

CONTINUOUS EDUCATION TOOLKIT FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS

• GUIDANCE + TOOLS •

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INTRODUCTION

As school facilities across the state are closed to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the well-being of students, teachers, and staff remain top priority. Continued learning and academic growth are critical components of student well-being. Routines and connections with educators provide stability, security, and structure that can keep our children active, engaged, and healthy. Therefore, the Department strongly encourages all school systems to develop and implement Continuous Learning Plans in partnership with teachers, families, and local boards of education.

The following toolkit provides school systems with guidance on how to assess capacity, analyze available instructional and technology resources, develop an approach to providing distance learning opportunities, and implement a distance learning plan.

Each school system must make local decisions in line with their needs, and several already have plans in place. For examples of how some school systems are approaching this challenge, view the approaches [Desoto Parish](#), [Jefferson Parish](#), [Miami-Dade County](#), and [Webster Parish](#) are taking. School systems with distance learning plans in place are encouraged to continue with strategies that are working for teachers and students.

A wide variety of tools for distance learning exist, and many are available at no cost to educators. This document is a compilation of such tools and provides a framework and guidance on the development and implementation of continuous learning plans.

School systems should refer to the [Privacy and Security Guide](#) when making decisions regarding distance learning.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CONTINUOUS LEARNING

- **Focus on Quality.** Teachers and students will have the greatest success when plans build from the instructional plan that was in place for the academic year. Rather than turning to new instructional materials, school systems should use existing [curriculum resources](#). Feedback from families indicates that long lists of websites and additional resources may be overwhelming.
- **Focus on Simplicity.** Plan for an appropriate amount of active instruction per day based on the age of children. Give families and staff specific advice about when and how to use recommended materials. Consistent days and times for teacher-student phone calls or online conferences will simplify routines.
- **Focus on Families.** It's better to take a little longer to roll out a learning plan that works for families than to rush a plan that causes frustration. Be thoughtful about the expectations placed upon families during this time.

*adapted from <https://tntp.org/blog/post/resources-for-learning-at-home-when-schools-close>



STEP 1: IDENTIFY RESOURCES

School systems must identify what is going to be taught and how it will be taught. This [worksheet](#) is designed to help school systems organize their thinking. Below are questions and considerations to [guide the process](#).

1. Identify Curriculum

- What curricula are already in use in schools?
- Many tier one [curriculum materials](#) are available for use.

2. Identify Technology Resources

- What level of device and internet access do students and teachers have?
- What [platforms](#) are available and easily accessible for students and teachers?
- [Google Teach From Home Toolkit](#) is highly recommended and easy to access.

3. Identify Staffing Needs

- [Identify the expectations for school system staff, school building leaders, teachers, and staff.](#)
- Identify the training needs of teachers and staff, considering the following:
 - » training on any technology platforms that will be used
 - » training on using the curriculum for continuous learning
 - » training on supporting and giving feedback to students

4. Assess Students/Families Needs

- If needed, conduct a [needs assessment](#) and ensure it is inclusive and accommodating of all families.
- Collect student contact information and consider necessary privacy protections.

STEP 2: DEVELOP APPROACH

School systems should decide on the [delivery approach](#) for continuous learning. Systems will also need to prepare teachers, communicate expectations to families, and provide logistical updates to all stakeholders. Below are steps to follow for both high-tech and low-tech options.

HIGH-TECH OPTION

1. Identify which lessons within the curriculum will be prioritized and how to best deliver instruction.
2. Assess teacher and student access to [devices and the internet](#). Disseminate devices and support with access to internet service as needed. [Cox](#) and [AT&T](#) are offering low-cost options for internet service.
3. Identify the needs of teachers to facilitate [digital or blended learning options](#).
4. Ensure that guidance is provided to support the unique needs of students who require additional support including, but not limited to, [students with disabilities](#) and [English Learners](#).
5. Develop a plan for technical support for families, possibly including a remote call center for technology questions and technical assistance.
6. Provide teacher/student interaction through online platforms, phone calls, office hours, or homework hotlines.

LOW-TECH OPTION

1. Identify which lessons within the curriculum will be prioritized and how to best deliver instruction.
2. Review the [Academic Resources](#) document for Louisiana Specific Curriculum Guidance.
3. Develop a plan to distribute materials to students.
4. Make paper copies of instructional packets to be picked up at school or delivered to families.
5. Ensure that the general education or [special education teacher](#) or [EL Specialist](#) provides [accommodations](#) for students with disabilities, students with a Section 504 plan, or those students who are ELs.
6. Provide teacher interaction through phone calls, office hours, or homework hotlines.

ACCESSIBILITY OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Regardless of the delivery approach, school systems must consider the accessibility of high quality instructional materials in a continuous learning environment. School systems should continue to prioritize the use of [high quality core instructional materials](#) for all students while also providing flexibility, based on student need.

High-Tech Approaches	
Accessibility Considerations	Resources
<p>Support students in using the accessibility features offered within operating systems, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrator • Display and Readability Functions • Text-to-speech • Showsounds • On Screen Keyboard • Speech Recognition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows accessibility features • OS for Mac accessibility features
<p>Utilize accessibility features available within web browsers, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusting text and video size • High-contrast display • TalkBack • Read Aloud • Keyboard Access <p>Include instructions for using accessibility features within lesson directions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google accessibility features • Firefox accessibility features
<p>Utilize the accessibility features available within delivery platforms such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closed captioning • Automatic Transcripts • Speech-to-text functions • Screen Reader Support • Color contrasting • Zoom functions • Keyboard access <p>Include instructions for using accessibility features within lesson directions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ZOOM accessibility features • Google Hangout accessibility features • Skype accessibility features • Google Classroom
<p>Ensure documents are designed with accessibility considerations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word accessibility • PDF accessibility
<p>Utilize web resources that were designed to include accessibility features.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web AIM Website Accessibility Tool
<p>Review additional accessibility resources for more support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Google Access For All

Low-Tech Approaches	
Accessibility Considerations	Resources
Ensure printed materials are accessible to all learners, including but not limited to accommodations such as braille, enlarged print, increased white space, highlighting, alternate fonts, or pictorial representations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Louisiana AEM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> >> AEM ELA Guidebook Accessible Instructional Materials • National Center for AEM
When possible, provide audio versions of texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audible • Barnes & Noble • Learning Ally • Local Libraries

Once the delivery approach is determined, school systems should create the following schedules to support instructional staff, students, and families:

1. An [instructional staff schedule](#) and set of responsibilities aligned to the platform you select and
2. Sample learning schedules for students at home.

STEP 3: IMPLEMENT AND SUPPORT

Continuous learning is a new endeavor for many school systems. Ongoing monitoring will be important to assess how plans are working and to make adjustments as needed. Three important areas to focus on are:

1. [Communication](#) with staff and families,
2. Training for teachers and staff, and
3. Access for all students and families.

This work will be challenging. Acknowledge that for staff and yourself. Give yourself and others permission to make mistakes and correct as needed. Flexibility is key.

RESOURCES

- The Department's COVID-19 [webpage](#)
- The Department's COVID-19 [FAQ document](#)
- The Department's [Continuous Education Toolkit: Staffing](#)
- [Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Staffing Guidance](#)
- [Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Accessibility of Instructional Materials](#)
- [Continuous Education for Students with Disabilities: Direct Services](#)
- [Supplemental Fact Sheet](#) from US Department of Education about serving students with disabilities
- [Bulletin 741](#) Distance Education policy, section 2326
- Please send all questions to LDOECOV19Support@la.gov.