



Virtual Summer School 2020

State Guidance for District and School Leaders

This series of supports has been assembled in consultation with state leaders, school system leaders, and other educators and experts. This resource draws on a resource created by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) that is based on guidance compiled from state education agencies and national and local organizations.

For any in-person summer learning activities, it is recommended you consult with local public health officials to ensure you have not missed any important considerations, given cases in the community. In addition, be sure to check the [daily actions and orders issued by Gov. Andy Beshear](#) and keep in mind that starting May 11, 2020, [every Kentuckian should be wearing a mask when out in public](#).

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) document “[Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities with Local COVID-19 Transmission](#)” provides more specific guidance.

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Introduction

Educators are working under extraordinary circumstances as school buildings close for the 2019-2020 school year due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and they transition to teaching students at a distance in their homes or shelters. This transition has shone a spotlight on and exacerbated long-standing inequities across communities.¹ One way that states can address this challenge is by providing guidance to district and school leaders on summer learning. Given the impact of extended building closures on student learning, virtual summer school is a strong strategy to ensure that all children continue their academic and social emotional learning and receive the health services they need until they re-enter buildings for the 2020-2021 school year.

The purpose of the *Virtual Summer School Guidance for District and School Leaders* is to provide states with guidance that their local education agencies can use as they plan summer school opportunities. This document offers resources and considerations based on what has been learned in the shift to virtual learning and the research behind summer learning. It is well-documented that students often begin the academic year at achievement levels lower than when they left school the prior year, a gap known as the “summer slide.”² Current projections show that there will be even greater gaps in student achievement due to extended COVID-19-related school closures.³

Together, these lessons provide a call to action for state and district leaders to ensure summer learning opportunities exist as a bridge between the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years, especially for the most vulnerable children. In the current context, families and educators are doing their best to ensure continuity of student learning while balancing their own work, child care, and self-care. Ensuring time and the availability of resources to prioritize the social, emotional, and mental health needs of families and educators during summer school is paramount.

Consider how the focus for summer learning might shift in response to COVID-19 circumstances:

	From... Traditional Summer School	To... Virtual Summer Learning 2020
Goals of Summer Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Intervention and remediation -Credit recovery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Frontloading the next school years’ learning to give students a jumpstart to SY20-21 -Maintaining social and emotional connections and academic opportunities for at-risk students -Intervention and credit recovery
Target Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students who are furthest behind -Secondary students who need to meet promotion requirements or complete graduation credit(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Students who are at risk socially or emotionally and need connections with peers and adults -Students who are furthest behind -Secondary students who need to meet promotion requirements or complete graduation credit(s)
Family Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Written communication to keep family members informed of student progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Regular online meetings throughout summer learning -Written communication to keep family members informed of student progress

	From... Traditional Summer School	To... Virtual Summer Learning 2020
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assessment for evaluation or summative purposes -Frequent assessment to inform grading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Low-stakes assessment for formative purposes -Establish competencies for ELA and mathematics, aligned to focused work of the prior and upcoming grade -Capture qualitative information about a student’s progress on particular competencies rather than use a traditional grade measure -De-emphasize summative assessment except in necessary cases for credit recovery purposes
Professional Learning and Collaboration for Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -One day in advance of summer school opening for classroom set up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Grade- and curriculum-specific training in virtual delivery model -Regular common planning time for grade-alike teachers to plan virtual lessons, connect with social-emotional learning (SEL) staff and intervention teachers -Regular faculty meetings to ensure staff wellness and opportunities for problem-solving

Many of the virtual summer school practices recommended in this guide are evidence-based and applicable to *any* summer learning format. For example, recent evidence suggests that expanding summer learning beyond remediation to provide students with rigorous opportunities to preview and practice knowledge and skills aligned to upcoming grade-level standards is effective at bolstering student achievement.⁴ Likewise, providing social and emotional learning supports for students yields benefits in more traditional school contexts.

The need for these practices is even more essential in the current climate, as students and families adapt to distance learning environments. Unfinished learning is becoming more acute, and families are experiencing fatigue with distance learning and the myriad packets and phone calls the model often entails. States have an opportunity to streamline, prioritize, and personalize virtual summer school to build meaningful academic and emotional connections for students and their families.

Guiding Principles for Virtual Summer Schools

Prioritize vulnerable students and those who need to meet promotion benchmarks and high school credit. Provide regular, additional support for specific students, especially students learning English, students with disabilities, and students who are homeless or migrants.

Focus on student success in the coming school year. Rather than focus solely on remediating learning gaps from the prior year, provide summer learning activities aligned to upcoming grade-level standards to set students up for success the following year.

Focus summer learning on a few critical areas. What are the most critical learning needs to encourage student accelerated learning? For a shortened summer schedule, prioritize daily instruction in English language arts, mathematics, physical education, and social and emotional wellness.

Hire effective teachers to support students. Prioritize those teachers with content and pedagogical knowledge and a track record of success teaching target grade levels of students.

Prioritize regular communication with families and students. Consider how and when your students best engage in learning: What content can they work on independently? What type of guidance and support do they need? Do families have what they need to support their children?

Engage a cross-functional team in front-end planning. Teachers, principals, and principal supervisors will be the front-line providers and supporters of children, so ensure that their voices and needs are built into the plan. Include community-based partners who can provide support in a virtual model and include parents who may be the closest overseers of their children's work.

Leverage current distance learning best practices. Keeping the above guidelines in mind, use materials and formats that work best for distance learning and supplement where needed.

Organizing for Success

While most district leaders have led rapid efforts to assess student needs and pivot to virtual learning environments for the remainder of this school year, planning for summer learning brings unique challenges.⁶ Aligning staffing, funding, and other essential resources for larger numbers of students than may be typical, in an environment that is atypical, will require creativity and shared leadership to ensure that all learners feel safe and prepared to engage.

As you develop your summer learning plan, consider the guiding questions below. Vetted resources and tools that could support decision-making follow.

Planning & Communication

- *Who needs to be at the table as you plan your summer learning strategy (e.g. teachers, specialists, IEP teams, teachers' union representatives, principals, principal supervisors, partner organizations, IT, student support services, chief academic officer, food service, family/community advocates, etc.)?*
- *How are families' perspectives and experiences centered in your communication plan? How and at what points in your planning process will you communicate decisions to families and other key stakeholder groups?*
- *What data and information will you collect to assess the implementation and impact of your summer learning plan? With whom and how will you share information to ensure coherence?*

Delivery Model

- *Based on your students' access to the internet and relevant devices, will you pursue a digital, hybrid, or analog (offline) model for summer learning? If digital or hybrid, what balance will you strike between synchronous and asynchronous learning?*
- *For students who do not engage with instructional resources, regardless of format, what strategy will you implement to connect with them?*
- *For students who work in an analog environment, how will teachers meet and provide feedback on their work?*

Staffing

- *Will you provide counseling and/or other support services over the summer? Will these services be available to summer learning students only or to all students? How will you communicate to all staff about how and to whom referrals for wraparound services (e.g. counseling, medical services, food resources) should be directed?*
- *If you are enrolling a larger student group than in previous years to account for greater need for summer learning and/or need for social-emotional connection, how will you select and fund additional staff, both teaching and non-teaching, to support those additional students?*
- *How will you define the role of summer learning principals and other administrators in a virtual context? Will you expect them to observe instruction and provide feedback to teachers? Will principals be expected to connect regularly with students and families? How will principals support the social and emotional needs of faculty members?*
- *If you work with community partners, how will you communicate and align your whole child supports (e.g. use the same tech platforms, share data, communicate jointly and consistently with teachers and families)?*

Scheduling

- *If implementing a shorter work day, how will you provide collaborative planning time for summer learning instructors?*
- *How will you structure teachers' time to allow for both individual student check-in time and the opportunity to assess student work and provide high-quality feedback? Especially at the elementary level, how often will teachers be synchronously working with a group of students?*

Curriculum Priorities

- *How will you determine and incorporate anticipated academic knowledge gaps from the previous grade level into summer learning?*
- *How will you ensure that content, concepts and/or skills from prior grade levels are reinforced while working towards current grade level standards?*
- *How will you use data to effectively differentiate instruction and provide equitable opportunities for learning?*

Equity and Access

- *For students who cannot access online materials or have difficulty accessing synchronous opportunities, how will you ensure equitable access to materials and instruction?*
- *How will lessons be delivered for students with 504 plans or IEPs? How will teachers and support staff provide appropriate supports and services for these learners and their families?*
- *How will you maintain communication with students experiencing homelessness or home instability? How will you support those students in accessing instructional materials, meal options, and other essential needs for summer learning?*
- *How will you maintain communication with multilingual learners, their families, and their communities? How will teachers and support staff provide linguistically appropriate supports for summer learning activities?*

Funding

- *How are you planning to pay for summer learning (e.g. Title I, II, and IV funding streams, private and public grants, etc.)?*
- *For anticipated higher enrollment or expanded programming, what funding sources are available to you from local, state, and federal sources?*
- *Can you repurpose resources reserved for in-person summer experiences or other expenses no longer needed to support summer learning instead?*
- *Are there private organizations or foundations in your community that you might be able to partner with to fill funding gaps and/or support wraparound services?*

Privacy & Security

- *How will you ensure alignment with FERPA, COPPA, and other relevant regulations?*

Dimension	Resources
Planning & Communication	Instruction Partners: Communication and planning templates

Dimension	Resources
	Texas Ed. Agency (TEA): Four-phase toolkit for continued learning models (including Excel planning tool)
Delivery Model & Staffing	Instruction Partners: Decision tree and key questions for delivery models Louisiana DOE: Staffing toolkit CRPE: State and district summaries of virtual learning models
Scheduling	CCSSO: Sample summer learning schedule Texas: Sample schedules Suggested Daily Schedules and planning resources TNTP: Sample academic year remote learning schedule Instruction Partners: K-5 sample ELA & math remote learning schedules
Equity & Access	Minnesota DOE: Key questions for equitable distance learning Opportunity Culture: Guide to cost-effective technologies for engaging students Louisiana DOE: High-tech and low-tech options for accessibility (see appendix A) WIDA: Strategies for teaching multilingual learners online Diverse Learners Cooperative: Guidance on hosting virtual IEP meetings Texas Ed. Agency: Checklists for serving students with disabilities TNTP: Specialized supports for students with diverse learning needs MA DESE: Remote learning guidance for English learners Louisiana DOE: Continuous education for students with disabilities CCSSO: Resources for the education of students with disabilities Educating All Learners Alliance: Resource library
Funding	Committee for Children: 3 federal sources for SEL funding assistance Minnesota DOE: 21st Century Community Learning Centers (Title IV) state by state guidance may differ)
Privacy & Security	USDOE: Guidance on FERPA during COVID-19 EdWeek: How to keep students safe videoconferencing

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

For the past several weeks, schools across the country have struggled to determine how best to ensure continuity of learning for all students in a distance environment. This includes social emotional in addition to academic learning. Given student and staff isolation from peers and colleagues, the provision of social, emotional, and physical health supports is critical to address during summer learning.

Educators will need to pay even more attention to students' social and emotional needs in relation to learning, as students may not be in classes with teachers and peers that they don't know – and didn't spend three quarters of the year with physically. Some may have lost loved ones, have family members who may have lost jobs or are sick, or may have been confined themselves in unsafe situations. It will therefore be critical for schools to provide more wrap-around services that support students' mental, emotional, and physical health needs that focus on:

- Building a culture in which relationships are prioritized and all students and adults feel safe, supported, as well as a sense of belonging and agency;
- Dedicating time to re-socialization and to developing social-emotional skills and mindsets that are reinforced and practiced across instruction; and
- Identifying students who have had traumatic experiences and helping them access local and culturally relevant supports.

As provisions for these supports become a part of your summer learning plan, consider the following guiding questions:

Guiding Questions

- *How much time during the summer learning schedule will you plan to attend to students' social and emotional learning? (See sample schedules in the section "Organizing for Success.")*
- *What materials/programs will you use? How will you ensure that they are organized around a high-quality SEL curriculum?*
- *How will you identify staff and students who have had traumatic experiences and help them access local and culturally relevant supports remotely?*
- *Will students participate in activities such as mindfulness, yoga, or other physical and emotional health practices?*
- *What platforms will be available for students to interact with their peers, their teachers, one on one, and in groups to build and maintain collaboration and connections?*

Consider the following curricular resources for SEL:

Grade Level	Resources
K-5	The PATHS Program Second Step: COVID-19 resources Sanford Harmony
6-12	Facing History

Grade Level	Resources
	Sanford Harmony
K-12	Baltimore City Schools: Supporting SEL during COVID-19 through office hours (video) CASEL: SEL for children and adults-organized around the 5 CASEL competencies PanoramaEd: SEL toolkit for adults and students BrainPOP: SEL lessons, activities, and resources for all students (ELL resources included) Edutopia: Strategies for motivating students with disabilities at home Culturally-Responsive Teaching & The Brain: 5 tips for strengthening academic mindsets EdSurge: 10 ways parents can bring social-emotional learning home Minnesota: Strategies for SEL for gifted learners during COVID-19

Social Emotional Learning for Teachers and Staff

Providing continuity of remote instruction and services is a significant challenge. Teachers and service providers may be primary caregivers in their home and struggle to find uninterrupted time, leading to emotional and physical drain. They may have access to limited resources and face the same uncertainty and isolation experienced by workers across the nation.

So, just like their students, teachers and other staff will need social and emotional support to work effectively in this new reality. As you build staff supports into your summer learning plan, consider the following guiding questions:

Guiding Questions

- *How will you engage teachers and support staff prior to the start of summer learning in order to build a community of support?*
- *What are the 1-3 most essential remote teaching and SEL strategies you hope educators apply during summer learning?*
- *Given the time and capacity constraints for summer educators, how will you deliver professional learning around these essential strategies?*
- *How will teachers and other staff participate in activities such as mindfulness, yoga, or other physical and emotional health practices?*
- *What platforms will be available for teachers and other staff to interact with their peers and/or their supervisors, in order to build and maintain collaboration and connections?*

Resources
Aperture Education: SEL strategies for adults and students
Aperture Education: Educator reflection and social-emotional training guide
Teaching Tolerance: Resources for supporting educators, including “do something” adaptable projects
Edutopia: 4 guiding questions for remote learning
Chula Vista Elementary School District: Exemplar weekly email to educators

Curriculum and Assessment

Curriculum plays an important role in how students are taught, and evidence shows that putting a high-quality standards-aligned curriculum in the hands of teachers can have a significant positive impact on student achievement.

Based on predicted or assessed academic knowledge gaps, teachers will need to determine the academic content standards to focus on throughout summer school. Time and attention must be spent on instruction and specifically on grade-level content gaps and learning outcomes for ELA/literacy and mathematics. Educators can use information gained from formative assessment as primary data regarding what students know and can do. Formative assessment practices during summer school can occur through exit tickets, student work, and student discussions or through clear demonstration of specific competencies. In many cases, recommendations for these practices can come from high-quality instructional resources.

As you provide guidance to schools on curriculum and assessment for use during virtual summer school, consider the following:

Guiding Questions

- *What instructional resources will you use? How will you ensure that they are aligned to state content standards?*
- *How will your summer learning content and instructional decisions jumpstart student learning in fall 2020?*
- *How will you support teachers to plan and use effective formative assessment practices as a primary means of data collection to inform instructional decisions?*
- *How will students in K-2 who have not mastered foundational skills be assessed and taught missing skills to close knowledge gaps prior to fall 2020?*
- *What additional supports will be employed for students who experience unfinished learning?*

Area	Resources
Assessing Student Progress	SAP's Foundational Skills Assessment Protocol Curriculum Assoc iReady Assessment Foundational Skills USDOE: Competency-based learning guidance with state and district examples Dylan Wiliam: Formative assessment guidance

Attendance

The shift from measuring students' on-site physical attendance to measuring the attendance of students participating in online and distance instruction is so complex that the U.S. Department of Education indicated it would "consider a one-year waiver to exclude this indicator" from states' accountability systems.⁸ While states are considering not reporting daily student attendance, they still want to track how many students are participating in the online learning provided. At this moment, measuring attendance means measuring privilege, as many students are not able to fully engage in online learning due to inequitable access to and use of technology. As you plan how attendance will become a part of your summer learning operations, consider the following guiding questions:

Guiding Questions

- *How will you define attendance (e.g., seat time, tasks met, work from home packets completed)?*
- *How will you set expectations for minimum attendance?*
- *How will you collect and collate attendance data? Who will oversee this process?*

Resources

[Kansas DOE: Sample attendance and truancy guidelines for virtual schools](#)

[Colorado DOE: Guidelines for attendance in online learning \(includes sample policies\)](#)

[Georgia DOE: Collected research on improving student attendance](#)

[Blackbaud: How are schools tracking distance learning? \(blog post\).](#)

[New York Times: Addressing absenteeism in online learning](#)

Professional Learning

Highly effective teachers are the most critical in-school variable that leads to increased student achievement. Teacher professional learning is an essential ingredient of any school's improvement path, and summer learning is no exception. All educators need time to collaborate and adjust instructional plans as they learn to teach virtually. Even in a virtual environment, the principles of effective adult learning remain constant.⁹ As you plan to provide educator professional learning in a virtual environment, consider the following guiding questions.

Guiding Questions

- *Given the time and capacity constraints for summer educators, how will your district prioritize professional learning to focus on the most essential teacher skills or strategies?*
- *How will your district ensure that teachers are trained in the virtual delivery of the summer learning curriculum and the learning management system in place?*
- *How will the teacher workday reflect the district's commitment to collaborative learning and coaching?*
- *How will your district ensure that principals are trained in virtual supervision and support of the summer learning curriculum?*
- *How will you prepare educators to elevate student interest and engagement in instructional tasks (though not at the expense of essential learning outcomes)?*

Resources
Learning Policy Institute: Effective professional learning principles
Novak Education: Timeline for UDL implementation (for an academic year, but aspects adaptable)
Learning First: How curriculum focuses teacher learning on student learning
National Staff Development Council: What does research suggest about effective professional learning?
Understood.org: Best practices for online learning

Family Engagement

At-home learning has added a new level of stress and responsibility for many families. As parents and caretakers adjust to working from home or loss of work altogether, they also are becoming the key support for their children’s daily learning. For families to continue to support their children’s learning at home, districts and schools will need to continue to strengthen communication, support, and access to parents and caregivers.

Guiding Questions

- *What forms of communication, proven to be successful with families, will you continue to use to inform and guide parents before, during, and after summer learning? What might you need to add/modify? What key district and school staff will be charged with these tasks?*
- *How will you assess the availability of devices and web access of students you serve? How will you address the gap in technology that still exists for students and families in preparation for summer learning?*
- *What district resources/services will you provide in order to support families with at-home summer learning? With what frequency will teachers be expected to connect with every child’s family during summer learning?*
- *How will you work with community partners and organizations to secure resources/services for families during summer learning? What data or information-sharing structures will you need to implement? How will you communicate clearly to families about how to access these services?*
- *How will in-district parent organizations mobilize to support families with communication, problem solving, and access to district and community services during summer learning?*
- *In what ways might parents be acknowledged, thanked, and appreciated for their work and effort with at-home learning?*
- *How will you communicate to families about their child’s progress on specific knowledge areas or skills, as opposed to a traditional grade report?*

Resources
PTA: Coronavirus resources for families
Springboard Collaborative: Weekly at-home reading schedules and resources (including texts)
Parent Academy Miami: Virtual academy
PBS: Resources for parents
Iowa: Family engagement guidance
Oregon: Family engagement guidance
New Mexico: Teacher-family check-in recommendations
Minnesota: Resources for supporting mental health during COVID-19

Resources

Minnesota: [School climate considerations during distance learning](#)

Minnesota: [Engaging families during distance learning](#)

Minnesota: [Setting up individual communication systems with students and families](#)

Minnesota: [Supporting immigrant and refugee families during COVID-19](#)

Minnesota: [Age-specific engagement strategies for students](#)

Endnotes

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