

DISTANCE LEARNING GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS

A Checklist Series



Communications



Communication is most important during **stage zero** because it is essential that all stakeholders are in contact with the school. This means setting-up and implementing the communication systems that will remain in place during all following stages, and throughout the school year.

STAGE	OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS	0 Make connections with all stakeholders and establish the communication systems that you will use throughout the year	<input type="checkbox"/> School teams share the vision and goals with staff for the SY 2020-21. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams will communicate what the school day will “look like, sounds like, feel like”, as well as key dates to both staff and families. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams communicate the distance learning schedule and expectations to staff, students, and families. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams use social media to share key information with stakeholders. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams establish a communication routine, such as a weekly newsletter, that ensures families know when to expect school updates. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams use a single tool (website, LMS page, Google Doc) to collect and post video and assignment links for students. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers create a system to capture parent/families email addresses and phone numbers to create listservs. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers send letters introducing themselves to build relationships with students and families.
SCHOOL IN SESSION	1 Schools and teachers build strong relationships with students and families	<input type="checkbox"/> School teams communicate to parents what training they offer to support distance learning such as Zoom, the Learning Management system and/or digital tools being used. <input type="checkbox"/> Principals provide “office hours” for families to ask questions, ideally in the morning or evenings when parents are less likely to be working. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers provide a schedule of “office hours” for students and/or parents to ask questions specific to their class. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers reach out to individual parents to share something positive the student is doing to build rapport and the relationship.
	2 Schools engage students and families around academics	<input type="checkbox"/> School teams create a way to capture what is working for teachers, sharing these best distance learning practices amongst the staff. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams and teachers remind students and families about distancing learning expectations. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams and teachers highlight the academic successes with students and families. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers reach out to individual students and families who may need additional support to engage in distance learning.
	3 School teams will reflect and iterate based on feedback	<input type="checkbox"/> School teams engage small groups of key stakeholders; like staff, families, and students; to find out what is and is not working. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams create outreach efforts to survey families and students - identify start, stop, continue for distance learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Principals will share with teachers that they will conduct virtual learning walks. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams conduct learning walks, gathering information about the state of distance learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Principal shares what is going well and new solutions to challenges, showing students, staff, and families that they are responsive to their needs.

Student Relationships + Engagement



Student relationships and engagement are most important during **stage one** because it is essential that all students connect with their teacher and are excited about the start of the school year.

STAGE	OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS	<p>0</p> <p>School teams prepare teachers to focus on developing relationships with students</p> <p>Teachers reach out to students and families to introduce themselves and their class</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School teams survey students and families to determine what digital equity gaps exist. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams conduct PD to share how to build relationships with students in a virtual setting. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers share the class syllabus - introduction of teacher, their background, what they're excited about this year, the academic focus of class, and any policies they need to know. <input type="checkbox"/> If possible, teachers reach out to their students to introduce themselves. This could be through individual emails, an email blast to all students, or even a video introduction.
SCHOOL IN SESSION	<p>1</p> <p>All staff members focus on establishing routines to build community and celebrate students and families</p> <p>Teachers focus on SEL and student engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Principal focuses on establishing community building routines amongst the staff, modeling the consistent focus on relationships they want to see at the classroom level. <input type="checkbox"/> Grade or content teams develop daily or weekly routines that celebrate students. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers develop daily routines that celebrate students and their families. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers focus on social emotional learning. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams use existing communication systems, such as newsletters and social media, to celebrate students and build community. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams provide PD that shares how teachers are using digital tools and platforms to engage students, celebrate them, and build community. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers survey students to determine their interests and ways they most enjoy engaging in virtual schoolwork. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers and school teams establish systems that track and promote student engagement. <input type="checkbox"/> Principal, school teams, and teachers offer office hours for students and intentionally reach out to invite students and families to attend them. <input type="checkbox"/> Administrators or student support staff reach out to students and families who are at-risk, such as those who are currently homeless, to preemptively support them to successfully engage in distance learning.
	<p>2</p> <p>School teams and teachers focus on engaging ALL students and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers and school teams identify students who show low engagement and participation. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers are assigned students to provide additional outreach to, aiming to better understand their needs and identify possible solutions Teachers try to solve those issue on their own and escalate problems they can't solve to the administrators. <input type="checkbox"/> Administrators problem-solve around issues escalated by teachers, working with student support staff, district teams, and community groups.
	<p>3</p> <p>School teams develop systems to monitor students' academic progress and provide support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School teams develop systems to monitor all students' academic progress, attendance, and social emotional needs. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers and academic teams preemptively provide support for students who are beginning to fall behind or struggle in class. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams and student support staff reach out to students and families who are not attending or participation in distance learning, to better understand their needs and provide support. <input type="checkbox"/> School support staff monitor students' social-emotional needs, establishing referral systems for teachers who may be concerned about a particular student.

Technology Routines + Procedures



Technology routines and procedures are most important during **stage one** because it is essential that all students can access the digital tools and resources necessary to participate in learning activities.

STAGE	OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS	<p>0</p> <p>Common learning platforms and digital tools are identified, subscribed to, and rostered</p> <p>Digital equity gaps are identified and responsive actions taken</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School or district teams identify learning platforms, such as an LMS, website, or video streaming platform that all classes will use. These may be identified along grade-bands. <input type="checkbox"/> School or district teams identify digital tools, such as adaptive programs and content libraries, that all classes will have access to. These may be identified along grade-bands. <input type="checkbox"/> School or district teams subscribe to any common platforms and tools and roster students if necessary. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams survey students and families to determine what digital equity gaps exist. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams identify steps to address digital equity gaps, such as distributing devices and setting-up mobile wireless hotspots.
SCHOOL IN SESSION	<p>1</p> <p>All students can log into the learning platform</p> <p>Expectations around device usage, internet safety, and online interactions are shared with students and families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers lead asynchronous lessons (in person or virtually) on how to log into the learning platform. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers or other school staff hold office hours to provide individual support for students and families trying to log into the learning platform. <input type="checkbox"/> Administrators publish technology use guidelines and share with families (e.g. guide, recorded or live webinar, office hours). <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers lead asynchronous lessons (in person or virtually) on the most important technology guidelines, particularly those around internet safety. <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher shares with students where to go to for ongoing technical support. <input type="checkbox"/> Share with families the learning platform and tools their students will use in school and at home. Ideally, this includes showing families how to monitor their students' use of those programs and how to support their use at home.
SCHOOL IN SESSION	<p>2</p> <p>All student can access digital tools and use them as needed for class</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Based on available guidance from district or school leaders, teachers determine the purpose and use of digital tools. Ideally, there is consistency for students around when and how they use these tools. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers lead asynchronous lessons (in person or virtually) on how to log into digital tools and use them for class. This may require follow-up lessons or reminders.
SCHOOL IN SESSION	<p>3</p> <p>School teams use the data from digital tools to help inform instructional decisions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School teams pull usage and achievement data from digital tools and platforms, such as an LMS. <input type="checkbox"/> Teams of teachers, such as PLCs, use data protocols to analyze the data, identify trends, and brainstorm solutions and next steps. <input type="checkbox"/> Administrators train teachers to use data protocols. <input type="checkbox"/> Principal shares and relevant trends with families and steps they might take to support students with distance learning.

Curriculum



Curriculum is most important during **stage three** because you need to establish student relationships and access to resources first. Once this has begun, teachers can focus on the instructional content that will best meet student needs.

STAGE	OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS	0 School teams learn about curriculum implementation last Spring and set a limited number of "tight" curriculum expectations with teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School teams gather data on the experience teachers and students had with the curriculum in the Spring.. Consider how the curriculum did or did not support distance learning in the spring, as well as gaps in understanding or implementation during in-person learning. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams ground curriculum expectations in the instructional vision, making new or clear connections for how it translates to distance learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional leaders design tight/loose expectations for curriculum--artifacts may include pacing guides; common assessments; articulation of priority standards; which tools, platforms, and materials will be used to maintain continuity of experience for students and teachers. At the start of the year, tight curriculum expectations should be limited to only the most important things. Teachers should experiment with the curriculum to find the best way to make it work in their distance learning classroom.
	1 School teams provide consistent, ongoing professional development on how to approach curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> School teams create a roadmap of professional learning to support teachers with accessing curriculum and ongoing support. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers align on expectations for assessment + progress monitoring. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams uncover existing technology support within the curriculum, either by reaching out to the publisher or conducting a walkthrough of materials. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers have supported opportunities to practice delivering instruction within the new environment, focusing on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Synchronous and asynchronous expectations to support learning. 2. Gathering data to inform adjustments for student-centered instruction.
	2 Teachers are building skills and comfort with curriculum Students and families understand how curriculum supports their learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Families participate in an overview session on materials and how they will support their learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers adapt curriculum into synchronous and asynchronous learning experiences to intentionally build engagement and understanding. <input type="checkbox"/> Teams frequently communicate within established structures to maintain alignment in pacing.
3 Teams are reflecting and iterating on instructional best practices in distance learning. educational vision for the school or district and enables teachers to innovate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional teams reflect on experiences and share emerging practices through structures like learning walks, PLCs, continuous improvement cycles. <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional leaders gather and analyze data to identify the greatest opportunities and areas of need. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers utilize the curricular resources that best meet those needs and opportunities. This may involve exploring new curricular options. A few tech-savvy teachers could test new curricular tools and report back their experience, before a new tool is widely shared. <input type="checkbox"/> Teams of teachers, such as PLCs, use data protocols to analyze the data, identify trends, and brainstorm solutions and next steps. 	

Instructional Models



Customizing instructional models is most important during **stage two** because baseline instructional models can be developed once teachers have a strong understanding of the needs of their students. Those needs should then inform the kind of instructional model teachers develop.

STAGE	OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS	0 Schools introduce a common instructional model that all teachers could use to facilitate distance learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Principal shares a simple instructional model that could be used by all teachers for distance learning. A simple synchronous model could be: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mini-lesson: A video lecture on or introduction of the material. 2. Collaboration: A collaborative protocol for students, such as using Zoom breakout rooms or an online message board. 3. Work + Check: A short work time (5-10 mins) followed by a check for understanding. 4. Flexible work time: Students can either continue their work independently, off Zoom, or stay on with the teacher if they need more support. 5. Exit slip: Students complete a quick problem to gauge their mastery of the material. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams set common expectations for teachers as it relates to their distance learning instructional practices, such as whether office hours are suggested or required. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams lead PD on digital tools and platforms, such as an LMS, that could be used with the instructional model. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers begin to plan/reformat lessons to be delivered in weeks 1-3 to align with design principles associated with their instructional model.
	1 School teams support teachers to successfully implement the common instructional model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Administrators use virtual learning walks to learn the successes and struggles teachers are having with the common instructional model. <input type="checkbox"/> School teams offer office hours for teachers who want additional support implementing the common instructional model. <input type="checkbox"/> Principals shares advice and best practices with teachers around the common instructional model. <input type="checkbox"/> Teams of teachers, such as PLCs, collaboratively plan using the common instructional model.
	2 Teachers customize the common instructional model to meet the needs of their students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Based on their knowledge of their students' social-emotional and academic needs, teachers begin to customize the common instructional model. <input type="checkbox"/> Principal ensures teachers know that customizing the common instructional model is a good thing and shares what "must remain" and what "must change". <input type="checkbox"/> School teams highlight the ways that teachers are customizing the instructional model to meet the needs of their students. <input type="checkbox"/> Teams of teachers, perhaps by grade-level or content-area, collaboratively share ways they are customizing the model. <input type="checkbox"/> Principal communicates to students and families that the distance learning experience is being improved, which is why things might change.
SCHOOL IN SESSION	3 Teachers continue to refine their student-centered distance learning practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers have the opportunity to virtually visit other classrooms to observe their peers, provide feedback, and deepen their own practice. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers take advantage of opportunities for cross-curricular and cross-grade level collaboration through synchronous team teaching. <input type="checkbox"/> Teachers collaborate with colleagues to experiment with differentiated roles for instructional models being implemented.

Student-Centered Distance Learning



STAGE	OUTCOMES	ACTIONS
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">BEFORE SCHOOL STARTS</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">0</p>	<p>Before School Begins, Create Clear Communication Structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Set up LMS (ex: Schoology, Canvas, Teams) to post assignments, instructions, contact information, and expectations in a user-friendly, organized and engaging way (i.e., organized by topic, theme or unit). <input type="checkbox"/> Send a welcome email to parents and families (be sure to provide translated versions as well) introducing yourself, your course and how to access and use your LMS of choice or mandated by district/school. <input type="checkbox"/> Offer a virtual Parent Academy/Meet + Greet session to introduce yourself synchronously and answer any questions parents may have (be sure to record and send out to all families). Offer follow-up sessions or individual parent-teacher meetings to ensure support is ongoing and responsive. <input type="checkbox"/> Provide regular, timely and consistent updates of learning objectives and outcomes via email or LMS. <input type="checkbox"/> Establish virtual office hours and expectations for email communications (i.e., responding to emails in a certain timeframe). <input type="checkbox"/> Secure an updated contact list of family information that is accessible and easily updated (i.e., Google slides, Microsoft Excel). <input type="checkbox"/> Send parent and student survey to gain as much information about student as possible (consider inquiring about technology and internet access, other responsibilities students may have, languages spoken at home, how many siblings student has, documented or undocumented learning needs or styles).
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">SCHOOL IN SESSION</p> <p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">1</p>	<p>Strengthen Relationships and Student Engagement Through Strong Routines and Structures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Invest the first week in getting to know your students, developing classroom norms and culture, establishing routines through engaging classroom experiences. (Some ideas to consider are: mini-presentations on something you learned in quarantine, student-to-student interviews, daily check-in questions, journey maps, goal-setting, show + tell from your workspace). <input type="checkbox"/> Work with your students on developing executive functioning skills (i.e., making schedules, carving out consistent workspaces, engaging in self-care). <input type="checkbox"/> Empower your students with the strategies and resources to get help and troubleshoot when needed. This may require follow-up lessons or reminders. <input type="checkbox"/> Lead synchronous sessions on digital citizenship. This may require follow-up lessons or reminders. <input type="checkbox"/> Publish weekly "Student Spotlight" pieces to celebrate student accomplishments and achievements on your LMS. <input type="checkbox"/> Secure an updated and accurate list of which students have technology and access issues and brainstorm alternative resources (i.e., use of phones) and follow-up with appropriate personnel in your school to address these needs.
	<p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">2</p>	<p>Use High-Leverage Instructional Strategies</p>
<p style="font-size: 2em; text-align: center;">3</p>	<p>Double Down on High-Quality Instruction</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Design personalized learning experiences for your students, using the curricular resources that best meet the needs of your students. <input type="checkbox"/> Leverage virtual learning space to develop presentation and technology skills. <input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate to accelerate. Work with your colleagues specialize in topics/modules and and to create interdisciplinary projects. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan units thematically. <input type="checkbox"/> Design lessons with purposeful flow between synchronous and asynchronous experiences <input type="checkbox"/> Seek out digital tools to maximize engagement (i.e., Jamboard, discussion feature on Schoology, Mural). <input type="checkbox"/> Incorporate reflective writing, journaling, guided note-taking to inform instruction and engage students. <input type="checkbox"/> Utilize discussion boards, assignment submission, post/share/ respond to audio, video, images, media. <input type="checkbox"/> Include flexible assessment modes: YouTube videos, Vlogs.