriate to equate time spent at home on school activities with the time the student would have spent at school. Districts must be cognizant of the fact that student lives at home are changed.
- Collaboration is key. We recommend collaboration with all district stakeholders in the decision-making process to select resources for continuous learning.

## **Planning and Preparation**

Teachers are urged to provide families with resources they need to meet basic needs as well as academic needs so that they can support their student(s). Families who are provided with options and variety are then able to participate to the level they are capable.

Collaboration with related service providers, specialists, and paraprofessionals is strongly advised. This helps to ensure continuity of services as well as share the workload among professionals who can then deliver a clear and consistent message to families. Support of families should be ongoing.

The following guidelines outline learning opportunities designed to address the needs of the whole child.

## **Social-Emotional Supports**

The social-emotional development of all young children is the key to maximizing the benefits of educational experiences at any time, but especially during this time of crisis. Young children are resilient and take their social-emotional cues from the adults around them. Providing information and explanations to our young children in an age-appropriate way will help ease some of their uncertainty. Ensuring our children are supported emotionally during this time of uncertainty is the foundation of any instruction we may provide.

## **Content and Delivery with Options and Opportunities**

Young children learn through everyday play, exploration, and consistency in a safe and stimulating environment. Your child's relationships with you, caregivers, and family members are key for their healthy development. Children learn best by having the freedom to actively engage with their environment.

Children's play is a highly supportive context for development and learning. Children's learning and development are multidimensional, so we need to use a holistic approach to cover children's mind and body needs. Teachers should provide students and their families with ideas to construct an understanding of the world around them, especially supporting and encouraging their communication and social-emotional skills.

This is a time for teachers to promote activities and ideas for students and their families to make connections with their background knowledge and to support students' critical thinking skills.

|  | <b>Birth to 3 years old</b>  | <b>PreK - K</b>   | <b>Grades 1 - 2</b>   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Unique Learning Characteristics</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn best in small blocks of time with repetitive activities.</li> <li>• Observing things, watching faces.</li> <li>• Listening to sounds and voices.</li> <li>• Touching textures.</li> <li>• Experimenting with objects.</li> <li>• Stimulating all the senses.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn best in small blocks of time with repetitive activities.</li> <li>• Active exploration of their environment in child-initiated activities and in teacher/adult-initiated activities.</li> <li>• Choices based on their own interests can increase learning.</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are becoming more confident and independent.</li> <li>• Self-discovery and independent exploration can increase learning.</li> <li>• Literacy skills play a key role in their learning and development.</li> </ul>   |
|  | <b>Birth to 3 years old</b>  | <b>PreK - K</b>   | <b>Grades 1 - 2</b>   |
| <b>Social-Emotional Needs</b>          | <p>To support the social-emotional development at this age level, establishing and maintaining nurturing relationships with the student in conjunction with responsive caregiving is key. Assist students with identifying basic emotions.</p>   | <p>To support the social-emotional development at this age level, providing child-directed choices within a structured environment is key. It is important to set limits to this exploration. Maintaining freedom with limits provides some stability and predictability that encourages positive growth and development across all domains. A calendar of activities created by each family can help them to do that. Encourage children to identify, label and manage emotions with the help of the family.</p> | <p>To support the social-emotional development at this age level, encourage opportunities for sharing feelings, needs and thoughts. Promote empathy through conversations about other people's feelings and perspectives. Use a journal to self-reflect. Talk about responsibilities and managing emotions. Encourage positive self-talk.</p> |

|   | <b>Birth to 3 years old</b>  | <b>PreK - K</b>  | <b>Grades 1 - 2</b>  |
|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Suggested Language Arts in All Languages Activities</b></p> <p>Adapted from Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards</p> | <p>Listen to and talk about stories. Singing together and teaching songs will promote children's use of language. Practice rhyming words. Increase vocabulary by introducing new words. Encourage reading experiences as much as possible.</p>   | <p>Play letter sound games. Listen to and talk about stories. Encourage reading experiences as much as possible. Songs will promote children's use of language. Create a journal or a diary, even if it is just with pictures, to set up a routine of drawing and writing. Promote self-expression and creativity. Increase vocabulary by introducing new words.</p> | <p>Engage in authentic writing activities. Draw attention to environmental print in objects in the home environment. Encourage reading and writing experiences as much as possible. Increase vocabulary by introducing new words. Use art to promote self-expression and creativity.</p>   |
|   | <b>Birth to 3 years old</b>  | <b>PreK - K</b>  | <b>Grades 1 - 2</b>  |
| <p><b>Suggested Math Activities</b></p> <p>Adapted from Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards</p>                           | <p>Practice reciting numbers and play with shapes. Possible activities include counting out loud and counting objects in the home, identifying colors and sorting games. Students could also hunt for objects with certain shapes in a room.</p> | <p>Practice counting forwards and backwards, count objects, explore shapes, identify colors, writing numbers, sorting and classification games. Possible activities include counting out loud up to 100, counting objects in rooms, and looking for objects with certain shapes in a room. Board games are also encouraged.</p>                                      | <p>Practice addition and subtraction, skip counting, and measurement. Possible activities include counting objects in the home and adding or taking away and counting objects by 2's, 5's or 10's. Other activities include using one object to measure another, such as using paper clips to measure a pencil or a toy. Playing board games is also encouraged.</p> |
|   | <b>Birth to 3 years old</b>  | <b>PreK - K</b>  | <b>Grades 1 - 2</b>  |
| <p><b>Suggested Science Activities</b></p> <p>Adapted from Illinois Early</p>   | <p>Through the application of science, young children begin to understand the world around them. They learn to manipulate physical, chemical and biological objects. Science explorations</p>  | <p>Observe the environment and describe through words, images and stories. Encourage children's reasoning about their own experience and the world around them.</p>  | <p>Encourage families to provide explorative activities and allow children to test and push limits while questioning what is and what can be. Prediction and cause-effect</p>  |

|   | <b>Birth to 3 years old</b>  | <b>PreK - K</b>   | <b>Grades 1 - 2</b>  |
|---|--|---|--|
| Learning and Development Standards  | increase critical thinking skills and increase higher level thinking. Encourage families to provide explorative activities and allow children to test and push limits while questioning what is and what can be. | Participate in recycling activities. Participate in meal preparation and mixing ingredients.  | questioning promote critical thinking.   |
|   | <b>Birth to 3 years old</b>  | <b>PreK - K</b>   | <b>Grades 1 - 2</b>  |
| <p><b>Suggested Social Studies Activities</b></p> <p>Adapted from Illinois Early Learning and Development Standards</p> | Encourage families to share family stories, talk about the structure of their specific type of family, explore culturally specific foods, clothing, music, dance, etc.   | Encourage families to share family stories, talk about the structure of their specific type of family, explore culturally specific foods, clothing, music, dance, etc. Give young children the opportunity to be active participants in the family by allowing them to share appropriate chores at home, and to make certain choices and decisions. | Through the social systems of economics, human connection, self-awareness, geography and families, young children begin to understand their place in the world. To promote this understanding, encourage families to share family stories, talk about the structure of their specific type of family, explore culturally specific foods, clothing, music, dance, etc. Give young children the opportunity to be active participants in the family by allowing them to share appropriate chores at home, and to make certain choices and decisions. |



## Grading

Assessment at the birth through second grade level should be focused on student progress and learning, not assignment completion and due dates. We believe it is essential to communicate the need for authentic student artifacts to enable educators to provide relevant feedback for continued learning.

Fewer standards/activities focused on familiar content may be completed within the remote learning time frame in accordance with the instructional guidelines regarding minutes of direct instruction, while also considering differentiation and individual student/grade level depth of knowledge on each standard. It is recommended that new content is not introduced during the remote learning period. Children may require hands-on involvement by parents, caregivers, siblings, or others depending on their age and developmental stage. Consider what you are asking families to complete as it may be a family who lacks time and ability to engage in continuous learning, or it may be a sibling or neighbor that is responsible for the child's supervision and continuous learning.

Districts currently providing technology-rich environments should use their platforms to the fullest extent, while remaining mindful of the screen time<sup>10</sup> guidelines for young learners. As this situation evolves, districts should consider the implementation and development of additional online learning platforms.

## Communication

The advisory group recommends communication with parents/caregivers to ensure continuity of care/instruction. We acknowledge the current national situation and environment. We do not wish to add additional stress to families to assess their child's achievement rather we seek to maintain communication with families regarding the progress they are seeing at home.

A routine for regular and consistent communication with families should be established. This may be through phone calls, emails, or other digital resources that are available to families.

## Developmentally Appropriate Assessments

It is recommended that students be assessed upon return to school (potentially in the fall) to determine their instructional needs. If a district does not already have one of these assessments, ISBE is developing have a tool for districts to utilize.

Developmentally appropriate assessments from birth through prekindergarten consist of authentic play-based assessment. In a remote learning environment, that would focus on regular communication with family members. This communication would not be a time to assess skills but rather a time to discuss authentic, play-based learning experiences in the home. Developmentally appropriate assessments for kindergarten through second grade that demonstrate continuation of learning may include:

- Photos of artifacts - Parent/caregiver submit a photo of student work and the teacher provides standards-based feedback.

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<sup>10</sup> [https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Preschool\\_for\\_All\\_Implementation\\_Manual.pdf](https://www.isbe.net/Documents/Preschool_for_All_Implementation_Manual.pdf)

- Collected physical artifacts - These can be collected periodically or at conclusion of the remote learning period.
- Parent phone calls - Teacher interacts with the child to assess identified skills/tasks.
- Video student skills - Parent/caregiver takes video of student completing task and shares with the teacher utilizing a district-approved platform.
- District-supported web-based programs.

# Elementary School (3rd -5th Grade)

## Instruction

### Planning and Preparation

Plan and create academic and social engagement activities with a focus on the maintenance of previously covered content. Keep in mind that many families have limited, if any, data internet and one device that must be shared between multiple people.

To optimize learning during a crisis, we encourage cross-curricular activities that include multiple subject areas. Assignments should be provided that allow students to work independently or with the limited help of a family member.

All possible efforts should be made in planning and preparation to provide an equitable academic learning experience for all students.

### General Recommendations

- Establish office hours: Teachers should have availability/check-ins. (Be flexible with office hours. Student and teacher availability could fluctuate.)
- Communicate with students first with the tools teachers are already utilizing and familiar with at this time. Use common platforms (suggested or already in use) across a district to alleviate any confusion for parents and students.
- Determine whether students are completing work online or traditionally.
- Keep variables in mind when you plan your lessons considering students may have:
  - Multiple classes
  - Other responsibilities
  - Personal or family illness
  - Limited access to devices, internet, and supplies
- Focus on student progress and learning, not assignment completion and due dates.
- Create learning opportunities that resemble classroom content using familiar wording.
- Create cross-curricular work when possible to maximize efficiency. Read a science or history article, use English language arts-based questions for comprehension, discussion, and/or writing.

## **Communication**

Communication is key! Regular communication is advised to keep students actively engaged, provide structure, and alleviate stress and uncertainty. Provide critical communication in languages representative of student and family/caregiver populations. Establish a local philosophy and approach for communicating with all stakeholders consistent with local policies and procedures using platforms that are familiar to students and parents. Examples include:

- Handwritten letters
- Phones, automated calls, etc.
- District website
- Local news, cable channels, etc.
- Email
- Social media and other web-based programs

## **Options and Opportunities**

We envision that students are offered multiple options that are self-selected depending on their interests, connectivity and academic activity. In order to optimize learning during a crisis, we encourage cross-curricular activities that include multiple subject areas. Those options and opportunities include the following:

- Journals (could include journaling about what they've learned, writing prompts, collection of activities completed, etc.)
- Academic Activities (specific assignments, scavenger hunt, non-digital resources, pen-pals, software applications, read to parents or siblings, books study, manipulatives, count money, etc.)
- Social Engagement Activities (group video chats, written communication/emails to teachers and/or classmates, family board games, etc.)
- Hands-on Activities (art, physical education, music, create your own board game, cooking, gardening)

## **Grading**

### **Equity and Support**

Grading at the elementary level should focus on the continuation of learning. Districts may offer support for learning goals. This may include documentation of learning and giving feedback rather than assigning grades. Examples of this may include teacher/student collaboration, performance based assessments, portfolios, journals, discussion posts, video responses, audio recordings, projects, choice boards, and other artifacts.

Students' grades must not be negatively impacted during remote learning. Assessment should be ongoing to promote equitable environments. The mode at which a student provides evidence of learning needs to be differentiated based upon student circumstances. The decision to provide summative grades or report cards during the remote learning period will remain local. Should a district provide report cards or summative grades, these should be reflective of the totality of evidence of learning submitted by each student. This body of evidence may differ based on what is submitted by each individual student and can be influenced by the level of connectivity, support, and other factors.

Learning targets should be focused and intentional during the remote learning period and reflect the highest priorities at that grade level.

### **Options and Opportunities**

The advisory group recommends that the “grades and assessments” used during the remote learning period reflect learning and growth. This includes using normed, local, and/or teacher generated assessments upon return to school as well as during the remote learning period, if possible and practical.

A transition re-entry period between remote learning and the return to typical school schedules should be considered and developed prior to learning and assessment.

It is recommended that student social-emotional well-being be the priority as students re-enter school following the remote learning period. Connections and relationships should be established prior to engaging in any form of rigorous testing or assessment schedule.

Districts should prepare for potential gaps in student learning and understanding and plan accordingly to support student acquisition of these skills upon return back to school.

### **Parent Communication**

Districts should deploy varied tools to communicate grading practices and expectations. The priority for parents during the remote learning period is safety, health, and well-being. Schools and families can partner to keep children emotionally and physically safe, fed, and engaged in learning.

It is not the intention of remote learning for parents to become the sole provider of educational content, but schools will rely on their support. With a strong partnership between homes and schools, we can keep students progressing forward during an unprecedented time.

Districts should consider modes of parent communication that best meet the population and demographics of the schools and families they serve. This may include phone calls, emails, video updates, social media posts, news updates, etc.

# Middle School (6th - 8th Grade)

## Instruction

The goal for instructional remote learning is to allow for continued instruction while acknowledging the additional challenges that come without traditional, face-to-face classroom learning. While new instruction can take place, the guidelines are suggesting that instructors take into account the needs of middle schoolers and their ability to learn independently. Additionally, school staff should be mindful that they do not exacerbate the gaps between low- and high-income students, and students with and without internet access. To ensure equal access, instructors can provide materials that do not require internet access, make sure that IEP accommodations are met, and reach out to all families to help them support their children as much as possible.

Acknowledging possible instructional needs or barriers of middle school students:

- Students may be helping their families with child care of siblings/relatives or helping to provide financially for their families.
- Students and families may feel unease or fear from this unprecedented event.
- Families may have multiple children who share a common device with no/limited internet access.
- Caregivers may become ill, placing additional burdens upon students.
- Students may become ill.
- Family members may not be equipped or have time to help students.
- Students may not have physical space sufficient to complete work.

Instructors must be aware of these challenges and ensure that their educational decisions support all populations of students.

## Planning and Preparation

- Combined daily instructional task(s) should not exceed three hours a day in total.
  - Generally, a MAXIMUM of 30 minutes of graded work per subject area/teacher per day (that is, 180 minutes graded work per subject area/teacher per week).
  - This time includes both any teacher instruction and all graded work for that day/week.
  - Teachers are encouraged to provide enrichment opportunities beyond the minimum recommended instruction tasks, but they must make clear to students that these are optional activities and do not count as assignments.
- Districts should work to set times for teachers to plan and discuss consistency of essential skills across subjects/grade levels. These virtual meetings should leverage video/phone conferencing technology, to the extent possible.

## Content and Delivery

- All students need to have access to content and material. If learning is going to be done online, then an educationally comparable offline version should be available that replicates the online version as closely as possible.
- Give priority in subject areas to prerequisite skills that will be required for next year
- Schools must make an effort to support parents with resources that may help to facilitate remote learning. It is necessary to establish reliable and district-approved channels of communication with parents by phone or email, if possible. Schools should make every effort possible to reach out to students and parents, while ensuring that they do not violate the communications guidelines of individual districts.

## Communication/Feedback

- Timely communication by teachers makes a difference in the number of students who complete assignments and in their achievement of the learning tasks.
  - Schools should attempt to set up channels of communication with students and staff without internet access, such as by phone or by mail.
  - Students with internet access can communicate with teachers by email or through learning websites.
- Establish office hours for teacher availability and check-in with students and families (if appropriate or possible).

## Social-Emotional Learning/Support

- The health and mental well-being of students should be a priority over learning. Accommodations and modifications can and should be done when appropriate for students and their mental health.
- School staff should make every effort to contact all families/students on a regular basis and open up lines of communication for families/students to contact them. These contacts can be done using email, phone calls, and social media. If teachers are not able to access their school phones, personal phone numbers can be hidden through the use of a phone number provided by web-based apps.

## Options and Opportunities

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>Content Options</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online learning software (as long as non-internet options are also provided)</li><li>• Books, newspapers, magazines</li><li>• Meaningful graphic organizers, puzzles or worksheets</li><li>• Projects, especially ones that are interdisciplinary and might earn students credit for multiple classes</li><li>• Printed articles</li><li>• Podcasts</li><li>• Poetry (read or listen and then write your own)</li></ul> |
| <b>Methods of</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Online</li></ul>  |

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Distribution</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribution at school food distribution centers</li> <li>• Drive-thru pickups from school</li> <li>• Distribution by bus</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Maintaining Student Relationships</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contact students and parents by phone, if allowed by school district, using methods that protect personal information</li> <li>• Contact students and parents by email or postal mail</li> <li>• Establish systems/mechanism for students to reach out and contact teachers</li> <li>• Once methods of contact are established, ask questions to ensure the physical and emotional well-being of students</li> </ul> |
| <b>Providing Feedback</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess student work meaningfully and leniently</li> <li>• Give students most of the available credit for simply turning in their work</li> <li>• See our grading section below for more information</li> </ul>   |

## Grading

Students' grades from when they left school in March 2020 should not be adversely impacted. The "new normal" for grading/assessment is recoup, review, refine, finish year.

### Digital Learning

- Demonstrate progress and development in materials.
- Collect multiple pieces of evidence of students learning a skill or building knowledge.
- Evidence should be authentic and a diverse selection that is not necessarily delivered in the same method.
  - Examples include Digital Socratic Seminar, student-created videos, problem-based learning projects, self-reflection or self-evaluation of learning.

### Non-Digital Learning

- Students may be provided the opportunity to write a learning reflection/journal after completing paper-based activities to demonstrate their own thoughts on their growth.

## Grading Models

### Pass/Incomplete

- The Pass/Incomplete model is highly recommended for middle schools/junior high schools as they take into account the inequities that may most likely exist in the current condition. The focus is to provide fair access to educational resources and support for all students. We recognize that we are asking middle school students to become independent learners and while some are ready, others are not and may require supports.
- Overall Goal: The focus should be on what has been learned and how the students have grown throughout the specific time frame.



### **Competency-Based**

- A district already using a Competency-Based model may consider continuing its use. However, the core critical standards for success in the following grade must be prioritized. (Not all the originally identified standards should be assessed given the current time frame and situation.)
- Districts that are in an early or full implementation of a competency-based assessment model and have invested considerable PD and work toward full implementation, should continue on with the plans, although modified for the time available.

### **Proficiency-Based or Evidence-Based**

- A district already using a Proficiency or Evidence-Based model may consider continuing its use. However, the core standards critical for success in the following grade must be prioritized. If sufficient supports are gathered, a proficiency-based rating may be considered for student assessment.
- Overall Goal: The focus should be on ensuring core standards are being met for success in the next grade.

### **Traditional Letter Grades**

- If sufficient supports are provided and significant evidence is gathered to validate a letter grade, and A-F grading system is used, during remote learning, the rating of incomplete or no grade at all may be used in lieu of an F grade. However, we strongly recommend that during the remote learning period, all possible barriers the learner may have are addressed and alternative methods of engagement/evaluations have been exhausted. We suggest that teachers document all efforts to communicate with students in an effort to help them complete work that is assigned. In lieu of an F grade, we recommend that the student be issued an incomplete or no grade at all. The advisory group suggests that there be a possibility to raise the grade through the summer or fall depending on the district's availability. Given the transition to remote learning, we suggest that grades not be reduced due to lack of participation in remote learning, but that the remote learning period be provided as an opportunity for grade improvement. Districts are to consider scenarios that will provide students with the best possible outcomes to demonstrate evidence of their learning.
- Overall Goal: The focus should be on what students have learned, the effort, time, and energy put into the work, and comprehension level of the material.

### **Other Grading Considerations**

- Paraprofessional Staff: Districts should consider how specialists, assistants, aides, etc. can assist in the grading model selected, supporting students, and assisting teachers in the logistical work from collecting assignments to providing guided feedback to students (e.g., digital learning tools).

### **District-Specific Implications and Considerations**

- Decide what the process of collecting work will look like. Consider how this process will impact grading and the progress students show in their learning. (See possible suggestions in the instructional recommendations for middle schools above.)
- Have a plan for how the district plans to reach students who have severe needs within the special education population.

- Districts can consider the scenarios for grading systems that will provide students with the best possible outcomes to demonstrate evidence of their learning.
- Districts can consider promotion criteria for individual students during this time frame and revise it to the student's needs and change plans, as necessary.

### **Constitution Exam**

Middle schools are NOT required to administer a constitution test provided students meet the requirement at the high school level. Under the ISBE Social Studies Mandates for the United States and Illinois Constitutions (105 ILCS 5/27-3), the Mandate Clarification section states that: *"Students must pass a satisfactory examination upon the Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States of America, the Constitution of the State of Illinois, and the proper use and display of the American flag in order to graduate high school. Students may be evaluated on their knowledge during middle school **or** high school but must pass a satisfactory examination at least one time between 7th grade and graduation of high school"* (emphasis added). School districts can consider exempting middle school students from the constitution test this year and communicate to their respective high schools that the students will be required to meet this mandate at the high school.

# High School (9th - 12th Grade)

## Instruction

Remote learning offers many possibilities to consider, but student engagement can be easily compromised by the lack of face-to-face interaction. These recommendations specifically focus on placing student needs first. Learning opportunities should offer authentic opportunities to help students stay engaged and connected to instructors and learning. The focus should be on the continuity of learning and creating learning environments that are inclusive of all learners and careful not to amplify existing inequities in communities we serve.

Maintaining continuous learning environments requires thinking holistically about meeting students' educational needs in the broadest sense. One common frame of thought is making sure inclusiveness and equity are at the forefront of decision-making. Continuity requires consistency and collaborative interactions for all stakeholders (students, instructors, family members, parent family liaisons, and administrators, for example).

As administrators consider how to implement remote learning for their respective schools, existing resources must be taken into account:

- Consider what resources can be leveraged or salvaged for a less expensive and more efficient transition to remote learning. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - Media Center resources/hardware
  - Internet availability
  - Licensing agreements
  - Group/classroom platforms
- Using available resources, such as:
  - Newspapers, hard copies of readings, and handouts
  - Textbooks and workbooks
  - Supplemental materials that have been used on a regular basis within the class

## Maintaining Consistency

- Utilize common technology within districts that is flexible enough to support a variety of purposes (such as document creation, internet research, and online virtual meetings).
- Decide on common learning platforms within the district.
- Consider transferring essential learning outcomes from on-campus to continuous learning environments.
- Provide hard copy, non-technology-dependent resources to students, as needed.

## Instructor Responsibilities vs. Student Responsibilities

| Instructor  | Student  |
|---|--|
| Provide resources for student learning and engagement                                 | Add feedback/discuss topics/issues                                       |
| Set specific times/methods for communicating with students and parents                | Reach out with questions or concerns                                     |
| Provide multiple pathways to assess student learning and create authentic assessments | Commit to and engage in this reimagined educational environment          |
| Create a structure and routine  | Complete assignments and assessments in a timely fashion                 |
| Be flexible and understanding with regards to social/emotional needs                  | Be flexible and understanding as Instructors navigate this new territory |

## Social-Emotional Learning

Support students by:

- Suggesting time guidelines/schedule for student engagement in learning activities while remaining sensitive to the fact that typical learning has been disrupted for all.
- Monitoring and support student participation.
- Prompting discussions, collaboration, feedback, assessment.
- Considering ways to focus on relationships and connections with students via various means, including phone conversations, various e-resources, and other social media platforms.

## Engaging Families

- Maintaining regular contact at consistent times using consistent methods allows family members to become comfortable with that form communication (e.g., phone calls and/or online conversations).
- Communicating expectations for students and asking families how they feel they can best support their student's success.
- Creating daily schedules and routines
- Developing family partnerships and support mechanisms
- Connecting families with educational and social-emotional supports from school and within the community.

## Planning and Preparation

- Daily instructional task(s) should not exceed three hours a day in total.
  - A general outline of 30 minutes of daily work per subject area/teacher or 150 minutes per week.

- Breaks between courses are recommended.
- Time frames need to be manageable for the meeting times of all parties.
- Working hours for the instructors(s) should be directly and clearly communicated to students and parents prior to the beginning of the coursework.
- Instructors can consider multiple platforms of delivery:
  - Free or district-provided platforms approved by school district.
  - Those without access to the internet may use phone apps.
  - Professional Learning Communities should use time outside of these set times to coordinate learning for all parties at all levels (mainstream, EL, special education, at risk, low literacy).
- Flexible time frames that allow for high school students who may be in charge of younger children or may be working long hours to provide for their families.

Key variables to keep in mind when planning lessons considering students may have:

- Multiple classes
- Other responsibilities
- Personal or family illness
- Limited access to devices and internet
- Difficulty focusing due to added stress and possible trauma related to the current ever-changing situation
- Limited English language support from family members at home
- Different schedules of students/instructors/schools/break/holidays/work

## **Content and Delivery**

- Districts should consider whether new content will be covered or if students would be best served by a review of the content already delivered. If delivery of new material is determined to be in the best interest of students:
  - Cannot be required to master and cannot be penalized for failure to master the new content
  - Instructors should determine the essential learning skills/standards needed for success in the sequential coursework and/or to meet postsecondary goals.
- Materials should be available both online and offline to ensure equity. Activities should be consistent to the fullest extent possible. If hard copies are distributed to students, care should be taken to avoid transferring the virus via those materials.
- A clear and consistent communication plan should be created to ensure that parents/guardians are partners in this process. Try to utilize the communication channels currently in place for your school/district:
  - Communicate with parents and students via text message or phone call.
  - Many bilingual families use encrypted texting apps as their primary messaging service. Parent liaisons and bilingual teaching assistants can be a huge help in communicating with families.
  - Groups can be an effective means to communicate with our students, parents, and guardians.

- Both real-time and pre-recorded classes have advantages and disadvantages. Instructors should use discretion and use whichever they feel is most appropriate for their particular content and classes.
- Translations of materials should be provided whenever possible to English Learners.

## **Additional Considerations**

- If new content is being covered, instructors should chunk content into smaller pieces to match students' needs and be flexible with pacing. Remember that students cannot be required to master and cannot be penalized for failure to master new content.
- Bandwidth may vary depending on the time of day and the number of people streaming video and audio. This may affect streaming quality in live video classes and the ability to view or upload videos in pre-recorded classes.

## **Feedback**

- Feedback should be used to encourage and motivate learners to access content and engage in suggested activities such as discussions, discussion boards, reflections, short essays, etc.
- Feedback should be informative and tailored to the assignment(s) given.
- Instructors should give personalized feedback on content materials (submitted or not submitted).
- Instructors should be able to provide a means (i.e., rubric) of how students will be assessed on the assignment(s) they are receiving. Assignment(s) should be accompanied with an understanding of the goals and objectives.
- Feedback needs to be consistent, ongoing, incremental, formative, as a means of keeping students engaged.

## **Recommendations Specific to Career and Technical Education (CTE), Dual Credit, and Advanced Placement (AP)**

### **CTE**

When weighing content decisions for CTE students, essential skills/knowledge must be considered along with what is required for students to earn industry credentials and meet standards of employers/certifying bodies.

Teachers may choose to use various delivery methods for materials and evaluation of knowledge. Presentation may include, but not be limited to, video, YouTube, self-guided activities, posting materials with discussion and questioning, reading of texts and readings, essay writing, and sequential process flow. Additional recommendations for CTE are being developed and will be posted on [ISBE's COVID-19 webpage](#) when available.

## Dual Credit

The Illinois Board of Higher Education, Illinois Community College Board, and Illinois State Board of Education developed the following guidance to advise secondary and postsecondary institutions in Illinois on supporting and accommodating students who are enrolled in dual credit courses during the COVID-19 public health emergency. The joint guidance can also be [found here](#).

- **For those dual credit courses that are taught by a high school instructor:** The online, alternative, or remote instruction that takes place must still meet the standards for college credit. So long as coursework is being completed in these courses, students should receive credit for that work.

If the high school lacks the capacity for online, alternative, or remote instruction, it is the agencies' recommendation that the college work with the high school to share any online resources/platforms needed to ensure student success. For example, the college or university might set up a Blackboard course section for the high school instructor or loan laptops to the students in the class, if needed.

- **For those dual credit courses that are taught by a college instructor:** The institution of higher education should work with the high school to transition those students to online, remote, or alternative delivery options, consistent with the direction of both systems at this time.
- **For Career and Technical Education dual credit courses typically delivered in person but currently being delivered online through an alternative format or via remote instruction after March 17, 2020:** In the event that students are able to resume in-person instruction at the high school or institution of higher education campus and complete the hands-on competencies as a part of the course, the high school and institution of higher education should ensure that instructors and students are exercising social distancing practices.

If after April 7, 2020, the college were to resume in-person instruction but the high school did not, opportunities to bring students on campus to complete the hands-on competencies as a part of the course should be implemented. If the high school were to resume in-person instruction but the institution of higher education did not, students should be allowed the opportunity to complete the course and/or the hands-on competencies as a part of the course at the high school, even if this is outside of normal timelines. Institutions of higher education and high schools should work together to finalize these plans.

- **For those students who may not be able to complete a course within the current semester framework:** Students unable to complete the dual credit course within the semester timeframe may be given the option to receive an "Incomplete," with an individual plan to complete that work as soon as is possible, within the context of the credit granting higher education institution's policies for completion of coursework.

For all students who are unable to complete a dual credit course through a community college or four-year college or university: The instructor of the course should make every

effort to work with the student and, if possible, their high school counselor to contact the community college, college, or university to inquire about the college or university's completion policies for dual credit courses.

If an incomplete is granted, institutions of higher education and high schools should work together to support all students with the development of an individual plan for the completion of a dual credit course, with a focus on students who are expected to graduate in the spring of 2020.

- **For students who choose not to continue their dual credit enrollment, given the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic:** Recognizing that students may be experiencing varying mental and physical health challenges at this time and may have very different access to supports and technology at home, grading should strongly consider the principle of “No educational harm to any student.” High schools and institutions of higher education should be actively engaged with each student to ensure he/she is not penalized by this situation. With oversight authority from the Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the Dual Credit Quality Act was enacted to protect the academic standing of students. See 110 ILCS 27/15, to wit:

Sec. 15. Student academic standing. Institutions may adopt policies to protect the academic standing of students who are not successful in dual credit courses, including, but not limited to, options for (i) late withdrawal from a course, or (ii) taking the course on a pass-fail basis, or both.

## AP

For support and information regarding Advanced Placement instruction and exams refer to [College Board](#).

## Options and Opportunities

| Content Areas  | Options  |
|--|--|
| <b>Core Courses</b>  | Daily learning time can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading and reflection</li> <li>• Writing</li> <li>• Recorded lectures</li> <li>• Non-Digital material</li> <li>• Discussion boards</li> <li>• Online resources</li> <li>• Content-based activities</li> </ul> |
| <b>Career and Technical Education<br/>(Applied Technology/<br/>Business/Family &amp; Consumer<br/>Science/Nursing/Fire Sciences)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online videos</li> <li>• Discussion boards</li> <li>• Article critiques</li> <li>• Manipulative materials/handouts</li> <li>• Career exploration research</li> <li>• Self-assessments</li> </ul>  |



| <b>Content Areas</b>                   | <b>Options</b>   |
|--|--|
| <b>Specials (Art/Music/Media)</b>      | Encouraging structured activities that are physical and focus on social/emotional engagement   |
| <b>World Languages</b>                 | Most resources for Core Courses also work for World Languages. Recorded lectures offer verbal enrichment as do websites, movies, and videos in and about the language and related cultures.  |
| <b>Health &amp; Physical Education</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage students to stay active during the current statewide lockdown.</li> <li>• Use concern about COVID-19 as a means to promote sanitary practices for students.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Driver Education</b>                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The classroom portion of a driver education program may be completed through remote/distance learning, but the 6-hour behind the wheel portion of driver education programs must be suspended for the duration of the Governor's mandated school closure as schools are closed to onsite instruction. The health and safety concerns for students and staff are paramount.</li> </ul> |

## Grading

We understand that resources vary for students to fully engage in a remote learning environment and that current events may be distressing to students. There is a wide range of needs demonstrated by our learners. We believe:

- Remote learning, in and of itself, should not have an adverse impact on student grades.
- During this time, students may experience positive learning gains in a way that may not happen in the traditional school setting
- Students should have the opportunity to have their grade reflect their achievement if they are demonstrating success with remote learning
- Effective feedback, grading, and evaluation can provide an important contribution to a healthy social-emotional state

## Options and Opportunities

Grades for the current term should be reported on a pass/incomplete basis (recommended). Grading structures at the district level could consider:

- It is encouraged that local districts issue an incomplete to students who are unable to complete the instructional remote learning activities in a timely fashion.
- Districts who have engaged in a full year competency-based grading pilot have the autonomy to decide grades using their established structure.

- Local districts may decide to use a traditional grading structure (A-F) for students who would benefit from grades other than pass/incomplete (students who want letter grades for class rank, GPA, etc.), provided:
  - Student's current grade in the current system of the district is maintained or improved and does not decrease. This is provided the student demonstrates continued engagement and ability at a passing level after the transition to instructional remote learning days
  - Students can improve grades as they demonstrate proficiency/mastery/attainment of prior and future skills and work.
  - Local districts have the option of either limiting the use of grades to reflect learning recovery/remediation or to use grades to reflect learning of new concepts as well
  - Local districts communicate the appropriate level of student accountability for this work during new instructional remote learning opportunities
  - The use of F is not in place during remote learning. Instead, a grade of incomplete or No Grade is recommended for usage.

## **Additional Grading Considerations**

### **Community Service**

It is recommended that districts with a graduation requirement related to community service hours waive the requirement or prorate it for current graduating seniors.

### **Grading Practices to Help Meet the Needs of High School Students:**

- Local districts should develop a repository of resources to help instructors develop alternate methods of assessment, including methodologies for linguistically diverse learners and opportunities for student choice where possible and appropriate
- When determining a standard for passing grades, make sure to take into account that students are receiving different and often reduced levels of support than they are accustomed to, and that they may need time and help to adjust to remote systems of support
- Provide multiple methods of work submission for students to demonstrate learning (electronic, hard copy, digital portfolio, mail, picture/video, etc.)

## Conclusion

The following purpose is identified in the development of a plan framework that is inclusive of and equitable to all students regardless of age, location, background, and available resources:

*To provide information to educators in providing remote learning opportunities while remembering that each school community is unique.*

ISBE is grateful to the individuals who shared their time, thinking, and commitment to students in the development of these recommendations. With grace and an assumption of positive intent by those who possess a different experiential background, these educators grappled with the large question of, *What might remote learning look like across Illinois while considering local values, student needs, and available resources?* We hope you will engage with the ideas shared in this document with a similar commitment to your localities. Feel free to share your ideas, surprises, and critiques with us at [COVID19@isbe.net](mailto:COVID19@isbe.net). In times like these, our best collective thinking makes all of our work that much better.

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# **Illinois**

## **State Board of Education**