



Department of
Education

CLP Implementation Review

An Analysis of CLP Implementation in Crockett County Schools

Tennessee Department of Education | July 2021



Executive Overview

The COVID-19 health pandemic has been unlike any other time and has significantly shifted education in Tennessee and the nation. As noted in the department's [Reopening Schools: Overview Guide for LEAs](#), the pandemic elevated known gaps, and created a sense of urgency for a child-centered strategy. This has been especially true for our youngest learners, those with existing achievement gaps, those in rural communities, and those who need additional school-based services.

On June 22, 2020, the Tennessee State Board of Education promulgated the Continuous Learning Plan (CLP) Emergency Rule 0520-01-17 and Policy 3.210. Based on that rule and policy, the Tennessee Department of Education produced a template and rubric on June 26, 2020. Districts submitted CLP plans and implemented those plans throughout the 2020-21 school year.

As a part of the emergency rule, the department is required to submit a mid-year report and an annual report on CLP implementation. To collect data for the mid-year report, the department administered a survey to districts, and did so again in May for the end-of-year report. In addition, the department conducted implementation reviews with selected districts from April-June to inform the end-of-year report to better tell the story of CLP implementation in districts during the 2020-21 school year.

The department saw this as an opportunity to tell the unique stories of districts and how they stepped up to face unprecedented challenges and overcame those challenges, as well as to highlight the challenges that still exist. The department contracted with external researchers to conduct these reviews. As part of the review process, the researchers collected and reviewed artifacts, conducted focus groups with district staff, leaders, teachers, and parents, and produced the following report that highlights all of the hard work Crockett did this year, and captures some of the successes and challenges experienced.

CLP Implementation Review Process

The department contracted with Karin Gegenheimer to create this case study applying a mixed methods case study approach that included analyzing CLPs, artifacts, and interviews with district leaders, teachers, and parents. The researcher first reviewed the district's original CLP. She then reviewed additional artifacts submitted by Crockett to better understand what occurred in practice as the district worked to implement the CLP and respond to challenges. Then, the researcher conducted interviews with district leaders, teachers, and parents. Finally, the researcher analyzed all information gathered to draft the following case study that tells the story of implementation for Crockett County Schools, highlights their successes, and articulates their unique challenges.

District Selection

The department used a purposive sampling technique to generate a diverse sample of districts for review that could provide the best potential information on successes as well as challenges. In order to get a cross section of districts statewide with varying CLP experiences, the department identified districts who appeared most often in the bottom 10% (11 districts) and the top 10% (19 districts) of the following data points:

- Percent of students in full-time remote learning
- Percent of students with disabilities in full-time remote learning
- Percent of economically disadvantaged students in full-time remote learning
- Percent of K-2 students in full-time remote learning
- Percent of teachers who have missed more than 10 percent of instructional days
- Size of ESSER 1.0 allocation
- Percent of ESSER 1.0 funds remaining

Crockett County Schools was selected using this criteria.

CLP Implementation

Model of Remote Learning

Crockett County Schools implemented a hybrid model of remote instruction. The district provided two options from which families could choose: (1) a hybrid-staggered model in which grade bands rotated every other day between in-person and distance, or virtual, learning, and (2) a full-time remote learning option offered through Edmentum, a third-party vendor. In the hybrid model, students were split by grade bands such that on any given day, half of the student population participated in in-person learning while the other half participated in distance learning. Students who were enrolled in the full-time remote learning option received virtual instruction from licensed Tennessee teachers employed through Edmentum. The district contracted with the vendor to reduce the burden on teachers and allow them to focus solely on providing instruction to students who were enrolled in the hybrid model. Throughout the first semester, the district allowed families to switch between in-person and remote learning at the close of each grading period. However, beginning in January, families could no longer switch from in-person to remote learning, although they were still able to move from remote to in-person.

Distance learning consisted of synchronous and asynchronous instruction provided by students' assigned teachers. However, due to limited technology access among students, much of the distance learning occurred asynchronously, where teachers either provided paper packets or emailed assignments to students. Many teachers provided optional synchronous learning opportunities in classes where the majority of students had working devices and reliable internet access, but these assignments remained optional out of consideration for students who lacked the necessary technology.

Shortly into the school year, the district switched from the hybrid model to a fully in-person model. The timing of the switch differed by school level. Elementary grades moved into a fully in-person model with no distance learning four weeks into the school year. Middle grades moved into fully in-person learning at the beginning of October (although Wednesdays remained designated distance learning days), and the high school was fully in-person by the beginning of February. In the fully in-person model, students remained in class cohorts throughout the day to minimize COVID-19 exposure.

The switch from a hybrid to fully in-person model did not affect students enrolled in the remote option, though relatively few students in the district opted for remote learning. As of April 2021, 11 percent of students were enrolled in full-time remote learning. Few students in vulnerable populations enrolled in remote learning: less than one percent of students with disabilities, less than one percent of English Learners (EL), and no students in grades K-2. The district hired an additional staff person, a district liaison, to serve as the primary contact between Edmentum and students and families enrolled in remote learning. The liaison made introductions between families and Edmentum teachers and was responsible for ensuring teachers communicated expectations for remote learning and remained in consistent communication with families about their children's engagement and academic progress.

When students needed to quarantine, they were temporarily enrolled in remote learning for the duration of their quarantine. Quarantined students participated in distance learning from their assigned classroom teacher in the same way that they participated in a regularly scheduled distance learning day. Across the district, approximately 41-50 percent of students have been quarantined at least once during the 2020-21 school year.

Teacher Preparation and Instruction

In the hybrid model, Crockett County Schools used Microsoft Teams as the primary learning management system for distance learning. The district encouraged all teachers to use the same platform to ease the burden on students and parents of having to learn and navigate multiple platforms. Teachers used the same curriculum for in-person and distance learning days. Some of the curriculum already included online components, which many teachers opted to use during distance learning days. Otherwise, teachers adapted their normal curriculum to the virtual setting by uploading PDF versions of textbooks, assignments, assessments, and other activities to the Teams platform.

In the remote learning model, the district employed the Calvert Learning Model provided through Edmentum. Although the district did not have control over the curriculum taught through Calvert Learning, they researched Calvert Learning's curriculum prior to contracting with Edmentum to ensure that the curriculum was rigorous, high-quality, and aligned to Tennessee standards.

The district provided various forms of training and professional development to teachers focused on how to deliver high-quality distance learning. First, they delayed the start of school by two weeks to provide additional professional development during teachers' in-service days. This professional development covered a range of topics, including:

- training and practice on how to implement the staggered schedule in the hybrid model;
- adapting curriculum to distance learning;
- communicating distance learning expectations to students;
- student and teacher safety in the building;
- student engagement in distance learning; and
- training on the Microsoft Teams platform, provided by a third-party vendor.

In addition, teachers had access to instructional coaches who worked on site at each school building. Instructional coaches had access to each teacher's Microsoft Teams classroom, and were responsible for monitoring and assessing teachers' instruction during distance learning, as well as providing one-on-one coaching and support individualized to teachers' unique needs.

Teachers also used time during professional learning community (PLC) meetings to plan for and assess progress in distance learning. During PLC meetings, teachers utilized virtual learning resources from the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) that provided guidance on how to adapt in-person lessons to the virtual environment, and how to plan and recoup learning loss. District administrators also attended PLC meetings, which gave teachers the opportunity to ask questions and communicate challenges and concerns. This communication between teachers and district administrators allowed the district to provide individualized support and shift resources to where they were needed the most.

Although the district provided an array of professional development opportunities, many teachers expressed that the most effective training for distance learning was simply learning by doing. As one teacher described, "until you put things into real life, it's hard to really learn how to do anything until you do it. And so you learn by doing." Teachers also sought out additional resources, such as online videos and Facebook groups, that helped meet their professional development needs. They also collaborated with each other, sharing best practices and tips on the best technology platforms. Some teachers made how-to videos to share with their colleagues.

Student Engagement and Academic Support

In the hybrid model of remote learning, parents noted that their children seemed focused and engaged during distance learning. During synchronous instruction, teachers used games, review activities, videos, and short assignments to increase student participation and engagement. During asynchronous instruction,

teachers scheduled check-ins with students, either online or by phone, to provide continuity of communication. Teachers generally tried to make distance learning as personal as possible and to interact with students as if they were in the in-person classroom.

In remote learning, student engagement was a challenge. District staff noted that the Calvert Learning program lacked student-teacher interaction, as it is primarily an independent program in which students are expected to work on their own with the help of a teacher, or learning guide, to help monitor their instruction. In the absence of consistent teacher interaction, students struggled to remain engaged in their learning.

To support students' academic progress, each school set up a designated area for students to come in person to receive additional support from teachers, including both academic support and tutoring as well as support with technology. Many teachers made themselves available to students as needed. One parent recounted, "both of my kids could call, text, or email teachers at any time for help and they would set up Zooms." There was also an after-school tutoring program where students and families could schedule time to meet individual or in small groups with teachers.

Teachers and administrators reached out to families of students who showed little academic progress. They held meetings with families to identify barriers to their children's progress and discuss ways the school and district could help them succeed. For students enrolled in remote learning, those that did not make adequate academic progress were strongly encouraged to return to their home school and participate in the hybrid model (or, if the school had already switched to in-person, fully in-person model). Most students who enrolled in remote learning at the beginning of the school year returned to their home school.

Students with disabilities continued to receive all required accommodations outlined in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Special education teachers created boxes of manipulatives and other instructional materials for remote students to use and keep at home. The special education supervisor established an after-school program during which both special education and general education teachers were available to answer students' questions or provide more intensive tutoring to students either in-person, by phone, or by Zoom. For those enrolled in remote learning, special education teachers made weekly contact with students and families to check in and provide support as needed. They also reviewed weekly reports generated by Edmentum to gauge student attendance, engagement, and progress, and made home visits to students who did not consistently log in to the program or complete their work. Students with disabilities who had more significant impairments received additional support in the form of teacher-created checklists that outlined sets of skills for them to practice with their families.

English Learners received the required amount of services outlined in their Individual Learning Plan (ILP). For students enrolled in the hybrid model, EL teachers worked closely with general education teachers to provide modifications and accommodations in the general education classroom, and provided extra instruction as needed. Students who were enrolled in the remote model continued to receive services through their grade-level EL teacher. They received access to the Lexia program, which the district has used in prior years, which provides individualized instruction that allows students to progress at their own rate. The program creates growth reports for each individual student, which EL teachers monitored and used to adjust instruction if necessary. Importantly, EL teachers communicated regularly with students and families to ensure students' needs were met, both academically as well as within the broader community.

Academic progress varied based on whether students participated in the hybrid or remote model of instruction. Students enrolled in the hybrid model made considerable academic progress, and recent benchmark assessment data shows that many were even able to recoup much of their learning loss from spring 2020 school closures. Teachers attributed this growth to their students' focus on learning throughout the year. On the other hand, students who participated in remote instruction for the majority of the year have not shown adequate growth, which district administrators attribute to students' lack of attendance and engagement in remote instruction. Many students struggled to learn independently and complete the self-paced learning modules without consistent accountability from a teacher. The lack of academic progress was particularly apparent for students from vulnerable populations; specifically, students with disabilities and English Learners. Relative to their peers who participated in hybrid (and subsequently fully in-person) instruction, those who were enrolled in remote learning have seen slower rates of academic growth, again, largely due to limited assignment completion and a lack of engagement in remote learning.

Technology

At the start of the 2020-21 school year, Crockett County Schools did not have a one-to-one student to device ratio. Although the district ordered devices prior to the start of the school year, they did not receive them until the end of December. As they distributed devices, they prioritized students who were enrolled in the hybrid model as well as students with disabilities who were enrolled in remote learning and had internet access but did not have a device. The district went to great lengths to provide devices to students who needed it. For example, one district administrator gave up her laptop for student use. "If we had resources, we made sure they got into kids' hands, to the point where I had a laptop for work, but it went to the school because it was more important. I had a desktop," she recounted.

The district also faced challenges providing internet access to students. At the beginning of the year, they were not yet able to provide hot spots to families without internet access. Students without internet access came to school buildings to pick up paper packets, or teachers dropped off paper packets at their houses.

The district was eventually able to provide hot spots in school parking lots and various locations throughout the community. However, district staff noted that the hot spots went underutilized because it was difficult for parents to routinely drive to a hot spot after work and sit in their cars while their children submitted work. In addition, internet connectivity throughout the district tends to be unreliable. Many students opted to use paper packets because of these challenges.

Attendance

For all students, the district employed the same attendance policy that they have used in past years. To track attendance for students in the hybrid model, students were required to complete online assignments and log in to synchronous sessions to be counted as present. For students in remote learning, teachers and administrators reviewed Calvert Learning program reports that included information on students' log on times and assignment completion. Students were required to complete daily modules to be counted as present.

Monitoring

To monitor distance learning in the hybrid model, the district administrators contacted principals regularly to check on attendance and academic progress. Because of the district's small size, it was not difficult for district staff to remain in contact with building-level administrators about day to day monitoring activities. For example, if principals noticed that teachers were not implementing distance learning with fidelity to the CLP, they contacted district staff to let them know and ask for support. In addition, the district held monthly meetings with principals, instructional coaches, and technology and attendance directors to monitor the instructional, technology, and attendance components of the CLP.

To monitor remote learning, the district liaison, who was the primary point of contact between Edmentum and the district, monitored how often students were logging on, how long they were logging on, as well as their academic performance and reported it to the district.

Biggest Successes

Crockett County School's biggest successes in remote learning included (1) utilizing a third-party vendor, (2) collaboration between EL and general education teachers, and (3) distributing food to families across the community.

Because the district chose to outsource fully remote instruction to a third-party vendor, teachers were able to focus on delivering high-quality instruction to students in a hybrid model. Teachers appreciated the ability to work only with students enrolled in the hybrid model, noting that it took "stress and a big burden

off [of them].” Teachers also appreciated the district liaison who was responsible for monitoring remote students’ progress and communicating with families. The distribution of responsibilities across teachers, the third-party vendor, and the district liaison afforded teachers the time to plan and deliver rigorous and high-quality instruction to students who were based at their home school.

District staff also noted that collaboration between EL and general education teachers was a point of success for the district this year. EL teachers communicated regularly with all general education teachers, checking on student performance on assignments and assessments. District staff observed that the relationships between EL and general education teachers “have grown tremendously” and have in turn contributed to student success. As one district staff member summarized, “to see those gen ed teachers reach out and rely on our EL teachers through this, it’s been wonderful... the support and the relationships between the teachers themselves, to rely on each other and support each other and to reach out and be able to do what the student needs, that’s been really great.” Collaboration between general education and EL teachers is necessary to providing EL students with high-quality and individualized instruction, and these relationships will continue to support EL students in years to come.

Another success point for Crockett County Schools during remote learning was their ability to distribute food to families in the community. The district recognized that COVID-19 presented a multitude of challenges to families, and as a district, they were committed to supporting students and families in every way they could. Families were able to come to the school to pick up meals, and for those that could not make it to the school buildings, district staff provided meal deliveries to their homes. Food distribution was an important element of remote learning for the district, as they acknowledged that it was “valuable for [their] students and parents to not worry where their meals were coming from for that school day.”

Biggest Challenges

Crockett County School’s biggest challenges in remote learning included: (1) internet access, (2) attendance, and (3) engagement.

As the district prepared for remote learning, they were aware that the majority of families in the district did not have adequate access to reliable internet. Although they were able to install hot spots at certain points throughout the community, the hot spots were not able to reach all families. The district is located in a very rural community, and it was difficult for families to be able to access the hot spots with the frequency needed to facilitate effective virtual instruction. Local internet providers have implied that it will be years before they will be able to set up reliable internet access throughout the entire district. Due to the limited internet accessibility across the district, distance and remote learning was provided primarily through asynchronous instruction.

Another major challenge was attendance in distance and remote learning. In distance learning, teachers noted that it was difficult to get students to log on. They described feeling as if there was nothing they could do to encourage students to view lessons because they were not in a classroom. In remote learning, attendance reports from Edmentum evidenced a similar and even more pronounced challenge. Students did not regularly log on to the learning platform and did not engage with the material. The lack of attendance hurt students' academic progress, as they were not accessing or engaging with instructional content.

Similarly, families described challenges motivating their children to engage in virtual instruction at home. Although many families were committed to supporting their children in virtual instruction, whether distance or remote learning, it was difficult for them to ensure that their children completed assignments. As one parent described, "the challenge was really on our end of getting [our child] to complete the things that needed to be done. Home and school are two different places, and when you put school at home, we all struggle with that, and [my child] struggled with that." Learning to do school from home was difficult for many students and their families.