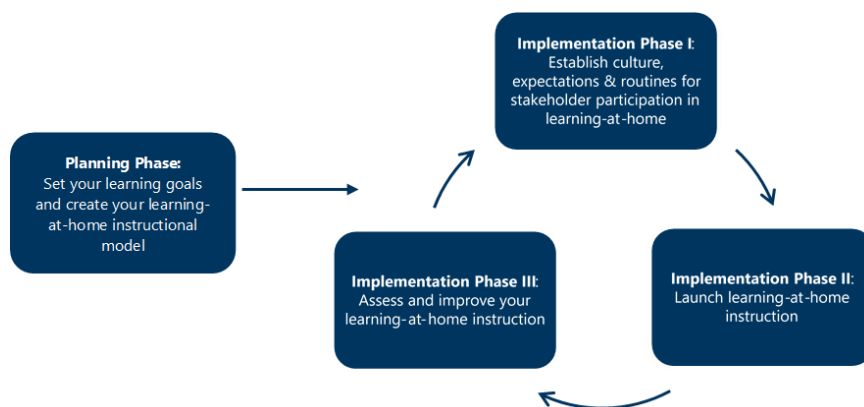


Shifting to At-Home Learning

TNTP Resources to Support Systems, March 2020

Over the past few weeks, school systems across the country have faced an unprecedented challenge: pivoting from a regular school year to at-home learning with only a few days to prepare. While some systems have begun implementing comprehensive home learning plans, many are still struggling to find the next step beyond offering packets of worksheets and links to online resources—sometimes because of legal concerns around serving students equitably, but more often because of logistical challenges.

Those challenges are very real, but we believe they are surmountable. Below, we offer a roadmap that can help school systems provide high-quality learning at home during extended school closures. We start with five guiding principles, and then detail a four-phase process, from planning through assessing and improving at-home instruction. We also outline the role different stakeholders should play in each phase, including families, teachers, school leaders, and district leaders. We hope this guide will be useful for systems regardless of how much progress they’ve made on at-home learning to date—from those who are still planning to those who are well into implementation.



Guiding Principles

Before considering logistics or tactics, school systems should set clear, achievable goals for the period while schools are closed. We propose rooting those goals in five principles:

- **Try to use what you’ve already been using.** Teachers and students will have the most success with materials they’re familiar with. If you can leverage your existing resources at home—especially if you’re confident in their quality—you should.
- **Keep it clear and simple.** Don’t overwhelm your staff and families with too many resources. Plan for about 2.5-4.5 hours of instruction per day, depending on age, and give families specific advice about when and how to use the materials you recommend. When it comes to delivering virtual instruction, don’t underestimate the power of the simplest solutions—for example, teacher-to-student phone calls.
- **Be honest about the capacity and needs of your staff.** Just like students and families, school-based and central office staff are dealing with a lot right now. Any successful plan needs to account for that reality while also focusing on student learning.
- **Do the best you can right now, while planning to meet the needs of every student.** As you build your plan, it’s critical to consider the needs of all students, including English Language Learners and students with IEPs. You’ll also need to consider issues like training, dissemination of materials, and access to technology, to ensure that your plan can work for all families. But don’t be afraid to roll out what you can do well right now while you continue to refine your plan (an approach the [U.S. Department of Education encourages](#), too).
- **Reading is everything.** If nothing else, make sure students have access to high-quality texts (fiction and nonfiction), and stress that reading should happen every day.

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Planning Phase (1-2 weeks): Set learning goals and create at-home instructional model

During this phase, you'll focus on building a diverse team to make foundational decisions about your at-home learning strategy, focusing on simplicity, staying connected to your school and district community, rigorous learning, and equitable access for all students. In this phase, you'll ideally create a leadership team composed of stakeholders from across your district, ensuring that you have representation from your academics team, ELL and special education team, technology team, legal team, and at least one parent and student. The goal of having such diverse representation is to proactively address as many barriers to at-home instruction as possible from the onset. The work in this phase is owned primarily by the leadership team and should be clearly communicated to school leaders, teachers, and families as you move into implementation.

There are a several guiding questions that your leadership team should ask as you create your at-home learning plan:

- What are your learning goals for students? Do you want them to maintain their current levels of learning or learn new content? Is there another goal driving your plan?
- How will you ensure that all your students have access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and teachers with high expectations (the [four key resources from *The Opportunity Myth*](#))?
- What are your culture/connectedness goals for students? How will you keep your students feeling safe and connected to their school communities?
- What capacity from your teachers, counselors, deans, and school leaders can you use right now? Do you have enough funding to pay them to work now and then to work additionally in the summer, should you need to do that?
 - *Note that in some scenarios, teachers and school leaders are nine-month or ten-month employees. You'll need to determine what you can ask from your teachers now, given what you might need to ask of them this summer if school goes back into session.*

- What learning is coming up in your core classes, and what resources do you have to support that learning? Do those resources provide students access to grade-appropriate assignments? How will you support students with IEPs and English Language Learners to access that content?
- What access to technology, including devices and the internet, do your students have? (If you aren't sure, administer a survey via text message or email to your families quickly.)

The answers to these questions will likely determine the choices you make about your at-home instructional model, which could vary grade-band to grade-band in your school or district. It is likely that your instructional model will be digital, paper/pencil, or hybrid. Depending on the choices you've made about which model you'll employ, you'll want to make sure to address a few core questions—some specific to particular models, and some universal:

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|--------------------------|---|
| Digital | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you ensure that all students have devices and access to the internet? • For how many hours per day will students need access to their devices? • How will you account for households with multiple school-aged children and only one device? • How will you ensure that your teachers have access to high-quality internet that allows them to stream content as needed? • What professional learning will your teachers and school leaders need to support digital instruction? |
| Paper/
Pencil | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you ensure that all students have access to the packets you'll provide and any additional resources (like textbooks) they'll need? • What frequency do you need to distribute these materials? |

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| Hybrid | <p>In addition to answering both the "digital" and "paper/pencil" questions, ask yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will families select the approach they are using, or are you telling them (based on the age of their student, their access to devices, or something else) which approach they should take? |
|---------------|---|

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| All
Models | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you ensure that students and families feel connected to their school community? • How will you help families understand what work is required (if any) and what work is optional or for student enrichment? • What expectations will you set for teachers related to the frequency and duration of touch points they'll have with individual students and families? How will you track those touchpoints? • What expectation are you setting for teachers, students, and families about students receiving feedback on their work? • How will you expect students to turn in work, if at all? If students are turning in work, how are you grading it? • How will you provide access to special education services? • How will you provide access to ELL services? • How will you ensure that all your students have access to books, either digital or paper? |
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Implementation Phase I (1-2 weeks): Establish culture, expectations, and routines for stakeholder participation in at-home learning

During this phase, you'll focus on ensuring that every stakeholder group feels safe and secure, knows the role they're playing, and has the resources and training they need to engage in at-home learning.

District Staff

Guiding Questions

- How will we communicate the choices we've made and expectations we've set to students, families, and caretakers?
- How will we distribute and collect (if applicable) the resources our students need to engage in at-home learning?

- How will we train our students, teachers, counselors, deans, and school leaders to engage in at-home learning?

Key Messages

- Our priority is to ensure that our students have what they need, including food, support for learning, and overall well-being.
- We also want to make sure every stakeholder knows their next steps to prepare for at-home learning. We are going to roll out a plan that enables us to serve all our students—and will provide families, caretakers, and students the support they need to be successful.

Communications

- Communicate the goals for at-home learning to different stakeholder groups.
- Communicate how the central staff will be shifting their work to support at-home learning in the coming weeks and months.
- Communicate to school leaders, teachers, families, and students what the expectations and options are for at-home learning (instruction, assessment, attendance).
- Ensure that these communications include directions for school leaders and teachers regarding what they should communicate with families and students.

Actions

- Ensure your students' basic needs are met.
- Establish a two-way communications protocol for students and teachers that meets your legal and policy obligations related to one-on-one contact between students and teachers.
- Provide professional learning around your expectations, selected technological tools, and resources.
- Establish weekly check-ins with each of your school leaders.
- Reflect on your guiding principles to support at-home learning and identify priorities for improvement.

Resources

- Provide curricular resources (online and/or printed) to your schools.
- Provide suggested instructional schedules to your schools.
- Provide your schools with access to tech platforms for instruction.
- Provide your schools with access to tech platforms for communication and collaboration.
- Provide daily/weekly schedule suggestions for school leaders, teachers, and students at each grade level in your district.
- Provide training materials that your teachers and students can use to acclimate to any new technological resources they'll be using.

School Leadership

Guiding Questions

- How will we communicate the choices we've made and expectations we've set to students, families, and caretakers?
- How will we distribute and collect (if applicable) the resources our students need to engage in at-home learning?
- How will we train our students, teachers, counselors, deans and school leaders to engage in at-home learning?

Key Messages

- Our priority is to ensure that our students have what they need, including food, support for learning, and overall well-being.
- We also want to make sure every stakeholder knows their next steps to prepare for at-home learning. We are going to roll out a plan that enables us to serve all our students—and will provide families, caretakers, and students the support they need to be successful.

Communications

- Communicate expectations and options to your teachers about what at-home learning will look like in your district and school.
- Communicate directly to families and caregivers about your overall commitments and priorities during this time of uncertainty.

Actions

- Ensure your students' basic needs are met.
- Attend professional learning.
- Lead professional learning as requested by your district.
- Ensure each student in your school has at least one designated staff member who will maintain a close relationship with them.
- Establish school-wide goals (i.e., student outcomes) for remote learning aligned with district's remote learning objectives.
- Determine how you'll structure teacher assignments during this time. You could have multiple teachers delivering virtual instruction, or you could choose to have one teacher deliver and/or record instruction, then other teachers on hand to support students as they need it.
- Set up weekly check-ins with all of your teachers.
- Set up a weekly virtual staff meeting where your teachers experience professional learning and communication from the school community.
- Ensure your students with IEPs and English Language Learners are set up to provide the required services.
- Reflect on your guiding principles to support at-home learning and identify priorities for improvement.

Resources

- Provide curricular resources (online and/or printed) to teachers.
- Provide suggestions for weekly schedules, lesson plans, and digital and printed resources.
- Provide supplemental resources, like extension activities or intervention.
- Provide a reading list and ways to access books virtually, to students.
- Suggest non-academic activities for students in your classes.

Teachers

Guiding Questions

- How will we communicate the choices we've made and expectations we've set to students, families, and caretakers?
- How will we distribute and collect (if applicable) the resources our students need to engage in at-home learning?
- How will we train our students, teachers, counselors, deans and school leaders to engage in at-home learning?

Key Messages

- Our priority is to ensure that our students have what they need, including food, support for learning and overall well-being.
- We also want to make sure every stakeholder knows their next steps to prepare for at-home learning. We are going to roll out a plan that enables us to serve all our students—and will provide families, caretakers, and students the support they need to be successful.

Communications

- Have at least one phone or video touch point with each of your students.
- Share expectations for teacher/student communication with your classes and their families and caregivers.

Actions

- Ensure your students' basic needs are met.
- Attend professional learning.
- Set up weekly check-ins with all of your students.
- If you are using a new tech platform, do a practice run with your students.

- Establish class goals (i.e., student outcomes) for remote learning aligned with school-wide goals for remote learning.
- Prepare your lessons for the next few weeks.
- Identify any social and emotional needs your students seem to have in one-on-one check-ins.
- Provide required services to students with IEPs and English Language Learners.
- Reflect on your guiding principles to support at-home learning and identify priorities for improvement.

Resources

- Provide supplemental resources, like extension activities or intervention.
- Provide a reading list to students.
- Suggest non-academic activities for students in your classes.

Families & Caretakers

Communications

- Share any needs your student has (learning, technological, emotional) with your teachers or school leaders.
- Set up a weekly check-in with your student and their teachers.
- Talk to your student about what they can expect when at-home learning begins.

Actions

- Establish a schedule with your student, using the guidance from your districts.
- Respond to your student's teacher, setting up a weekly check-in.

Students

Communications

- Share any needs you have with your teachers.

Actions

- Have a weekly check-in with your teacher.
- Attend the technology "practice run" with each of your classes.
- Read! While you're waiting for the district to get learning-from-home expectations set, make sure you are reading.

Implementation Phase II (weeks 3-4): Launch at-home instruction

During this phase, you'll work to ensure that every stakeholder can successfully engage in at-home instruction.

District Staff

Guiding Questions

- How will we ensure that every student has access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations?
- What early indicators can we gather about what is working and not working, for students, families, caretakers, and school-based staff?

Key Messages

- Our priority is to ensure that our students have what they need, including food and support for learning.
- We want your feedback on how at-home learning is going as we work out the kinks in this new approach to learning.

Communications

- Plan ongoing and regular communication with each group of stakeholders.
- During each week of at-home learning, survey students, families, teachers, and school leaders on how at-home learning is going. During your ongoing weekly communication, share back what you're hearing from the surveys.

- Communicate how school leaders should provide feedback to teachers.

Actions

- Provide professional learning for your school leaders around observing at-home learning and delivering effective virtual feedback.
- Provide updated guidance for key central staff responsibilities during this time period.
- Reflect on district's Remote Learning Objectives and relevant progress and/or challenges—and adjust, based on your reflections.
- Reflect on your guiding principles for at-home learning and identify priorities for improvement.

Resources

- Provide any assessments teachers should use to monitor student progress.
- Provide any templates that school leaders should use to schedule their observations or provide feedback to teachers.

School Leadership

Guiding Questions

- How will we ensure that every student has access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations?
- What early indicators can we gather about what is working, and not working, for students, families, caretakers, and school-based staff?

Key Messages

- Our priority is to ensure that our students have what they need, including food and support for learning.
- We want your feedback on how at-home learning is going as we work out the kinks in this new approach to learning.

Communications

- Communicate expectations to your teachers about how you'll observe their instruction and provide feedback.
- Communicate expectations and strategy for lesson planning, posting of lesson materials, etc.

Actions

- Attend professional learning for school leaders.
- Set up observations for at-home learning, if possible.
- Plan your staff meeting.
- Reflect on school-wide goals and relevant progress and/or challenges—and adjust, based on your reflections.
- Reflect on your guiding principles for at-home learning and identify priorities for improvement.
- Reflect on how you're deploying your teachers. Are all students receiving the supports they need, and are any teachers duplicating each other's work?

Resources

- Provide supplementary resources to teachers who might need additional support.

Teachers

Guiding Questions

- How will we ensure that every student has access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations?
- What early indicators can we gather about what is working, and not working, for students, families, caretakers, and school-based staff?

Key Messages

- Our priority is to ensure that our students have what they need, including food and support for learning.

- We want your feedback on how at-home learning is going as we work out the kinks in this new approach to learning.

Communications

- Have at least one phone or video touch point with each of your students.
- Share grade-appropriate assignments and targeted supports with your students.

Actions

- Plan your instruction.
- Coordinate with special education teachers or ELL teachers are targeted, differentiated supports.
- Teach your classes.
- Provide your students feedback on the work they complete.
- Have weekly check-ins with your assigned students.
- Reflect on class goals and relevant progress and/or challenges—and adjust, based on your reflections.
- Reflect on your guiding principles for at-home learning and identify priorities for improvement.

Resources

- Provide additional scaffolds and supports to individual students in your class who are struggling.

Families & Caretakers

Communications

- Share any new needs your student has with your teachers or school leaders.
- Communicate feedback about how learning-from-home is going.

Actions

- Ensure that your student attends their classes and completes their assigned work.

Students

Communications

- Share any needs you have with your teachers.
- Communicate feedback about how learning-from-home is going.

Actions

- Have a weekly check-in with your teacher.
- Attend your classes and complete your assigned work.
- Read! Even though at-home learning has started, make sure you are reading.

Implementation Phase III (weeks 5+): Assess and improve at-home instruction

During this phase, you'll focus on improving at-home instruction so that every student can meet the goals you've set for the period while schools are closed.

District Staff

Guiding Questions

- How will we ensure that all our students have access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations?
- When we see gaps in equitable access to the resources, how will we respond?

Key Messages

- Our priority is to ensure that our students have what they need, including food and support for learning.
- We want to ensure that every single student is having a strong at-home learning experience.

Communications

- Continue ongoing and regular communication with all stakeholders.
- Continue weekly surveys of students, families, teachers, and school leaders on how at-home learning is going. During your ongoing weekly communication, share back what you're learning the surveys.

Actions

- Reflect on equity gaps you're seeing in the quality of students' experiences.
- Provide professional learning for your school leaders around gaps you're seeing in student experiences.
- Reflect on your guiding principles for at-home learning and identify priorities for improvement.

Resources

- Provide resources to support teachers and leaders in addressing the equity gaps you see.

School Leadership

Guiding Questions

- How will we ensure that all our students have access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations?
- When we see gaps in equitable access to the resources, how will we respond?

Key Messages

- Our priority is to ensure that our students have what they need, including food and support for learning.
- We want to ensure that every single student is having a strong at-home learning experience.

Communications

- Communicate trends you're seeing with your individual teachers—what's going well, and what still needs to improve?

Actions

- Reflect on equity gaps you're seeing in the quality of students' experiences.
- Attend professional learning for school leaders.
- Provide professional learning for your teachers around gaps you're seeing in student experiences (and based on needs teachers have shared).
- Plan your staff meeting.
- Reflect on your guiding principles for at-home learning and identify priorities for improvement.
- Reflect on how you're deploying your teachers. Are all students receiving the supports they need, and are any teachers duplicating each other's work?

Resources

- Provide supplementary resources to teachers who might need additional support.

Teachers

Guiding Questions

- How will we ensure that all our students have access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, deep engagement, and high expectations?
- When we see gaps in equitable access to the resources, how will we respond?

Key Messages

- Our priority is to ensure that our students have what they need, including food and support for learning.

- We want to ensure that every single student is having a strong at-home learning experience.

Communications

- Have at least one phone or video touch point with each of your students.
- Tell your school and district leaders what professional learning you need.

Actions

- Plan your instruction.
- Teach your classes.
- Provide your students with feedback on the work they complete.
- Reflect on equity gaps you're seeing in the quality of your students' experiences.
- Have weekly check-ins with your students.
- Attend professional learning.
- Reflect on your guiding principles for at-home learning and identify priorities for improvement.

Resources

- Provide additional scaffolds and supports to individual students in your class who are struggling.

Families & Caretakers

Communications

- Share any new needs your student has with your teachers or school leaders.
- Communicate feedback about how at-home learning is going.

Actions

- Ensure that your student attends their classes and completes their assigned work.

Students

Communications

- Share any needs you have with your teachers.
- Communicate feedback about how at-home learning is going.

Actions

- Have a weekly check-in with your teacher.
- Attend your classes and complete your assigned work.
- Read! Even though at-home learning has started, make sure you are reading.