

# ACADEMICS



## SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT: ACADEMICS

As we all prepare to launch a successful 2020-21 school year in a variety of formats, educators should remember that we are not just returning after an extended summer break. Schools should re-connect with families and students, reestablish the relationships necessary for a strong learning culture while at the same time reshaping how an instructional day is staffed, structured, and resourced. Instructional practice will still be the center of every student’s learning experience; however, daily instruction redesigned and tailored with the impetus of support, care, and flexibility is critical.

*All information in the document is non-regulatory guidance issued for general informational purposes only. This document is not intended to constitute legal advice. Because local school board policy and unique facts make dramatic differences in analyzing any situation, the Tennessee Department of Education advises each school district to consult with the local school board attorney for specific legal advice regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations.*

## II. Brief Academic Reopening Checklist (Summer)

When planning your return, think about critical summer activities that can provide an opportunity to reconnect your school and its educators to families who need to feel reassured that their children will be returning to a safe and nurturing environment. Consider the following:

- Develop a representative stakeholder council (referred to as an “educator team” throughout this document) to redesign school day structures, classroom set-ups, and student movement procedures. Consider incorporating outside walkways and other outdoor locations to increase student movement options.
- After finalizing redesign plans, incorporate rotations of all educators, staff, and local health care professionals to review and provide feedback to each school’s redesign plan during pre-service professional development.
- After finalizing redesign plans, communicate widely through traditional and social media avenues.
- Schedule in-person and/or virtual open houses in small groups so that parents and families can preview what learning spaces will look like, what materials will be used, how students will move through their school day, and what alternative learning options may look like.

All redesign opportunities should focus on reconnecting and reestablishing relationships with educators, families and students. Sharing reopening plans will help build trust with each stakeholder group during these uncertain times.

## III. Reconnecting and School Culture

School culture and climate will also play a significant role in the learning of every child at the reopening of school. A school’s environment should address basic needs of safety, security, and belonging, and many parents, students and even educators will return to school with a sense of uncertainty about their days ahead. Therefore, many options for developing a strong learning community will be provided throughout this toolkit. Our intent is to spark ideas and opportunities for districts to innovate and develop high-quality learning experiences in new and unique ways that fit their local context.

There are two fundamental pieces for a successful reopening to school: the health and wellbeing of children and quality academic programming and instruction. Child wellbeing and school culture are deeply important components of the former, and school culture is one critical way in which students are supported during the year. This is especially important at the start of the school year.

Each district and each school community are unique in their cultures and how they create safe, welcoming and supportive environments for students, both academically and developmentally. As such, the information and checklists below are intended to provide an overarching set of actions to take through the context of individual school communities:

- The school should identify the critical areas that contribute to the school’s culture and then identify the components related to the whole child that might need to be addressed.
- The educator team should identify ways in which students and staff can be meaningfully engaged before the start of the year, during the first two weeks and again periodically throughout the year related to school culture and climate. Specifically, staff and students should have the opportunity to reflect on school culture, their needs, and ways that culture could support any significant areas identified.
- The educator team should consider ways that school culture and child wellbeing support can be meaningfully integrated into the daily academic schedule. As an example, the educator team can structure morning reflections, draft math word problems, or develop art and P.E. activities that include school culture components.

## IV. Academic Considerations

All redesign structures and protocols should consider health and safety and be rooted in current CDC and state health guidance. This toolkit has used current guidance as of June 3, 2020 and provides suggestions and best practice but acknowledges that all of these decisions need to be made within the local context around what is best for individual communities.

Academic planning for reopening should focus on a few critical key levers:

- A. Learning Spaces
- B. Materials
- C. Instructional Delivery
- D. Student Movement

Many of these decisions will be different for schools within a district depending on the grade band, size of school and the physical school structure. The following guidance will include these critical factors in helping educator teams make appropriate decisions for their school.

### A. Learning Spaces

Educators are exceptional at designing warm and welcoming spaces for their classrooms. Many have included comfortable reading spaces, carpets for daily meetings, and shared classroom libraries. While these elements of a classroom have created positive classroom cultures, in particular around literacy, some may now be unadvisable in our current environment. These types of spaces may be impossible to clean or sanitize sufficiently, are shared between many students, and may otherwise invite close contact. The [CDC](#) recommends that “cleaning toys and other items used by children with soap and water is usually sufficient.” As such, educators will need to consider the disinfecting procedures for shared spaces and limiting close contact spaces that might typically be made available to students.

### ***Elementary Schools***

It is strongly recommended that the educator team collaboratively considers design options for classrooms. The classroom is a personal space for educators, so changes that might be suggested or required at the local level will need to consider the impact that might exist for how educators teach their students, run classroom procedures, etc. Including this team in the design on the front-end will support better solutions and deeper investment overall.

Once an educator team is established to help design and review possible classroom set-ups and other learning spaces, the team should conduct a walk-through of each classroom in addition to other learning spaces. The educator team should review any areas that use high-traffic fabric seating such as reading corners, carpets, or learning centers. While hard surfaces are the focus for disinfecting, places like “the carpet” or “reading beanbags” typically invite close contact between students and may also carry additional risks based on the number of students who use the same areas in quick succession. As much as possible, schools should replace these spaces with plastic materials or non-fabric surfaces that can be wiped down and sanitized. The CDC states “soft and porous materials, such as area rugs and seating, may be removed or stored to reduce the challenges with cleaning and disinfecting them.”

It is recommended that carpet spaces used for morning meetings and reading mini-lessons, learning centers and shared “play” spaces be removed from or adjusted within classrooms. These spaces make it challenging for teachers to maintain social distancing, cleanliness routines, and ensure student safety throughout the school day. Some districts have considered replacing the reading carpet with yoga mats or with plastic seats, which allow for easy disinfecting each day. The educator team may also consider removing excess furniture in the classroom (and other items) that may cause challenges to spreading desks apart to ensure appropriate social distancing for students assigned to a classroom. Schools should have storage solutions in place for extra furniture.

In addition, elementary classrooms frequently use tables in lieu of traditional desks. Within table seating areas, the educator team should ensure that students can be appropriately distanced. It is likely that having elementary children wear masks for the duration of a school day is unrealistic; therefore, more consideration for appropriate spacing and social distancing, in addition to more frequent hand washing or hand sanitizer usage, should be given in early grade classrooms.

Technology such as laptops and tablets should be used in a one-to-one model versus small-group learning centers that require rotations of students. If rotation structures are used, equipment should be disinfected between each group. A school should consider the amount of time cleaning will take during instructional time and what additional procedures would need to be put into place to ensure disinfection takes place between uses.

Generally speaking, school libraries serve an important purpose in schools and should remain open. Some strategies for keeping a library open while still aligned to COVID-19 safety protocols can be found [here](#) from the International Federation of Library Associations.

### ***Middle and High Schools***

Learning spaces in middle schools often have similar learning spaces to elementary schools such as classroom libraries, in-classroom reading spaces, and de-escalation areas. In addition, middle and high schools often have science labs, athletic equipment, and more complex music equipment. As in the elementary schools, the educator team should consider the ability to sanitize in-classroom surfaces, remove seating areas with fabric that are high-traffic areas, and maximize classroom space for desks to ensure social distancing can occur. In classrooms such as science labs, art rooms, or other areas that use tables for student seating, ensure that seating assignments allows for appropriate social distancing and/or frequent disinfecting. Rooms that have large amounts of immovable furniture may need to be used for classes that have a small number of students to maintain appropriate social distancing. Students should have routine hand washing or hand sanitizing procedures in place.

### ***Incorporating the Arts***

Arts classrooms, theaters, studios, music rehearsal halls, and other types of arts-specific learning spaces are typically designed for specialized use by arts programs. Many spaces are designed with secure storage for course-specific materials and equipment. Districts should consider ways to minimize transitions by large numbers of students in and out of arts spaces and consider in-classroom arts where possible to minimize student movement. Arts educators should be involved in planning and decision-making to develop appropriate cleaning procedures for any class changes that follow current [CDC guidance](#). Schools that offer individualized music, dance, or other types of one-on-one or small group lessons presented by a certified arts educator or an external arts provider, should designate appropriately sized spaces that can safely accommodate participants using social distancing guidelines. Districts should also consider how to accommodate virtual arts experiences should the need arise.

## **B. Materials**

Often in education, classrooms maximize educational supplies to minimize costs. Whether it is a classroom set of textbooks or communal pencils and markers, the educator team will have to consider an individualized approach to distribute materials within the school. The educator team may want to focus on materials for a school-specific approach, or the district may want to consider a district materials team to review textbooks, consumable student materials, technology, and classroom supplies more holistically. Districts and schools may want to consider different ways of sharing textbooks with students and navigate technology options to increase flexibility with materials. One example may include creating binder materials with plastic sleeves that can be wiped down between uses. In addition, schools may want to encourage teachers to move towards individual student supplies in plastic containers that can be easily cleaned and maintained independently by each student.

### ***Elementary Schools***

Currently, elementary schools in the state are the least likely to have a one-to-one technology distribution. In addition, technology may not be the most appropriate way to distribute materials for all learning concepts (depending on the age and grade level). For example, decodables should be

printed for students when practicing foundational skills. Students should have the opportunity to trace letters, words and sentence patterns to reinforce concepts of print. Therefore, districts may consider prioritizing this group of students to be in-person in school buildings to the extent possible. The educator team should analyze the best use of technology for each set of materials traditionally used in an elementary school and make recommendations on the best delivery mechanism. In addition, elementary schools frequently use tactile manipulatives. All manipulatives used by students should be washable and disinfected daily. When manipulatives are used, the educator team should encourage individual sets of manipulatives for each student. Cleaning of manipulatives should be incorporated into instructional routines.

Elementary instruction also often involves small group stations and classroom rotations. When considering the use of stations or any instructional method that rotates students through areas of the classroom, the educational team should work with teachers to consider the impact of rotating students through materials and instructional spaces. If manipulatives are traditionally used at each small group station, each small group would need to wash manipulatives before the next rotation (or students could have their own “set” of manipulatives). If classroom libraries or learning centers are traditionally used in student rotations and are unable to be disinfected between uses, teachers and educator teams will need to consider alternative activities that do not involve shared resources. Finally, even if teachers are able to use individual sets of materials for students to rotate through stations, educator teams should consider whether each station area should be cleaned before students move.

Additionally, elementary schools should incorporate elective activities into the classroom setting. If the classroom space allows for activities such as art or music, elective teachers should consider the materials used within each classroom. If the teacher leaves one classroom and moves to another classroom, the educator team and electives teachers may want to consider ways to ensure each student has his/her own art and music materials, for example, in their classroom.

Finally, physical education and other fine arts classes may need to occur in the classroom. The educator team should consider the space available in classrooms and in the gym. If the gym is large enough, it may be appropriate to move classes into the gym for physical education; however, the educator team should work with fine arts teachers to determine the amount of equipment to be shared and ways to sanitize spaces in between classes. Often, equipment is hard to sanitize between multiple daily lessons and is too expensive to have these resources for all students in a school. Educator teams should practice possible routines and solutions and identify what might work, by grade level.

### ***Middle Schools***

Middle schools also have reading spaces, classroom libraries, and manipulatives in mathematics and science. Middle schools may also have one-to-one technology capability for students. Educator teams may consider using laptops or tablets in a one-to-one setting for as much content delivery as possible in lieu of shared textbooks, student handouts, and reference materials. This will also allow for a more seamless transition between in-person instruction and distance learning, when needed.

If a school does not have the ability to have one-to-one devices, the school should work with the educator team to determine how to move from “classroom sets” of textbooks to ensure that students have their own individual copy of all textbook resources. If this involves copying materials, the educator team may want to work on systems to create packets or look to partner with a printing service. In addition, middle schools frequently use novel sets for ELA and math calculators in science and math. The educator team should make plans to ensure students do not need to share texts or math tools.

In addition, middle schools have formal lab equipment in science. When reviewing science labs and procedures, science teachers should work with the educator team to develop sanitization procedures, shift lab activities that cannot be sanitized easily, and consider science modeling via video or demonstration.

### ***High Schools***

High school materials bring unique challenges that are different than elementary and middle schools. High schools include sophisticated CTE laboratories, science laboratories, and comprehensive fine arts programs. As discussed later, scheduling with unique courses becomes a greater challenge for high schools. In addition, high schools often use class sets of textbooks for elective courses, class sets of novels for English courses, and shared digital calculators. However, high schools in the state of Tennessee may also be well-poised to be in a one-to-one environment.

High schools should work with their educator teams to move as much content as possible to a digital platform to ensure that students have full access to the curricular resources as well as the opportunity to use digital tools within their course platform. Again, this allows for more seamless transitions from in-person to distance learning when necessary. If moving coursework to a digital platform is not an option for a high school or a district, educator teams should look for printing alternatives, additional texts for English, and additional mathematics tools as discussed in the middle school section. Additionally, high schools should look towards lab simulators that can replace traditional lab settings for science courses and CTE courses, when necessary. If digital simulations are not an option for high schools, high school educator teams should develop sanitization processes for all shared lab equipment and ensure that lab equipment is sanitized between student rotations.

### ***A Note on Digital Resources***

As districts consider how to effectively deliver content and how to use instructional materials, they should prioritize a one-to-one environment in middle schools and high schools. Regardless of internet access, content can be delivered in both face-to-face settings and digital environments. Students can transition flexibly between multiple environments and can transition easily to a distance learning environment if they have digital content. Further, paper textbooks and resources should not be shared between students for sanitation purposes, which may cause challenges in effectively using traditional resources. Elementary environments may want to consider using devices for a variety of instructional content; however, districts should look at developmentally appropriate practices for digital learning with young learners. See [NAEYC](#) and later in this toolkit for more information.

### C. Instructional Delivery

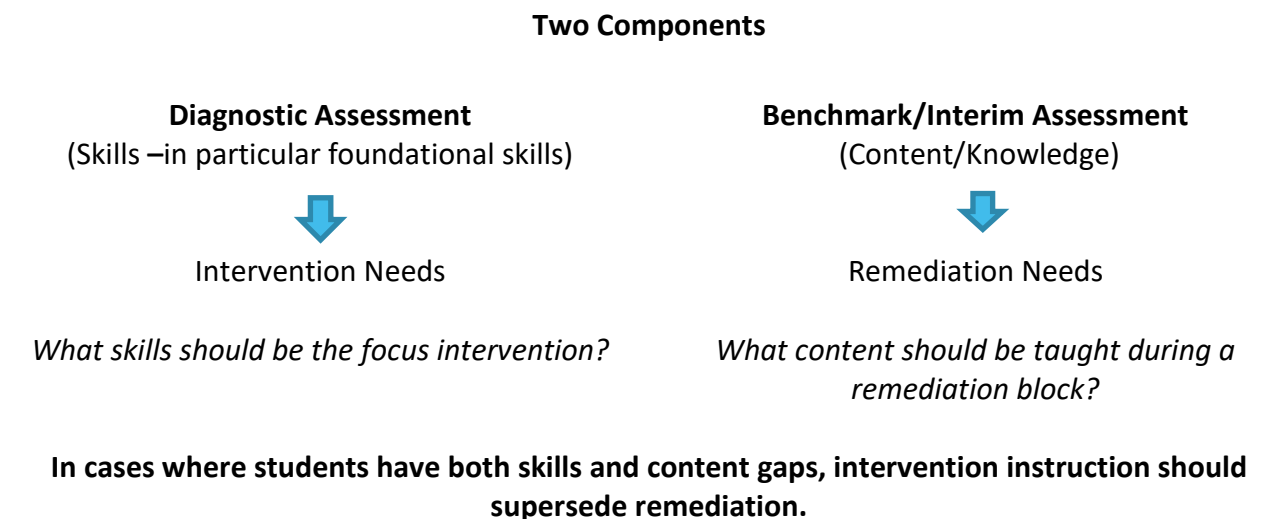
When creating instructional plans for the 2020-21 school year, district educator teams will need to consider several broad questions in their preparations for instruction. These determinations include whether to use paper-based materials, invest in digitally based platforms or use the state’s online learning tool platform, as well as how to organize the daily schedule. In addition, decisions may also involve supporting learners who may be safer at home and learners who are in school every day, or how to support student groups with unique needs or additional challenges for learning. These decisions need to precede instructional decisions as they will guide teachers and school leaders in the instructional planning for the school year. Regardless of how instruction is delivered, this section looks at the starting points for instructional decision making for all learners.

**□ How much learning was lost for all students in my district?**

Educators will need to determine a plan to assess the current learning needs of all students. This may include a benchmarking assessment for standards in major content areas, diagnostic assessments in early grades, and an analysis of coursework at the high school level. While educators and districts may assume all students need remediation when planning for the school year, it is important to consider that many students did learn content during the extended school closure. So, assessing the needs of each individual student is critical and should drive instructional programming. Districts will also need to determine skill-based needs versus content-based needs and develop a plan that includes skill-based intervention and content-based remediation.

#### Steps for Diagnosing Learning Loss

When students return, districts will need to determine what skills and knowledge students have and what they have lost/not learned.



In addition to creating a plan to determine learning needs, educators should strongly consider the need for students and teachers to reconnect, establish learning cultures, and to create trust in the new, challenging learning environment before using benchmarks and diagnostics to assess students. Educator teams will need to work intentionally and collaboratively to establish a balance between



reestablishing relationships and developing learning plans. Reestablishing relationships can be completed through formal curricula or through a variety of embedded classroom structures and activities. These are important planning decisions within the framework for instructional delivery.

***How do I support the learning of all students in my district?***

After determining the learning needs for each learner, a district should plan for additional supports to recover skill loss or knowledge gaps. Students with minor impacts may be able to continue with limited supports or remediation. However, many students may have moderate to significant learning impacts due to school closures. This learning impact will require significant supports that should first prioritize skill loss and second to literacy knowledge building and conceptual mathematics understandings. The education team should determine if daily in-school remediation or intervention might be an option to support the needs of learners whose results identify significant skill or knowledge gaps, or if additional time might be considered. Depending on the local contexts, a district may need to extend intervention time or add remediation content into daily coursework. Finally, a district may have to develop formal remediation courses, supports and intentional scheduling of students to ensure learning gaps are closed for all learners.

***What is the difference between traditional intervention and determining remediation needs as a result of COVID 19 school closures?***

Often, interventions are provided after learning has occurred. Interventions focus on gaps in skills necessary to understand concepts. For the case of this toolkit, remediation may include re-teaching of content that was covered through distance learning. On the other hand, intervention should be considered regardless of the loss of learning and should be prioritized over remediation to ensure skill gaps are closed as quickly as possible. Because remediation is needed for a myriad of reasons during the reopening of school, it is important for the educator team to develop flexible solutions. Best practice research indicates that struggling students need 30 minutes of extra time daily to catch up to their peers. Closing achievement gaps and raising the achievement of students who are struggling is attainable when the instructional day allows for 30 minutes or more of time for remediation. Find ways to include extra time during the school day that is specifically protected for remediation. While each district has unique needs and will need develop appropriate local solutions, sample district models for solutions are included later in this toolkit.

***How do I support teachers in their preparation for reopening?***

Teachers will need support in a variety of ways for reopening school including digital learning tools, using newly adopted high-quality materials in ELA (in-person and digital spaces), integrating lost learning concepts into new learning, and engaging learners effectively during distance learning times. Within teacher planning structures for all content areas, teachers should plan for additional remediation, reinforcement of connections between prior and new content, and additional practice.

Teachers will need collaboration with district staff and school leadership to analyze diagnostic and benchmark assessments, determine learning gaps, and incorporate missed learning into 2020-21 content-specific scopes and sequences. Strategies within lessons also need to be intentional.

Teachers should not focus on increasing independent practice in face-to-face learning or distance learning situations, but instead, learning experiences should increase discussion opportunities and

guided practice within the learning day (virtual or in-person). Students may have larger misconceptions due to significant periods of independent practice without support throughout school closure experiences. Discussions and guided practice will help strengthen teachers' abilities to discern misconceptions and to re-teach within the lesson.

Finally, teachers will need to increase feedback and checks for understanding to ensure that learning gaps do not interfere with building new content mastery. Districts should consider ways to provide teachers with modeling, sample tools, and support to ensure they are focusing on closing students' learning gaps.

As teachers plan for the opening of the school year, districts are encouraged to work with teacher groups in subject-specific strategies grounded in high-quality materials.

- **In ELA**, teachers will need unit preparation and lesson preparation time with their new curriculum. A collaborative and fluid approach to unit preparation and lesson development before and after schools reopen will be critical to success. Great consideration will need to be focused on instructional support, checks for understanding, integration of remediation activities, and even re-teaching of concepts from the previous school year. Guidance for vertical ELA PLCs, unit preparation protocols, and lesson plan preparation protocols will be available in July to support district preparation.
- **In mathematics**, teachers will also need to work collaboratively in vertical teams. The vertical teamwork should be grounded in 2020-21 grade-level content, but also include an analysis of fourth quarter content that was not taught. Teams should focus on aligning that content to current grade-level content and developing units and lessons that integrate missing content and lost learning at appropriate points. Teachers should also work in vertical teams to analyze diagnostic and benchmark data to inform decision-making. A series of math PLC guides will be available in July to support district preparation.

***Are there specific supports teachers will need in preparing for potential distance learning environments?***

Some teachers will need technical supports in using the district's digital platforms, content tools, and other non-digital methods chosen by the district. If a district chooses digital spaces for distance learning, teachers will need supports in the technical uses of these platforms and will also need training on how to engage learners of all ages in appropriate content instruction through digital platforms. Teachers will need support in providing feedback to learners, encouraging discussion, and developing digital checks for understanding. If your school or district can provide a non-digital interface for distance learning, the educator team should consider ways for engagement in learning. Whether teachers follow up through phone calls or provide written feedback, it is important that teachers have professional learning support, guidance in strategies, and a focus on providing effective learning feedback asynchronously.

Finally, all teachers will need support to ensure routines, structures, and most importantly, relationships are reestablished during the first two weeks of school. This may include supporting

teachers if they are moving between classrooms and students are staying in place, developing strong classroom routines at the beginning of the school year, and developmentally appropriate practices for digital learning. Most importantly, teachers may also need support feeling safe in the school environment and opportunities to reestablish relationships with each other

□ ***How should I incorporate the arts into a well-rounded day for my students?***

The importance of the arts has been evident as the COVID-19 pandemic swept the country. We have seen and heard it play out through works of art on sidewalks, shared musical moments from porches, in virtual synchronous plays and dance performances, and every other imaginable iteration of art-making. Therefore, it is important that all students have access to an arts education that includes dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts that supports their educational, developmental and emotional well-being. Districts should consider opportunities, in accordance with other guidance provided in this document, for students to engage in arts experiences both in-person and virtually.

□ ***How do I create additional supports for students with language challenges, learning challenges, or other barriers to learning?***

The educator team should include special education teachers that help to plan structures for remediation, intervention, and additional compensatory support. For additional guidance, see the Access and Opportunity Re-Opening Toolkit and the Special Populations Re-Opening Toolkit.

### **Elementary School Considerations for Instructional Delivery**

As elementary school students start the school year, the educator team should pay close attention to foundational literacy skills and conceptual mathematics foundations. Instructional days may need to be adapted to extend literacy blocks and mathematics blocks, or to incorporate literacy and mathematics intentionally into other content blocks. Teachers will likely have to reestablish behavioral and learning routines. While establishing routines and structure, the educator team may also recommend longer foundational skills lessons to reinforce the critical skills students need to build automaticity in reading and reestablish a love of reading through deep knowledge-building lessons with high-quality materials. It is essential that teachers have high-quality materials to reinforce research-based approaches to foundational skill building and knowledge building literacy activities. See the Tennessee Foundational Skills curriculum supplement [here](#) for a free option for foundational skills. For mathematics, the state is developing a series of conceptual K-2 mathematics resources to reinforce conceptual mathematics. Resources can be found in the state's online learning tool (under development until August).

If elementary schools need to use a digital learning option for content delivery, the educator team should consider what types of activities should be delivered virtually and what types of activities students should be engaging in at home. For example, students should be getting foundational skills instruction synchronously in a digital environment; however, students may be able to reinforce knowledge building through video-based lessons at home.

### ***Middle School Considerations for Instructional Delivery***

When middle school teachers begin planning their lessons for the 2020-21 school year, teachers should work in vertical teams to consider critical standards from the prior school year. Opening units and lessons should reinforce both conceptual and skills from the preceding year to ensure students do not have misconceptions or gaps in learning. Strategies for scope and sequences in math, ELA and science can be found within the online learning tool starting in August 2020. Middle school teachers should also use their high-quality instructional materials in ELA and mathematics to build strong lessons.

Instructional practices for discussion and reflection should be prominent in lesson plans for face-to-face and blended resources. Young adolescents will need the opportunity to reconnect and reestablish relationships with their teachers and their peers. Instructional delivery should emphasize these opportunities and provide students with relevant and rigorous opportunities for discussion. Routines will also need to be established in middle school classrooms. Educator teams should reinforce the importance of structure and routines especially if students are remaining in a cohort location and teachers are moving classrooms (see movement options below). Middle school students will need brain and body breaks to be responsive to developmentally appropriate activities for students. For digital learning, teachers should intentionally design synchronous learning experiences to increase engagement and discussion opportunities.

### ***High School Considerations for Instructional Delivery***

High school teachers should take into consideration similar instructional methodologies as middle school teachers. Teachers should also plan vertically to identify content gaps and ensure continuity in subject-specific coursework. In particular, math teachers should look at fourth quarter content and determine how to integrate skills and concepts that may need reinforcement during the first quarter of the 2020-21 school year. See the sample remediation schedules below for ideas on how to incorporate modified blocks for those students who missed critical content during the fourth quarter of the 2019-20 school year. Additionally, high schools may want to consider using a digital “zero period” for fourth quarter content as well.

Instructional delivery may be flexible in high schools; therefore, high schools should focus on blended learning approaches that rely on one-to-one technologies within physical and at-home learning environments. Moreover, teachers should be trained in using blended approaches to actively engage learners in discussions and rigorous conversations. High-quality curricular materials can guide teachers in setting-up strong learning experiences both in face-to-face classrooms and in online platforms. Teachers should use both high-quality curricula and strong digital discussion techniques to reinforce learning in the high school. If high schools cannot access a one-to-one environment, the educator team will need to consider how to provide distance learning options while engaging students in the right face-to-face conversations when students can be in classrooms.

Finally, as high schools consider limiting student transitions (see below), teachers will need to consider brain breaks and body breaks both within instruction and between instructional activities.

Finally, high schools have additional considerations for students related to college- and career-readiness. Among those are:

- **Course Selections:** While the majority of students may have courses already selected for the 2020-21 school year, there may still be students without a schedule. Consider how counselors may be used during this time to meet with students in-person, virtually, or via phone to ensure students have enrolled for the required and preferred classes for the 2020-21 school year.
- **ACT Preparation:** Without the junior testing day in spring 2020, there should be considerations for how students are preparing for the ACT. Typically, schools emphasize ACT preparation leading up to the junior test date through ACT boot camps and other study sessions to support students. Ideas for acclimating students may include sessions during the 30-minute flex period, optional Saturday, optional after-school boot camps, or online resources where a teacher or counselor is able to track student progress.
- **College and Career Advising:** While it may be easy to overlook college and career advising, it should remain a crucial component in the high school setting. Eighth graders entering ninth grade may have missed the one-on-one sessions with counselors or perhaps a “High School 101” group session (or similar). Ideas for how to incorporate these crucial informational meetings include continuing to hold one-on-one sessions virtually or via phone if in-person meetings are not possible or filming a “High School 101” video to send to students and families entering high school to help them feel informed and connected. The same could be done for graduating seniors and their families. Sessions and/or videos of reminders as they transition to postsecondary education, military, or into a career could also be included with information related to the FAFSA, TN Promise, HOPE, and other scholarships, grants, statewide resources, industry certifications, websites, and contact information for assistance.
- **Building Connections:** In the high school setting with multiple courses and teachers scheduled every day, students can feel overlooked. Districts and schools should consider ways for adults to connect with every student regularly. Considerations include a “homeroom” at the beginning of the day or during the flex period where an adult is checking in on a cohort of students each day or finding ways to get “eyes and ears” on each student daily in a distance learning environment. Districts should encourage teachers to spend extra time with students monitoring whole child supports that may extend beyond academics.
- **Extracurricular Activities:** Research has shown that high school students are more successful academically if they feel connected to school through meaningful relationships and/or extracurricular activities. Encourage students to become involved at school through athletics, clubs, honor societies, arts, career and technical student organizations, or other opportunities to connect with peers. Maximizing these opportunities, even in a distance format can be crucial for reintegration to high school, support student investment and attendance and maintain normalcy for students in all grades.

## D. Student Movement

As the world has come to learn, the more one engages in close contact with others the more likely we are to spread the coronavirus. Many social distancing practices have been developed to help reduce engagement between others and minimize the risk of becoming exposed to viruses. Schools and districts will also have to take precautions when considering how often students change settings during the instructional day. Student movement varies significantly between grade bands; thus, considerations should be handled separately. See the “scheduling” section [below](#) for sample ways to structure school days for reduced movement.

### ***Elementary Schools***

Elementary students often do not move between classes and receive most of their instruction from one teacher. However, as mentioned in earlier sections, students move frequently within the classroom. As a first priority, the educator team should consider how much movement within a classroom is manageable, how cleaning procedures will occur as students move through the classroom, and how the teacher will ensure social distancing as activities change in the classroom. If an elementary school has chosen to departmentalize in some grades, the educator team has several additional considerations. The team should consider whether students should move (and thus require disinfecting between movements) or if teachers should relocate to the homeroom classroom for students.

### ***Middle Schools***

Middle school movement is unique to elementary and high school settings, as middle school schedules often require students to move seven to eight times in one day. The educator team should review master schedules and consider reductions in the number of class changes and hallway interactions that might be scheduled during the day. It is not feasible to manage disinfection of classrooms or social distancing with the amount of movement in a traditional seven or eight period schedule. As hallway engagement will be challenging to manage related to social distancing, master schedules may also need to reflect reduced classroom movement of students to moderate passing in hallways. An educator team could also consider a schedule that keeps students in one place and requires teachers to travel to students. While some elective classes may be challenging, it may be necessary to keep cohorts of students in one place for core coursework.

Middle schools should also consider the equipment needed for each course, or if all coursework can be completed digitally in a one-to-one setting. It may not be practical to keep students in one classroom if the teacher needs specific materials and might need to disinfect any necessary materials between classes.

### ***High Schools***

As stated in the middle school section, master schedules that require students to move frequently may cause significant challenges to social distancing, classroom disinfection, and other CDC guidance. It is not feasible to manage sanitization of classrooms or social distancing with the amount of movement in a traditional seven or eight period schedule. As such, block schedules might be

encouraged. As hallway engagement will be challenging to manage, block schedules will also minimize transitions between classes. It is recommended that the educator team review high school schedules to consider reducing class changes, keeping students stationary (moving teachers for core content areas), and minimizing travel through hallways by creating grade level sections of the building rather than subject-specific hallways. Additionally, districts may want to consider outdoor walkways, outdoor classrooms, and outdoor eating spaces if available and the weather is appropriate. Sample block and modified block schedules are included below.

If students will continue to move between classes, districts should consider a staggered schedule for different cohorts of students.

## **V. Best Practices**

### ***High Quality Materials for Learning***

As teachers are planning for increased intensity of skill-based learning and re-adjusting scopes and sequences, high quality materials should guide this planning. Teachers should have adequate time to prepare sequences, train in new materials, and adjust learning plans based on early-year data. Before schools and district reopen, revisit your selections and ensure that you have appropriate materials and resources that will meet the diverse learning needs of students. In addition, provide virtual and in-person supports for teachers as they plan for the beginning of the year.

### ***Using HQIM to Bridge Face-to-Face and Digital Learning***

High quality instructional materials should also be used in multiple environments given the potential for additional school closures. Schools should consider resources that allow students to move within digital and traditional spaces fluidly. The department's online learning tool will provide opportunities for districts to use traditional methods of learning from high quality materials while simultaneously providing digital learning resources for students in at-home learning environments. Additionally, materials in the online learning tool allow districts to quickly and seamlessly move from traditional classrooms to digital environments in the event of school closure. The tool will include schedules and guidance to support districts in these transitions; and moreover, the tool will allow districts to shift to virtual resources to ensure individualized materials in the school environment.

### ***Best Practices for Fine Arts***

Students should receive equitable and frequent instruction in the arts. Not only is class time important, but the frequency of class meetings is important for sequential skill and knowledge building. Districts and schools using hybrid or virtual delivery methods should set aside time for specific and authentic learning in the arts.

### ***Beginning of Year Assessments***

Based on the earlier section, diagnostic assessments aim to analyze what *skills* students have mastered in the past. The results are used to identify areas that need more attention in future instruction. With great consideration given to the amount of instructional time lost, a best practice would be for diagnostic assessments to be given to students within the first month of reentry to school. Second, benchmark assessments will provide remediation concepts that vertical content teams can use to revise on-grade level scopes and sequences. Educator teams should balance the importance of reestablishing strong connections and building relationships with the timing of diagnostic and benchmark assessments.

The department will provide a free “checkpoint” assessment for districts to use at the start of the year. These optional tools are intended to support educators with identifying areas of strength and areas in need of additional support for all students based on prior year content.

The department will provide all Tennessee districts with content-specific benchmark assessments for grade 3 through high school. Existing diagnostics can be used in grades K-2 to determine gaps in foundational literacy skills, gaps in conceptual math skills, and quick curriculum-based comprehension measures to determine the needs of our earliest learners. Then, significant time and analysis of the data should be given during PLC settings. Teachers and leaders will be able to determine student needs and adapt instructional plans to best fit the needs of their learners. This data-driven approach is considered one of the best practices in ensuring instruction continues and designing gap instruction to support learners.

Early learners may need a higher intensity of practice in sounds-first activities, fluency, and decodables to reinforce the automaticity of reading. Plan for these activities after diagnostic assessments are provided. Middle and high school students may have developed misconceptions or have gaps in content knowledge that may also need to be addressed within the scope and sequence of content. Vertical content teams should have the opportunity to assess benchmark data and adapt scopes and sequences accordingly.

## **VI. Recommended Schedules**

Districts will have many considerations to make when determining how to use instructional time. Currently, the statutory definition of an instructional day is 6.5 hours, but many schools use a longer schedule. All samples below consider a traditional method for delivering instruction inside a physical school building.



### Sample Elementary Schedules

The following schedule from one of our Tennessee schools shows a master schedule that provides

### Elementary Master Schedule

	7:45	7:50	8:00	8:10	8:20	8:30	8:40	8:50	9:00	9:10	9:20	9:30	9:40	9:50	10:00	10:10	10:20	10:30	10:40	10:50	11:00	11:10	11:20	11:30	11:40	11:50	12:00	12:10	12:20	12:30	12:40	12:50	1:00	1:10	1:20	1:30	1:40	1:50	2:00	2:10	2:20	2:30	2:40	2:50
Pre-K			Breakfast 8:10-8:35		ELA																LUNCH 12:02-12:27		MATH			PLANNING																		
K	Homeroom		Tier Time 8:00-8:30		Tier Time 8:30-9:00		ELA 9:00-10:20						LUNCH 10:20-10:57		Math 11:00-11:55		ENCORE 11:55-12:40		Tier Time 12:45-1:15		Recess 1:15-1:45		Homeroom 1:45-2:35																					
1st	ELA 7:45-8:30		Tier Time 8:30-9:00		Tier Time 9:00-9:30		ELA 9:30-10:40				LUNCH 10:41-11:18		Math 11:20-12:20		Recess 12:20-12:45		ENCORE 12:45-1:30		Tier Time 1:30-2:00		Homeroom 2:00-2:35																							
2nd	ELA 7:45-9:30						SS/Science 9:30-10:00		Tier Time 10:00-11:00			LUNCH 11:02-11:36		Math 11:40-12:50			Recess 12:50-1:15		Tier Time 1:15-1:45		ENCORE 1:45-2:30																							
3rd	ELA 7:45-9:15				Tier Time 9:15-9:45		Tier Time 9:45-10:10		ENCORE 10:10-10:55		Tier Time 10:55-11:20		LUNCH 11:14-11:54		Math 11:55-1:20			Recess 1:20-1:45		SS/Science 1:45-2:40																								
4th	ELA 7:45-9:20				ENCORE 9:20-10:05		MATH 10:05-11:35						LUNCH 11:32-12:06		Tier Time 12:15-12:45		SS/Science 12:45-1:40		Tier Time 1:40-2:10		Tier Time 2:10-2:40																							
5th	Tier Time 8:00-8:30		ENCORE 8:30-9:15		ELA 9:15-10:40				Tier Time 10:40-11:10		Tier Time 11:10-11:40		LUNCH 11:50-12:25		Math 12:30-2:00			SS/Science 2:00-2:35																										
ENCORE	PLANNING		ENCORE 5th 8:30-9:15		ENCORE 4th 9:20-10:05		ENCORE 3rd 10:10-10:55		LUNCH 11:00-11:30		ENCORE K 11:55-12:40		ENCORE 1st 12:45-1:30		ENCORE 2nd 1:45-2:30																													

The second schedule focuses on utilizing a varied schedule for grade level teachers to maximize hallways spaces for elementary transitions.

	7:30	7:45	7:50	7:55	8:00	8:05	9:00	9:05	9:10	9:15	9:20	9:25	9:30	9:35	9:40	10:00	10:05	10:10	10:45	10:50	10:55	11:00	11:05	11:10	11:15	11:20	11:25	11:30	11:35	11:40	11:45	11:50	11:55	12:00	12:30	12:35	12:40	12:45	12:50	12:55	1:00	1:20	1:25	1:30	1:35	1:40	1:45	1:50	1:55	2:00	2:35	2:40	2:45	2:50	2:55	3:00	3:05	3:10	3:15
2nd A Homeroom	ELA 90																INT/REM 30	ELA 45	Lunch 30	Recess 30	Math 90						Science/ SS 40				Special Areas 60																												
2nd B Homeroom	ELA 90																INT/REM 30	ELA 45	Lunch 30	Recess 30	Math 90						Science/ SS 40				Special Areas 60																												
2nd C Homeroom	ELA 90																INT/REM 30	ELA 45	Recess 30	Lunch 30	Math 90						Science/ SS 40				Special Areas 60																												
2nd D Homeroom	ELA 90																INT/REM 30	ELA 45	Recess 30	Lunch 30	Math 90						Science/ SS 40				Special Areas 60																												
3rd A Homeroom	Math 90						INT/REM 30	ELA 90						Lunch 30	ELA 45	Special Areas 60				Science/ SS 40	Recess 30																																						
3rd B Homeroom	Math 90						INT/REM 30	ELA 90						Lunch 30	ELA 45	Special Areas 60				Science/ SS 40	Recess 30																																						
3rd C Homeroom	Math 90						INT/REM 30	Recess 30	ELA 45							Special Areas 60				ELA 30	Science/ SS 40																																						
3rd D Homeroom	Math 90						INT/REM 30	Recess 30	ELA 45							Special Areas 60				ELA 30	Science/ SS 40																																						
4th A Homeroom	ELA 135																	INTERVENTION 30	Lunch 30	Recess 30	Math 90						Science/ SS 40																																
4th B Homeroom	ELA 135																	INTERVENTION 30	Lunch 30	Recess 30	Math 90						Science/ SS 40																																
4th C Homeroom	ELA 135																	INTERVENTION 30	Recess 30		Math 90						Science/ SS 40																																
4th D Homeroom	Special	Math 90						Science/ SS 40				INTERVENTION 30	ELA 45	Lunch 30	Recess 30	ELA 90																																											

### Sample Middle and High School Schedules

As districts think about flexible scheduling, a flex block or a modified flex block can provide opportunity for remediation and/or intervention time for all learners, and intensive supports for our most fragile learners. These examples are offered as templates for consideration.

**Shifting Schedule for Reduced Movement**

8 Block Schedule	Modified Four Block
Block 1	Block 1
Block 2	Block 2
Block 3	Block 3
Block 4	Block 3
Block 5	
Block 6	Flex Block for Intervention/Remediation
Block 7	Block Four
Block 8	

When moving to a four-block, a district or school can choose to hold two electives in a block or two 45-minute courses into a combined block in one classroom.

**Flexible A/B Schedule**

A Day	B Day
90-minute Block 1	90-minute Block 2
90-minute Block 3	90-minute Block 4
90-minute Block 5	90-minute Block 6
50 Min. Block 7	50 Min. Block 7

A hybrid A/B schedule may be used to offer schools flexibility in both traditional and staggered face-to-face and digital learning. A district doing a staggered 50% attendance schedule could schedule in-person courses for all students on A days and distance learning courses for B Days.

Other considerations for students:

- **Include Every Student:** Build in flexible periods so that they are accessible to all students. Transportation, student internships, extra-curricular activities, and other student interests

and obligations will continue to complete for time and should be considered. Try to avoid creating flexible periods at the very beginning or very ending of the school day.

- **Use Data for Intentional Placement:** It will be important to use data from screeners and other diagnostic tools to purposefully schedule students into the most appropriate flexible intervention. A flex period, whether intended for remediation or enrichment, will significantly lose effectiveness if students are not placed intentionally based on data. Student choice should also be valued in planning their individual placement.
- **Identify Untapped Expertise:** Your district likely has personnel in each school that has untapped expertise. Survey faculty at each school to find their areas of expertise and training that may be useful during flex periods.
- **Whole Child Supports:** Be sure to consider the social well-being of each student. Some students may benefit from whole child supports more than an academic remediation or enrichment flex courses. Use district and local community experts to plan and facilitate class sessions and programs to meet individual needs.

## Online Learning<sup>1</sup>

Overall, there are five primary phases that a district will need to move through to get to online instruction:

- I. **Materials:** Ensure all necessary stakeholders have access to devices and the internet (students, staff, etc.).
- II. **Policies and Procedures:** Outline the districtwide policies that are in place regarding device check-out, appropriate use, troubleshooting, return, etc.
- III. **Support and Development:** Identify, develop and implement professional learning opportunities for educators in the delivery of online instruction.
- IV. **Deliver Instruction:** Identify what content teachers will deliver to students and how student progress and achievement will be measured.
- V. **Adjust Course:** Identify metrics to track progress related to effectiveness of virtual teaching and learning and make necessary adjustments throughout the year.

### Materials

To implement strong virtual learning, districts should consider what it would take to have the following related to materials: (1) every student has their own developmentally appropriate, internet-enabled device; (2) software, programs, and LMS is developmentally-appropriate, family-

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<sup>1</sup> The safety of students is always the priority. For online learning, districts should have policies and procedures in place around technology use, referenced websites, and “live” meetings that might take place. This ensures the privacy and safety of students and educators. The Federal Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA) still applies.

friendly, and accessible; (3) all materials used are regularly reviewed by district and school staff for quality, safety, and usability; and (4) the district has a troubleshooting and technical assistance support structure in place.

Below are some guiding questions to support this work.

- How many devices are currently available and for what use?
- What is current inventory for districtwide licenses and resources?
- What information does the district need to collect to effectively facilitate learning in a virtual format?
- What resources will the district provide to students compared to what resources does the district expect them to have? What are the district's mitigation strategies?
- Who will the district provide technology to and in what format (all students, some students and under what criteria, some staff, all staff, etc.)?
- Who will the district provide internet access to (all students, some students and under what criteria, some staff, all staff, etc.)?
- How many devices does the district need and for whom?
- Is there a sustainability plan for the future and what is the replacement policy for hardware?
- How will access to the internet be provided (via hotpot, etc.)?
- What network equipment is required in schools and classrooms, and what is the installation plan for that?
- How will the district account for homes with a device, but multiple students in one household that require simultaneous access for coursework (which would either require multiple devices or asynchronous opportunities)?
- What LMS will the district use and in what capacity? Will the district use any state-provided resources, systems, etc.?
- Does the district have software or other existing online tools to support virtual learning, or will those be new? Will the district be using the state's resources? How will that selection take place?
- How will student work be collected (online submission, save and email, etc.)?
- What communication forms will the district use, in what ways, and how will the district set those expectations with staff and students?
- What technical assistance and troubleshooting will be available and during what blocks? How will it be staffed?

### **Policies and Procedures**

To implement strong virtual learning, districts should consider what it would take to have the following related to policies: (1) develop a board-approved set of policies related to technology use,

access and application; (2) identify the appropriate filters and security measures on all devices; and (3) identify the requirements for student training and family sign-off for use.

- What will the district prioritize for computer-based learning? For example, in many homes family members or caregivers will have multiple responsibilities and not necessarily be able to focus exclusively on supporting student learning. Similarly, it might not be the most appropriate setting for students to be in front of a device all day. Districts should prioritize accordingly and may want to consider how to ensure that students have access to books as well as devices, to allow for screen time breaks and alternative activities throughout the day.
- Will there need to be a video conferencing element to distance learning and what policies and expectations need to be structured related to privacy and appropriateness?
- How will software updates and packages be updated?
- Will there be any requirements for updates to the network and how will that be conducted?
- What are the guidelines for stolen or damaged devices?
- What accessibility standards must be in place and what additional assistive technology will the district need to include?

### Support and Development

To implement strong virtual learning, districts should consider what it would take to have the following related to support and development: (1) a needs assessment specific to what educators, students and families need in order to effectively access technology and use it for teaching and learning; (2) identify when that support will be provided and in what format; and (3) identify the ways in which ongoing support will take place.

- What is the current capacity of educators and staff related to distance learning (ranging from no real capacity or strategy in place to basic virtual learning capacity to exceptional and experienced virtual learning capacity)?
- How will the district provide support for students and families with little to no technological resources or experience?
- What specific strategies or practices will be prioritized and how will teachers be supported?
- How will the district address educators or staff who do not have (or have trouble developing) technological proficiency?
- How will students be supported and onboarded for how to learn in a virtual setting (including strategies, ways to ask for help, etc.)?

### Instructional Delivery

To implement strong virtual learning, districts should consider what it would take to have the following related to instructional delivery: (1) the information and data that will be collected must

be identified, as it is needed driving instruction and managing student achievement; (2) an instructional delivery support model that includes peer support and self-reflection activities; (3) an effective way to self-assess student engagement during instructional delivery; and (4) a plan for what meaningful teacher and student interactions and feedback will look like on a daily basis.

- Schools and districts should consider how to conduct daily check-ins with students, similar to what naturally happens during class in a
- How will lessons be distributed, collected, graded, and reviewed?
- How will checks for understanding occur?
- How will students with disabilities be supported in a virtual format and what additional resources will be needed?
- What are the expected interactions between teachers and students in a virtual setting?
- How will students connect with their teachers?

### Adjusting Course

To implement strong virtual learning, districts should consider what it would take to have the following related to adjusting course: (1) identify the data that will be used to determine successful implementation and (2) expectations are clearly named for staff and students about when and how changes will be made throughout the year.

- What are the governance processes in place related to learning and how will issues be identified, escalated, reviewed, and resolved?
- How will the district support staff as they deliver and navigate virtual teaching and learning? How will any impact to students be mitigated for those who may struggle with the format?

## VII. District Spotlights

**Trousdale County:** Trousdale County is focusing on launching the school year with on-grade level content using their adopted high-quality curriculum and materials. Even though they had a

continuity of learning plan during the COVID-19 closure and students completed work at home, the district knows that this kind of instruction is not equivalent to being in the classroom instructed by their strong teachers. Typically, in the district, educators believe if students miss two months of content, they should "make up" teach the content missed. However, Trousdale does not want their students to be two months behind at the end of the next year. Their plan is to assess before they make plans for re-teaching. They intend to use within-curriculum assessments from their high-quality ELA and math materials to assess students in time throughout the school year as entry-year benchmark assessments. Then, their instructional leaders will use the data to make "surgical decisions" to determine gaps in learning. Identifying key gaps will help identify additional content that will need to be emphasized within the on-grade level curriculum; their teachers will integrate additional content into the on-grade level scope and sequence to accelerate learning rather than slow learning. This approach avoids blanket remediation, and instead connects lost learning to new learning. This ensures missing learning is anchored in appropriate new grade level content.

**Haywood County:** As Haywood County Schools has thought about re-entry for the 2020-2021 school year, they are planning to use blocked intervention time as a way to increase grade-level instruction for ELA and math. In regard to their skills block for K-2 in ELA, the district plans to use the intervention block for the first nine weeks to deliver additional skills lessons from the time lost at the end of 2019-2020 school year. First grade teachers will use the skills block content from kindergarten's last quarter, second grade will use first grade's skills, and third grade will use second grade's skills. This will allow time to reinforce critical reading development skills lost. Please note that this will be happening simultaneously with grade-level skills lessons. For students who are receiving systematic instruction for Tier III or special education, the district will add time to their instructional plan accordingly.

**Clinton City:** Clinton City Schools is planning to allow students to travel to art classes. In elementary school, most special area class times provide a common planning time to teachers at each grade level. For instance, second grade classrooms are divided into separate special area classes each day: music, art, library, physical education, technology/guidance. Students attend special classes at the same time to provide that common planning time for each grade level. Therefore, art teachers teach six or seven classes a day, but only see one grade each day. The art teacher is planning to use different mediums/materials with each grade-level, so items do not have to be shared during the school day. Everything is then cleaned at the end of each day. The art teacher is also planning to implement therapeutic art for the first semester. She has weaved her art standards into activities that will be placed into an individual student booklet that displays a wide variety of art projects that are therapeutic in nature. Clinton City Schools wants to minimize the contact that children have related to sharing materials. However, the district feels that it is important that students are able to see an environment other than the four walls of the classroom. Therefore, Clinton City Schools intends to let students go to special area classes with social distancing and safety precautions in place.

## VIII. Checklists



Below are checklist considerations for academics, by pathway. While each pathway has a number of options within it, including a hybrid model, the academic structures that are necessary for quality implementation are specific to the placement of each individual student. As such, educators and school staff should consider the needs of students in each environment. If students are present in both or there is a hybrid model operating within the school, considerations for the needs of each section should be included in district and school planning.

- Define the educator team.** Who needs to be involved in planning, training, and implementation of the academic program? It is recommended that a team is developed at the district level to include school-based representation from all grade bands and inclusion of the needs of all learners, as well as school-based teams for site-specific needs. Recommendations include the district academics lead (or CAO), a special education lead, an English Learner lead, an assessment and data lead, a principal, a teacher, and a coaching or instructional leadership lead.
- Identify the pathway.** Teams should identify which pathway they will use. This could either be as part of the district-wide strategy or it could be a school-level model based on facility needs. Teams should plan for models that account for short- or long-term closures.
- Identify and establish class sizes and capacities for instruction.** This will require each school site to have a strong idea of the physical capacity of each school, the number of teachers available in-person and remotely, the number of students expected, and the composition of needs related to those students. Based on that information, schools and districts will need to determine who can come back, how students will be prioritized within and across grades, and what that means from a staffing perspective. Please see the Procedures Toolkit for more information on how to calculate space requirements and make capacity decisions.
- If pathways vary between schools, consider redistributing resources or capacity so that students across the districts have relatively equivalent learning opportunities and experiences.** Districts must ensure that there are not examples of entire groups of students at some schools who have in-person instruction, while groups of students at other schools are all distance or remote (as a result of staffing and capacity issues). Districts will need to consider ensuring all students in the district have equivalent access to similar instructional experiences, by school.
- Identify the staffing that will be available (and in what format) to design a plan for master schedules and student grouping.** Schools should collect information about which staff and which students will be returning to school. This will dictate how the school or district's plan will need to work related to distance learning, teaching assignments, etc. For students that need to learn from home in cases where schools are fully back in physical buildings, schools should identify the ways in which students will be meaningfully incorporated into the school day. (Examples might include video conferencing into physical classrooms, creating district-wide digital classrooms for all remote students, and phone or video one-on-one supports delivered by teaching or support staff for student help). Thoughtful student engagement, especially for those who are learning remotely, should be planned in advance with very clear expectations and processes built-into each lesson.

- **Educator teams should also consider areas where multi-school or district-wide lessons are feasible options to maximize instruction.** In particular, when there is a distance model, districts may want to consolidate instruction to one master teacher for each grade and content area and then allow regular classroom teachers to focus on individual and small group support. This maximizes the impact of master teachers while still maximizing the time and capacity of all educators. Otherwise, teachers would need to carry the dual workload of providing regular instruction and then finding time to work with individual and small groups of students outside of that learning time as a way to ensure content understanding and proficiency. Using a master teacher approach allows for one person to focus on effective instructional delivery in a virtual format, while allowing other teachers to focus on explicit support for students.
  - This could be similarly applied in hybrid models to maximize learning for all students equitably by emphasizing individual/small group, grade-level supports after effectively delivered online content.
  - This can also be used in cases with schools that have limited teaching capacity because of educators needing to work from home due to health issues. In these cases, schools may have limited staff available for classroom-based instruction. As a result, districts might be able to use a district-wide master teacher to provide first instruction to classrooms and then have on-site teachers able to rotate and support student learning after those district-wide videos are distributed. Teachers working from home might be able to do activities such as planning or wellness checks.
  - These are all scenarios that should be considered by educator teams. As a note: districts may consider forming multi-district groups to collaborate on videos or may want to take advantage of the videos that will be provided for free by the department. Department-provided videos will include a full-year of cohesive, grade-level content for 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grades in ELA and math and provide a range of options related to materials (using any publisher on the approved list who gave permission for their materials to be used).
- **Plan for school culture.** Educator teams must identify the school culture elements that are most important to them. Consider each major stakeholder group: students, staff, and families. What is the experience the school and district want each of them to have in the model selected, and also in the event of closures? Prioritize the elements of culture for each scenario as high, medium, and lower priority actions and then develop a plan and training sequence for each.
- **Select instructional materials that work for the pathway(s) selected.** Select the instructional materials that will be used in each scenario and for each pathway. Identify the materials that will be needed and consider how those materials will be used (including development for educators). All materials should be grade-level materials.
- **Identify the diagnostic that will be used at the beginning of the year.** This data will be critical in identifying student needs and areas where more support will be warranted. The department will provide a free and optional beginning-of-year checkpoint (aligned to state

standards), as well as an interim assessment, an item library, and a series of formative assessments for optional use. Please see the Assessment Toolkit for more information on building a meaningful assessment program to support instruction and learning.

- **If using a distance or hybrid model, identify the learning platform that will be used and ensure all content is accessible to all students and loaded before the start of the year.** Any distance learning should allow for students to have equitable access to content and materials and come with clear guidance for how to use the platform selected. Please reference the online learning section, above, for checklists specific to this topic area.
- **Support students and families in how to use the identified instructional materials (training, videos, etc.).** If in a distance environment, outline the ways in which students and families will receive training and support in how to engage with any instructional materials. This should include how to access the materials, how to engage with the materials, expectations on student work and participation, assignment completion, and where to go for help. Please reference the online learning section, above, for checklists specific to this topic area.
- **Review start-of-the-year data and consider needs for grade-level content and any prioritized review, remediation or intervention that will need to occur from the prior year.** Look at the scope and sequence for the year in addition to student checkpoint or diagnostic data. Determine the types and amounts of review, remediation and/or intervention that might be needed. Educator teams should pay careful mind to (1) not over-remediating or incorporating too much intervention time, as a great deal of content can be meaningfully incorporated into grade-level content throughout the year, and (2) considering the needs of the most vulnerable students and those who may have the largest gaps to ensure students are getting what they need to close those gaps, but are also receiving access to grade-level content.
- **Plan for grade level content and any prioritized review, remediation or intervention that will need to occur from the prior year.** Look at the scope and sequence for the year in addition to student checkpoint or diagnostic data. Determine the types and amounts of review, remediation and/or intervention that might be needed. Please note that while it might be tempting, there is not necessarily a need for a “remediation unit,” or similar at the start of the year. Instead, focus on the most effective ways to prioritize unfinished learning that might need focus and strategic ways to incorporate prior-year content into the grade-level assignments.
- **Determine enhancements and modifications for each lesson.** Educator teams may want to divide selected instructional materials amongst one another. Team members may then go through each lesson and make notes on (1) materials that may need to be modified for health reasons, (2) modifications that may need to be made in a socially distanced classroom, in a virtual environment, in a distance and non-virtual environment, and/or in a hybrid model, and (3) opportunities to enhance the lesson to provide reinforcement of critical learning opportunities. Doing these things in advance saves time and allows for immediate deployment of health-related strategies, should they be necessary. In many cases, strong publishers will have already identified modifications that can be made to content or

materials to accommodate these needs and educator teams may choose to contact the publisher first in the case this work was already completed.

- **Identify priorities for teaching and learning for each pathway.** Teachers may want to work in grade bands and identify the most critical standards that students needed to master for each grade from the prior year. From there, teams may be able to make plans about what content can be taught whole-group (due to universal gaps), what content requires smaller group supports, and what content can be meaningfully incorporated into the regular and ongoing grade-level content throughout the year.
- **Determine the grading policy for assignments, in a physical or a distance environment.** Educator teams should coordinate on grading policies and expectations, student feedback, examples and exemplars to norm on expectations (especially for students in a distance environment), and how assignments will be prioritized. Separately, educator teams should prioritize grading assignments that reflect overall student proficiency or student growth.
- **Determine promotion and retention policies to align with various scenarios before the year begins.** Each district and school should have clear expectations on what assignments and materials will count for grades and consider any adjustments/modifications that might need to be made if the school is required to transition to a distance or virtual model. The district should also consider communication protocols for students and families to proactively clarify what information will be used to determine a student's grades and promotion criteria at the start of the year for any possible scenario that could be deployed.
- **Teacher coaching and support.** Regardless of the model, educators will need additional support during the year. For instruction that takes place in the school building, teachers may need help in developing and implementing social distancing policies or may need support in implementing an adjusted instructional framework (if smaller classes are created). In any virtual scenario, teachers may need support in navigating the technology and developing new strategies for instruction and student engagement in a new format. This should be purposefully planned at the start of the year to give teachers the opportunity to know what will be provided and when. Support focused, purposeful teacher teams will be essential. Please see the Professional Development Toolkit for more information on educator supports.
- **Plan for coverage during lunch and planning time.** Depending on schedules, students may be eating in classrooms. Structures should be put into place to ensure full observations of students while allowing for coverage for necessary teacher breaks and planning periods.
- **High quality materials matter, and so does implementation.** This is the first year of implementation of new ELA materials in many districts. Districts should focus on the top 5 implementation strategies that they will get right (in-person or online) and utilize the free implementation support provided by the department through upcoming grants and CORE.

## IX. Resource List

### School Closure Toolkit for Academics

[Link](#)

This site provides an interactive search feature for both educators and parents. Users can search for resources by subject area, grade level, and by open source curriculum. Instruction resources include

### **Online Learning Tool**

This online learning tool is under development, and in August, will provide curriculum-based videos, lessons, teacher and student resources, and family support resources. Those resources will be launched in the full tool release on August 1<sup>st</sup>. The resources can be used in an online environment and as a downloadable resource. In addition, the entire PK-2 foundational skills curriculum supplement and supporting teacher video training packages. K-2 math resources will also be available in August. K-2 foundational skills curriculum supplement will be housed [here](#) in June and July and moved to the online learning tool in August.

### **PBS Repository**

#### [Link](#)

The link provides 1st-6th grade students standards-aligned instructional lessons on ELA and Math that were broadcast in April and May 2020 on local PBS stations. Additional 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade lessons are available on the department's [YouTube page](#). Students, families, and educators can find lessons, [teacher guides](#) and [student packets](#) for using the PBS videos on the department's website. **The Summer Learning Series** will feature PBS LearningMedia programming that has been specifically chosen for a continued focus on early literacy and math, aligned to Tennessee standards. Each of these programs also have teacher, family, and student resources available [online](#).

### **ReadyRosie App**

#### [Link](#)

This free resource (until 9/30/2020) provides families with free engagement strategies and models for working with their children with simple literacy and math strategies. Three-minute, modeled moments are provide in Spanish and English, on the Internet, email or phone-based app, and allow families to receive additional guidance on child development topics.

### **What Works Clearinghouse**

#### [Link](#)

The What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) reviews the existing research on different *programs, products, practices, and policies* in education. *Our goal* is to provide educators with the information they need to make evidence-based decisions. We focus on the results from *high-quality research* to answer the question “What works in education?”

**Tennessee Graduation Requirements**[Link](#)

Tennessee high school graduation requirements are linked here for easy access and review while planning.

**Promising Practices in College and Career Readiness**[Link](#)

As you consider college and career readiness during the re-entry process, this is a helpful link to snapshots of district practices and initiatives which support the department's goals and strategic priorities.

**American School Counselor Association**[Link](#)

Suggestions and resources to consider when providing mental health support to students, families, and staff amid COVID-19.