NCDPI Reopening Schools

GUIDANCE FOCUS:
REMOTE INSTRUCTION PLANS

Remote Instruction Plans in Response to COVID-19 Crisis
SPLN-006
Adopted by the State Board of Education, May 21, 2020

Each public school unit (PSU) shall develop a Remote Instruction Plan (RI Plan) for the 2020-2021 school year and shall submit its Plan to the State Board no later than July 20, 2020 based on Session Law 2020-30, Senate Bill 704.

The RI Plans will provide a framework for delivering quality remote instruction to all students within the public school unit during the 2020-21 school year. The RI Plans will also provide a foundation for blended learning with flexibility and quality to respond to future COVID-19 disruptions.

Remote Learning Definition:
In NC K-12 public schools, remote learning is defined as learning that takes place outside of the traditional school setting using various media and formats, such as but not limited to: video conference, telephone conference, print material, online material, or Learning Management Systems (LMS).

FURTHER NCDPI GUIDANCE BELOW:
The Remote Instruction Plan shall include responses for each of the 15 following components. NCDPI has provided guidance for each component on the following pages to support each PSU's development of its remote instruction plan.

REMINDER:
Technical Assistance Tuesdays are available for further professional development.
See NCDPI Remote Learning Information and Resources website for more information

Each PSU must submit the Remote Instruction Plan to NCDPI by July 20, 2020 through the submission directions provided to each RI Plan contact.

COMPONENT 1:
Consulting with teachers, administrators and instructional support staff, parents, students, community partners, and other stakeholders in developing the Plan and effectively communicating the Plan to all involved parties.

GUIDANCE:
Identify Stakeholders
Consulting a wide variety of stakeholders is critical for the development and effective communication of quality remote instruction plans. An important first step towards meaningful engagement is to identify your stakeholder groups. Do stakeholder groups ensure every voice represented? If yes, great! If not, this is a great opportunity to expand your engagement efforts.

Examine Engagement Structures
Once you know you have identified all of the right groups, the next step is ensuring mechanisms are in place to *share and receive information*. Critically review the systems and structures in place to interact with these various stakeholder groups. For example, do you have an active district-level advisory board? School-based PTA/PTOs? Teacher and student advisory councils? Community councils? Grandparents/retirees? How would these groups typically share and receive information from your district/school? Do they understand these systems? Are the details of how and when these groups convene readily available? If you wanted to enlist feedback from all parents in your district/school, what survey tool would you use? How would you distribute this information?

Review Internal Communication Processes & Activate Ambassadors
It is important to remember that every employee in your district/school is an ambassador. All should be empowered to respond to questions, correct misinformation, and direct people to the resources they seek. In order to be good ambassadors, they must have access to pertinent information. Effective Internal communication is the foundation of healthy organizations. If it is important for stakeholders to know and understand, it is important for all staff to know and understand it FIRST. It is imperative that all staff understand the remote instruction plan specifics and the tools to be used to communicate these plans. What systems of internal communication does your system currently employ? Email is a great starting point; however, it must be a communicated expectation that staff read information from the district/school. It is also important to communicate with staff that they are ambassadors and the importance of this role in building public trust.

Identify Key Communicators
Key Communicators are those external stakeholders who have access to accurate information about what is happening in your district/schools. These individuals are often trusted sources of information who have access to broad audiences. Key communicators should be recruited as such and made fully aware of important information.

Communicate HOW You Communicate

Seek input from your advisors about the communications strategies they prefer. What do existing metrics about your engagement efforts tell you about where people are most likely to go for information (ex: website, social media, all-call system, text, etc.). It is absolutely critical that you routinely communicate your communications plan. Helping your stakeholders know how, when, and where to find information reduces frustration and builds confidence. Maintain their confidence by keeping content fresh and updated. Develop a process and identify specific individuals responsible for reviewing and updating website and social media content. Reviewing content and providing feedback is a great task for a trusted key communicator. Consult with your district PIO or Communications Coordinator to explore other avenues to communicate to your stakeholder groups.

Seek & Apply Feedback
Have you sought feedback on how remote learning went this Spring? This will help to continue what works and tweak or abandon what didn't. When seeking feedback, keep it simple. You may find it useful to use the same questions with each stakeholder group for easy cross-reference. Focus groups, in person or virtual, are also good strategies to gather feedback. As a rule, it is always helpful to define how feedback will be utilized to avoid unnecessary conflict. If you are seeking feedback in an advisory capacity rather than for a democratic process, state that. Once you have gathered feedback, it is important to acknowledge what was received and what, if any action will result.

Note:
The most important thing to remember is that communication is only deemed effective when information is delivered, received, and as a result, all stakeholders have a common understanding.

COMPONENT 2:
Training for teachers and staff on the effective use of the remote instruction resources utilized by the public school unit and the process for student submission of completed work; and identifying any learning management system, online instructional resource, or an offline instructional resources that will be made available to all students in a grade-level across the public school unit.

GUIDANCE:
Professional learning that builds educators' capacities to implement quality remote instruction is necessary for teachers and staff. Personalized, anytime, anywhere training facilitated by formal and informal approaches will support educators as they deliver quality instruction. Professional learning may focus on educators' immediate learning needs such as a PSU's remote instruction resources, the process for submission of student work, online pedagogy, delivery methods, etc. Clear communication of these opportunities will assist with staff engagement in professional learning. In addition, identify any learning management system, online instructional resource, or offline instructional resource that will be made available to all students in a grade-level across the PSU. Consider providing opportunities for educators to collaborate and share grade-level resources as they navigate and create lessons to engage students.

Consider choosing the least number of tools possible and make them consistent across classes/schools to lessen the burden of learning and navigating multiple technologies on all families. It is important to keep platforms and technology tools consistent and standardized as much as possible. Create and communicate a process for training and supporting teachers, families, and students in the use of the virtual tools and platforms that have been selected.

Guiding Questions:
- How will your PSU determine the professional learning needs of your teachers and staff regarding the effective use of the remote instruction PSU resources?
- What formal professional learning opportunities and informal support will be available to meet the needs of your teachers and staff regarding effective use of the remote instruction PSU resources?
- How will you ensure that your PSU's teachers and staff are aware of relevant professional learning opportunities?
- What are your PSU's expectations regarding teachers and staff connecting with students through remote instruction resources?
- What process will be used in your PSU for submission of student work?
- What learning management system, online instructional resource, or offline instructional resource will be available to all students in a grade-level across the PSU?
- How will your PSU effectively communicate this with stakeholders?
- How are you simplifying the number of technology tools teachers, students and families need to learn?
- What processes do you have in place to create consistency of technology platforms and tools being used in a grade level or school?

Resources:
Remote Learning 101
NCDPI DTL: Featured Remote Learning Resources from NC PSUs
Quality Matters: Emergency Remote Instruction Checklist
NCCat Instructure Catalog
Google for Education - Professional Development Handbook
- Fundamentals Training
- Advanced Training
- Digital Citizenship and Safety Training
- Support English Language Learners Course
- Tools for Diverse Learners Training
- Chromebook Training
- Distance Learning For Educators

COMPONENT 3:

Defining and clearly communicating staff roles and expectations for remote instruction days, including teacher workdays, teacher accessibility, and noncertified staff workdays and responsibilities. The Plan may include variances for staff expectations when remote instruction days are also used as teacher workdays.

GUIDANCE:

To be prepared to implement remote instructional days in the 2020-2021 academic year, public school units are required to have a clear instructional plan and expectations for employees on how schools will implement the remote learning day. Public school units (PSUs) are encouraged to consider all staff, both certified and classified, and how their roles and responsibilities will support students' educational, emotional, health, and safety needs. PSUs may want to develop standardized expectations on the length of the workday on remote learning days. PSUs also have the flexibility to temporarily reassign roles and responsibilities for staff during the remote instructional days.

Component of Plan	Considerations
Length of Instructional Day	● PSUs have flexibility in defining the workday. ● PSUs are encouraged to define clearly the length of the workday for staff on a remote learning day. ● The remote instructional day may be a combination of direct interaction with students, asynchronous engagement, and/or preparation. ● Consider allowing flexibility for staff to complete required workday hours outside of conventional school scheduling.
Teacher Work Day	● Schedule remote instructional days as teacher workdays. Teachers may use accumulated annual leave on these days if they have developed remote instructional resources for the day. ● Consider developing clear guidelines regarding what constitutes "adequate instructional resources" and the required amount of notice to use annual leave on these days. ● Consider requiring points of contact for students whose teachers will be on leave during remote instructional days.
Administrators	In addition to school-based responsibilities, consider how administrators can support remote learning in their schools by: ● attending synchronous meetings of classrooms; ● reviewing assignments and student work products from those assignments; ● offering support for improved remote learning opportunities; ● monitoring staff expectations.

Instructional Support Personnel (e.g., Guidance Counselors, Instructional Coaches, School Social Workers, Related Service Providers, Program specialists, etc)	● Develop opportunities for Instructional Support Personnel to sustain the school's instructional program as articulated by leadership. ● Consider how these employees will support the social-emotional needs of students and families in a virtual environment. ● Consider how these employees will adapt their in-person programming to the offsite programming.

Teachers	● Provide clear expectations for teachers on the components of the remote instructional day, such as:
	    ○ direct interaction with students,
	    ○ Providing feedback to students,
	    ○ check-in with students,
	    ○ asynchronous engagement,
	    ○ PLCs, and/or
	    ○ instructional preparation.
	● Consider following regular school schedules to avoid meeting conflicts for staff and students.
	● Develop roles and responsibilities that support students' educational, emotional, health, and safety needs for **all instructional staff.**

Classified Staff (e.g., custodians, child nutrition, Teacher Assistants, etc.)	● Determine which classified staff must report to work (mandatory) and which staff members may work from a remote location (non-mandatory). ● Regardless of location, develop assignments for remote staff that support the students' educational, emotional, health, and safety needs or the operational needs of the school. ● Should the remote instructional day be due to health concerns, the health status (i.e., "high-risk" designation) of staff members may be considered in the determination of mandatory/non-mandatory.

EXAMPLES:
The following examples are illustrative and should not be considered the requirements of any PSU's plan.

Length of Instructional Day: School staff are expected to be at work or online from 9-4 on remote instructional days. Schools, with central office approval, may shift or distribute the remote instructional day in ways that best support their students and staff while maintaining the required number of total hours. Schools shall deliver, at a minimum, 2 hours of direct interaction with students and 2 hours of asynchronous engagement as part of the instructional day.

Teacher Work Day: Teachers who wish to use annual leave on a remote instructional day (designated as a teacher workday) must submit their instructional resources for approval one week before the scheduled remote instructional day. The content must be sufficient to cover the time designated for direct interaction and asynchronous engagement as prescribed by the central office. Teachers are responsible for designating a point of contact for their students while they are on annual leave to assist students who have questions or concerns.

Administrators: On remote instructional days, school administrators must create a plan that will cover three main duties for the remote instructional day. 1) Logistics of remote learning for students - are there any unexpected teacher absences, hardware or software issues, etc., 2) Management of the physical building - oversee any operations that may be taking place in the school building while students are learning remotely, and 3) Monitoring instruction - visiting the school's virtual learning spaces and ensuring that remote learning plans are being implemented with fidelity and rigor. Administrators should provide support, encouragement, and constructive feedback on the virtual environments he/she observes. 4) Administrators will monitor to ensure teacher expectations are being met during remote instruction days.

Instructional Support Personnel: Guidance counselors may use the virtual environment to convene groups of students as they would in a face-to-face setting. School social workers can compile attendance data from the remote instructional day to assess how absent students could be supported in attending future remote instructional days. Instructional coaches may work with administrators on providing support to teachers in the virtual learning environment with a focus on how teachers can build on the strengths of the current day to improve future remote learning sessions. Technology Specialists should create a master schedule of all remote learning activities on the remote learning day. These master plans should be available to all staff to ensure coverage of all remote learning sessions in the event of an unexpected absence or to facilitate monitoring by the administrative/coaching staff. Tech specialists could also be on call to all staff engaged in remote learning to troubleshoot any technology issues that arise. Related Service providers determine the provision of appropriate virtual service delivery, based on students' needs and accessibility. AIG program specialists provide direct services online and offline, check-in weekly with students or groups of students to support social/emotional needs, and provide instructional feedback for teachers to ensure DEPs are met during remote instructional days.

Teachers: All instructional staff should have a role in the remote instructional day. Schools should consider whether students will receive instruction in non-core subjects during the course of the remote learning day. If non-core instruction is not provided, a school should consider how non-core teachers will assist with the remote instructional day. Schools may consider having "specials" teachers facilitate small group break-out sessions conducting a "reading circle" with groups of students, providing brief transition breaks (e.g., short exercises to get students moving, a brief discussion about a famous work of art or artist, learning some useful phrases in a foreign language, etc.), or other educational opportunities.

Classified Staff: Schools must have a plan for ensuring meaningful work for classified staff during the remote instructional day. Schools should consider using remote instructional days for addressing activities that may be difficult to complete when students are in session (e.g., maintenance, landscaping, cleaning, etc). If classified staff is permitted to work remotely, those staff members should be given duties that are comparable (in time) to those who are working on-site. The remote staff could develop work schedules, assist with record keeping, create supply orders, etc. Schools should have a plan to identify classified staff who will be designated "mandatory" and "non-mandatory" in the event of a public health crisis. These plans should include how employees' relative health risk is factored into the designation process. Schools should also consider how a modified workday on remote instructional days could impact classified staff's compensation and provide strategies for mitigating loss of wages for these employees.

COMPONENT 4:

Surveying student and teacher home connectivity and providing for remote instruction that is appropriate for teachers and students with limited connectivity capability, including the opportunity for students to download remote learning materials in advance when practicable.

GUIDANCE:

Connectivity is critical to instructional success for students and teachers. Lack of broadband access throughout the state is a major challenge to effective remote instruction. Each PSU will need to survey students and staff to determine the availability of effective Internet access.

Often, students do not know how to evaluate if they have reliable, effective Internet access as many may not have access at home or have connectivity that supports remote instruction online tools. Surveying students and teachers at regular intervals will provide current data to determine how you will account for all students' access to online and/or equitable offline instructional materials.

PowerSchool fields may be utilized to record and report connectivity data. All options for accessing remote learning materials should be widely communicated with all stakeholders in multiple formats and mediums for maximum awareness.

Guiding Questions:
- How has your PSU determined students' and teachers' home connectivity capabilities?
- What barriers to access exist in your PSU?
- How will your district ensure equitable access to instruction and learning materials for students with limited connectivity capability?
- What modifications or non-digital opportunities will be available for teachers and students with limited connectivity capability?
- How will your PSU effectively communicate this with stakeholders?

Resources:

NCDPI DTL Home Access Survey (Google Form - link makes a copy)
CoSN Sample Out-of-School Connectivity Survey

COMPONENT 5:
Engaging with community partners on services that parents and students can utilize on remote instruction days, including community partners willing to provide free broadband access or connectivity for remote instruction and community partners with child care options, and communicating remote instruction schedules with those partners.

<u>GUIDANCE:</u>
It is important to remember your plan is only effective through a collaborative effort by all community stakeholders. Reviewing, practicing, and updating the plan on a regular basis is essential to ensuring the highest level of success when making a swift shift from face to face to remote learning. Each community has unique local needs as well as varying resources to support those needs. In anticipation of short- and/or long-term disruptions to on-site instruction as a result of this global pandemic, the following questions should be considered:

- How can you build on community strengths and resources and existing relationships to help students and families meet their basic needs during this time (e.g., food, clothing, housing, child supervision, medical services, medication, etc.)?
- How can you work with the community to provide families access to essential resources for distance learning (e.g., technology, internet access, educational supplies)?
- Who at your school/district could be designated to lead the coordination of school-community partnerships?
- Is there a school-community partnership already established that can be mobilized to concentrate on the needs of remote learning?
- How can you establish two-way, ongoing communication to build trust and transparency with community partners?
- What funding sources are available to make sure devices and hotspots are available for all students?
- How will you communicate information about these established community partnerships, the availability of resources, and how to access these with families and the community, including families who may be difficult to contact through traditional means?

 Partnership Examples:
- Developing alternative means of instructional delivery including TV programs, if a partnership with television stations is feasible, recorded or streaming live channel of YouTube, podcasts, phones/texting, radio broadcasts, etc.
- Explore partnerships with the private and government sectors and business partners in securing the resources to provide devices and connectivity. Consider local businesses, community colleges or [local Smart Start/Partnership for Children](#) to set up guest wifi access that does not require a password.
- Building partnerships between schools and higher education institutions to augment the capacity of districts and school systems to provide adequate professional development to teachers and to families. Perhaps consider learning opportunities for families on how they might support children's learning in a remote or blended learning environment.

- Building an alliance with a broad audience including community agencies (like the YMCA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America, **local Smart Start/Partnership for Children**, etc), local government, Chamber of Commerce, health-related groups (including hospitals/clinics), faith-based organizations, and institutions of higher education.
- Involving all levels of stakeholders including teachers, families, internet service providers, local businesses and community centers with available connectivity, food banks, and other social services entities.
- Developing a plan to use school facilities and/or public libraries as community hubs/service centers. Planning should include building an integrated service center to support families and communities while supporting high-quality instruction (i.e. tutoring, parking lot wifi zones, other community partners that may have accessible sites).

Resources:

COVID-19 INTERNET SERVICE OFFERINGS
North Carolina Department of Information Technology has compiled a list of new and existing free or affordable service offerings from vendors across the state.
https://www.ncbroadband.gov/covid19broadband/

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Child Care Resources
https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/guidance#child-care

COMPONENT 6:

Developing effective design and delivery of remote instruction lessons within professional learning communities.

GUIDANCE:

Effective design and delivery of remote instruction lessons within professional learning communities should be reflective of the seven instructional design principles:

1. Instructional Time
2. Connection to Families & Students
3. Student Engagement Aligned to Standards
4. Equity, Choice, & Flexibility
5. Feedback on Student Work
6. Collaboration among Students
7. Social & Emotional Learning

The design principles are overarching and applicable to various types of remote learning environments and contexts. The principles should be applied with the understanding that students and teachers approach remote learning with varying access to devices and the Internet. The design principles operate in conjunction with one another and can best be understood through the graphic shown in the figure below.
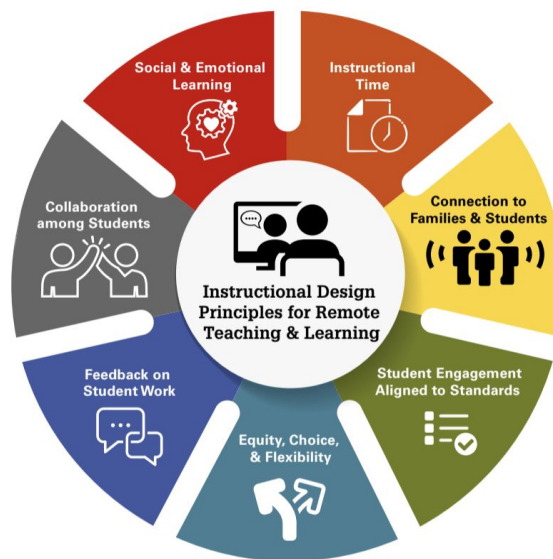
Establishing and promoting Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) provides opportunities for educators to collaborate and share resources to create engaging lessons. Consider how your PSU will promote PLCs that foster collaboration for the development of effective remote instruction lessons, ideas, resources, and activities. PLCs may enable teachers and staff to deliver remote instruction successfully. Resources such as Home Base applications can be leveraged to support PLCs.

High-quality remote instruction is achieved as a result of the collaborative efforts of a professional learning community. While site-based staff forms the core of a PLC, professional learning communities must expand beyond the school walls and into online platforms to create a larger learning network for teachers. Online platforms provide connections to much-needed support, such as:

- · Business leaders
- · Local City/Town leaders
- · Community College/university leaders
- · Religious Community, and
- · Non-profit organizations.

All members working together at the start of the development of the remote learning plan will ensure each member is aware of, and has buy-in to, their role in ensuring learning continues during remote learning days.

- How will your PSU leverage PLCs to develop remote learning lessons?
- What PSU delivery platforms, methods, resources, etc. will enable teachers and staff to engage in PLCs?
- What is your PSU's plan to transition from face to face PLCs to virtual PLCs as needed for remote learning?
- How will your PSU gather information on teacher and staff participation in PLCs?

Resources:
Instructional Design Principles for Remote Learning
Teaching Remotely in Times of Need
NCDPI ELA Choice Boards
Tips and Tools for Teaching Remote Learning
Learning Continuity WebinarsSupporting Teacher Learning & Development During Remote Instruction
Smart brief for discussion

COMPONENT 7:
Teaching and practicing opportunities for students on accessing and using remote instruction platforms and methods, including how to locate, complete, and submit assignments; and including regular opportunities for students to use the platforms and methods during non-remote instruction days to ensure student success during remote instruction.

GUIDANCE:
Students need to practice for successful remote instruction during non-remote instruction school days to ensure student success. It is important that there are many opportunities on non-remote instruction days to learn and practice protocols for finding, completing, and submitting assignments and materials using the same platforms students will be expected to access during remote instruction. NCDPI recommends that each PSU provides clear communication and practice on resources that are available and supported for remote instruction, including learning management platforms, acceptable forms of communication, and approved digital tools that may be used by teachers and students.

Guiding Questions:
- What PSU resources are available for remote instruction?
- How will your PSU offer learning opportunities for students on accessing and using remote instruction platforms and methods, including how to locate, complete, and submit assignments?
  - What is your PSU's plan to communicate these expectations to stakeholders?
- What teaching and learning guidelines will your PSU make available to teachers regarding remote instruction?
- What is your PSU's plan to gauge student success on accessing and using remote instruction platforms and methods, including how to locate, complete, and submit assignments?
  - How will your PSU communicate this to stakeholders?
- How will your PSU leverage blended instruction during non-remote instruction days to ensure student success during remote instruction?

Resources:
Passport to Canvas: Student Tutorials
Passport to Canvas consists of nine modules of content for students. The modules are designed to teach students everything they need to know about using Canvas.
Growing with Canvas: Teacher Tutorials
Growing with Canvas has five modules of content for teachers. The modules are designed to teacher educators everything they know about using Canvas.
 Be The Hero: District LMS Administrator Tutorials
Be The Hero has five modules of content for district Canvas Administrators.

COMPONENT 8:
Communicating learning targets to students on each remote instruction day and ensuring that lesson design provides instructional time, practice, and application components to demonstrate learning; and including a process for monitoring the quality of remote instruction materials.

GUIDANCE:
Clear learning targets are essential for assessment *for* the learning *of* learning. They provide the foundational framework for all aspects of the learning, teaching, and assessment processes.

What is a clear learning target?
- Designed in student-friendly language "I can..." and "I know..." statements.
- Demonstrate what students will be able to do.
- Consists of concept (noun), skill (verb) and often a specified context so students perceive the information as interesting and relevant.
- Directly reflect learning goals: Accomplished in a few days at most.
- Specific to what and how: Empowering students to take ownership of their own learning.

Learning targets are best communicated when:
- Posted daily for students to see;
- Discussed with students at the beginning of the lesson;
- Reviewed with students at the end of the lesson and
- Informally assessed to monitor student understanding

Curriculum (What are we teaching?)
- Develop lessons aligned to required standards
- Clearly define and post the learning target and/or expected outcome
- Communicate and post the learning target in student/family-friendly terms
- Select appropriate grade-level materials, resources, and/or platform to support the learning target
- Consider and create aligned lessons to support all learners (ie. IEPs, 504s, DEPs, etc.)

Instruction (How are we delivering?)
- Incorporate modeling opportunities to support various learning styles.
- Consider appropriate instructional models based on the learning target/desired outcome
  - Gradual Release "I do, You do, We do" or Inquiry-Based "You, We do, I do"
- Provide opportunities for student-guided and independent practice with feedback.
- Identify the most appropriate instructional delivery method
  - Teacher-Led, Self-Paced, Choice Menus, Project-Based Lessons, Paper/Pencil
- Include high-quality differentiated activities and engaging programs to support critical thinking and understanding (Blooms, DOK, SAMR, etc.)

Deployment (Where/When are we teaching?)
- Establish routines/processes for aligned deployment (staff, student, parent expectations)
- Define the amount of time to be spent teaching the learning target.
- Define the amount of time to complete the assignment.

- Establish suggested virtual time limits (consider age, individual limitations, etc.)
- Balance collaborative and independent opportunities for students

Monitoring/Assessment (How did we do?)
- Pre-assess student knowledge of the learning target
- Determine how students will demonstrate learning (Artifacts, Notes, Organizers, Interactive Lessons/Tools, etc.)
- Determine how to monitor student learning throughout the instructional process
- Assess student learning through various tools and respond to ongoing data.
- Create a clear process for:
    - Lesson Submission (Teacher to School Administrator)
    - Assignment Submission (Student to Teacher)
    - Ongoing Feedback (Administrator to Teacher, Teacher to Student)
    - Response to Instruction (reteach, intervention, etc.)
    - Evaluation Rubrics
    - Data collection

COMPONENT 9:

Ensuring that remote instructional time, practice, and application components support learning growth that continues towards mastery of the standard course of study; and including work measurement guidelines appropriate to each grade level, including deadlines for submission of assignments and methods to assess and grade learning during remote instruction.

GUIDANCE:

Instructional time, practice, and application components must support learning growth that continues towards mastery of the standard course of study. This includes work measurement guidelines appropriate to each grade level, including guidelines for submission of assignments and methods to assess and grade learning during remote learning.

Instructional time expectations in a remote setting will differ from instructional time in a traditional face-to-face setting. Considerations to student time in virtual meetings or other conferencing systems should be well-planned and appropriate to the students' learning while also remaining mindful of the social and emotional connection.

Designing student practice and application components that work toward mastery should also include consideration of student and teacher access to connectivity and devices. Both online and offline versions of practice should be made readily available to ensure equity regarding connectivity and devices. Practice toward mastery should include collaboration among students, as students need social interaction and collaborative opportunities in the remote learning environment. Collaboration should happen multiple times each week through standards-aligned, yet simple lessons that can be completed in a manageable amount of time.

Teacher feedback on student work can greatly impact student learning and motivation. Rich teacher feedback is even more critical in a remote instruction environment. Remote learning should consist of ongoing monitoring and formatively assessing students to ensure that student learning continues toward mastery of the standard course of study.

Regular and timely feedback through both virtual and non-virtual means, to support varying access to devices and connectivity, is vital for supporting students in the remote learning environment. Formative assessment options range in type, structure, length, and other ways.

Examples of Remote Learning Instructional Time:
- Instructional time will vary based on student level and content area.
- Having regular and predictable opportunities to connect will help establish routine.

Examples of Student Practice and Application Components during Remote Learning:
- Student practice and application must be aligned to the standards.
- Engaging students will help maintain student interest and assignment completion.
- Student practice and application should consist of opportunities for students with and without access to devices and connectivity.

- Student practice and application components should be designed with the understanding that students likely will have limited adult support and supervision.
- Providing parents with resources to assist with student practice and application components will aid in student growth toward mastery of the standards.
- Utilizing choice boards and other opportunities for student voice and choice will aid in increased engagement and a greater flexibility based on students' access to connectivity and devices.

Examples of Providing Feedback to Students During Remote Learning (i.e. Formative Assessment):
- Teacher discretion should dictate additional support to students based on formatively assessing the students through various means, such as--but not limited to--virtual exit slips, yes and no buttons through applications, private chats applications, and digital tools.

COMPONENT 10:
Ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to the remote instruction provided by their public school units and that remote instruction is provided in a manner consistent with each student's individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan. Remote learning day supports shall be considered and included, as appropriate for the student, when an IEP or 504 plan is initially developed or at any subsequent review or revision of an IEP or 504 plan.

GUIDANCE:

The determination of what is appropriate and possible educational for all students will be influenced by health and safety considerations, as well as what is possible and appropriate under the current circumstances. It is understood that the provision of educational services may vary widely from one district to another, and that not all students will have the same level of access to services, despite the best efforts of school districts.

Special Education and Related Services

Schools must provide FAPE "consistent with the need to protect the health and safety of students with disabilities and those individuals providing education, specialized instruction, and related services to these students".[OSEP Supplemental Fact Sheet-March 21, 20203] "However, federal disability law provides flexibility in determining how to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The determination of how FAPE is to be provided may need to be different in this time of unprecedented national emergency". [OSEP Supplemental Fact Sheet, March 21, 2020]

The provision of FAPE may "include, as appropriate, special education and related services provided through distance instruction provided virtually, online or telephonically".

Students with disabilities (SWD) are general education students first. SWD must be provided equal access to the same educational opportunities provided to non-disabled peers. (OSEP Q and A, Q A- 1, March 12, 2020) Additionally, SWD should have access to their specially designed instruction and related services outlined in their IEP "to the greatest extent possible".[OSEP FAQ, March 12, 20204]

Carefully consider the following:
- It will be important that EC teachers collaborate with General Education teachers to provide accessibility to grade-level remote learning opportunities and provide accommodations/modifications as appropriate based on the student's unique needs and circumstances.
- The EC teacher/service provider is expected to make every reasonable effort to communicate and collaborate with the parents regarding the student's accommodations/modifications and the provision of special education and related services.
- The EC Division strongly recommends a log of remote learning provided or offered be kept by all EC service providers.
- The date, time (beginning and end), mode of instruction (video conference, telephone conference, print material, online material, or learning management systems, etc.), IEP

goals addressed and progress monitoring data are important elements to include in the log.

It is understood that even when districts act in good faith to provide all students with meaningful access, the very nature of the student's disability or other circumstances may impede their ability to meaningfully access their specially designed instruction during times of remote learning.

If the LEA believes that it may not be possible to provide the IEP and related services as stated in the IEP, communication and collaboration with the parent is critical and should be documented.

Resources:

US Department of Education Supplemental Fact Sheet: Addressing the Risk of COVID-19 in Preschool, Elementary and Secondary Schools While Serving Children with Disabilities, March 21,2020.

US Department of Education Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak, March 12, 2020.

COMPONENT 11:

Tracking and reporting attendance on remote instruction days, including protocols for determining attendance, the reporting system to be used, and how attendance procedures will be communicated to parents before remote instruction begins.

<u>**GUIDANCE:**</u>

Attendance in a remote instruction environment is designed to keep students engaged, ensure they are on pace, and to offer academic and emotional support. Unlike attendance in a building where students are marked for being physically present, in remote learning the students home environment and connectivity limitations will impact how and when students complete assignments. Maintaining communication with students and their families and finding an efficient way to do so is more important to maintain a successful learning environment. Consider setting up virtual office hours and reaching out to families by phone or email, teachers may consider using various technology tools for routine check-ins.

Guiding Questions:
- How will I communicate remote attendance procedures to students, parents, teachers, support services, related services, etc.?
- How will we monitor to ensure attendance protocols are being followed?

How do I track and report attendance on remote instruction days?
On remote learning days, daily attendance must be taken in the student information system, PowerSchool.

A student is considered present for daily attendance during a remote learning day:
- If a student completes their daily assignments, either online or offline;
  and/or
- If a student has a daily check-in, a two-way communication, with the appropriate teacher(s):
  - In grades K-5, homeroom teacher
  - In all other grade levels, each course teacher as scheduled

NOTE: A student cannot be considered absent solely due to not logging into an online resource/lesson on a remote learning day.

How do I communicate attendance procedures to students/families?
It is a local decision on how to communicate the attendance procedures to students and parents/families before remote instruction begins.

Ideas to consider for communication:
- Include information in Back-to-School/Orientation resources
- Include information in weekly principal calls
- Have every teacher add to Beginning of the Year class information
- Remind parents/students when a student is not in attendance with this information

Additional Calendar information:

NCDPI has authorized the addition of three Calendar DayTypes to use for remote learning days that have been added to the Student Information System.

1. **Remote Instruction Day**: This Calendar Day Type is intended to describe instructional days when students and teachers will be working remotely.
2. **Remote Instruction Day / Teacher Work Day:** This Calendar Day Type is intended to describe instructional days when students will be working remotely and teachers will be expected to attend for an official teacher workday or use leave.
3. **Remote Instruction Day / State of Emergency:** This Calendar Day Type is intended to describe instructional days when students and teachers will be working remotely because North Carolina has declared a state of an emergency necessitating school closures.

On a remote learning day, the PSU marks the days on their calendar as in-session and uses one of the scenarios above as the calendar type. It is critical that these days are listed as in-session to count as a school day.

COMPONENT 12:

Providing online and offline contact options for students to communicate with teachers or staff for remote instruction days that are not used as teacher workdays.

GUIDANCE:

To ensure optimal student engagement in remote learning, PSUs are encouraged to incorporate reliable communications tools as well as processes and protocols that are widely communicated and available for students to seek timely assistance during remote instruction.

Examples:

- Designate a primary technical assistance contact for student/parent questions.
- Develop communications protocols for students to seek assistance from individual teachers during remote learning.
    - Examples include:
        - Live online 'office hours';
        - Live offline 'office hours' via phone;
        - Designated chat room times online;
        - Email communication with assurance of timely response;
        - Designated phone call times for students who do not have online access; School and individual teacher usage of phone messaging systems.

COMPONENT 13:

Providing technology support for students experiencing technical difficulties on remote instruction days.

GUIDANCE:

Successful remote instruction must include technical support for students experiencing technical difficulty away from school. Students cannot be successful with remote instruction if they are unable to access the content, login, need connectivity support, or access to online resources. Through remote technical support most software or user error related issues can be resolved. Reliable remote technical support provides students a safety net to continue instruction.

Methods of providing effective technology support remotely, include:
- Phone or email help desks/hot lines
- Online chat portals
- Remote support with screen sharing
- Ticketing systems with communicated resolution expectation times

Options for hardware support of school-provided devices may include centralized repair centers that offer either immediate repairs or loaner device swaps where feasible. Consider a ticketing system that will allow the IT staff to easily keep track of all requests for remote technology support. Further, ensure IT staff are well-versed not only in the remote support tools and methods selected by the PSU but also in communications and customer service. Students and families who receive effective and courteous technical support when needed are more likely to experience success with remote instruction.

Guiding Questions:
- How will your PSU provide online and/or offline technology support for students experiencing technical difficulties on remote instruction days?
- What is your PSU's communication plan to ensure that stakeholders are aware of technology support that is available on remote instruction days?
- How will your PSU provide training to build IT staff's capacity to provide effective and courteous technology support on remote instruction days?
- How will your PSU safely manage device repairs or replacements during periods of remote instruction?

Resources:
[How IT Staff Provide Tech Support During Remote Learning](#)

COMPONENT 14:

Responding to how the needs of English learners, Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted learners and students who have been identified and are served under the McKinney-Vento Act as homeless will be met during remote instruction during remote instruction.

GUIDANCE:

***English Learners (ELs)**:*
"Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI) and the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 (EEOA), public schools must ensure that EL students can participate meaningfully and equally in educational programs. EL programs must be reasonably calculated to enable EL students to attain English proficiency and meaningful participation in the standard educational program comparable to their never-EL peers.

Guiding Questions:
1. How are the unique needs of ELs being addressed/met during remote learning days?
2. How has the LIEP been adapted for remote learning?
3. How are ESL teachers being included in the planning and delivery of remote instruction?
4. How are you ensuring that parents receive communications (written and oral) in a language they can access?

Resources:
- The U.S. Department of Education's Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA)
- USED Tool Kits: Newcomers and English Learners
- Fact Sheet: Providing Services to English Learners During the COVID-19 Outbreak (May 18, 2020)
- ELD Google Site: Resources for ELs During Remote Learning
- NCDPI EL identification during school closure
- Providing English Learners Equal Access to Curricular and Extracurricular Programs, EL ToolKit, Chapter 4.

Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted Learners
Based on General Statute § 115C-150.5, each local board of education has established a plan which outlines the different types of services provided in a variety of settings to meet the diverse needs of identified academically or intellectually gifted students.

In keeping with this charge, as schools have shifted to remote learning across the state, NCDPI encourages all PSUs to continue efforts to differentiate instruction with learning opportunities to enrich, extend, and accelerate the NC Standard Course of Study for AIG and advanced learners and to find ways to support their social and emotional learning needs during this time.

NCDPI also encourages PSUs to consider the continuum of services available in the official Local AIG Plan and determine ways in which these services can be delivered effectively via remote learning means.

Guiding Questions:
- How is the PSU continuing to identify students who demonstrate a need for gifted programming, during remote learning?
- How will your service delivery options be provided remotely?
- For the upcoming year, how will the DEP be revised to include potential remote learning opportunities and expectations? If not the DEP, how will you communicate clearly the expectations for AIG learners and personnel?
- How has the AIG staff (personnel) been included in the planning for remote learning at each grade level?
- How will communication with students and families continue through a variety of modes described in the local AIG Plan?

Examples:
- Meet with students through online or offline platforms for services, enrichment, extension, and acceleration.
- Establish minimum expectations for AIG staff (personnel) to conduct weekly check-ins with students and parents.
- Work with classroom teachers to provide extension and acceleration opportunities (via online learning management system and paper and pencil packets for those who need print materials).
- Continue differentiated instruction and courses, ensuring advanced learning opportunities are provided.
- Utilize the NCDPI Advanced Learning Labs with students K-12 through the AIG staff (personnel) or other classroom teachers through online platforms and/or sending home in packets or other offline strategies.

Resources:
NCDPI Remote Learning Resources in partnership with Duke TIP and NCAGT
NC AIG Program Standards
NCAGT Teaching Online: Best Practices, Technology, and Tools
NAGC Parenting Tip Sheet

Homeless Children & Youth Guidance
Services for Homeless students as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act may be provided through programs on school grounds or at other facilities (e.g., shelters and nonprofit community social service centers). To the maximum extent practical, services shall be provided through programs and mechanisms that integrate children and youth experiencing homelessness with their housed peers. Activities undertaken must not isolate or stigmatize homeless children and youth.

Authorized Activities in the Law:
- Tutoring, supplemental instruction, and enriched educational services
- Professional development and other activities for educators and pupil services personnel that are designed to heighten the understanding and sensitivity of homeless children and youth
- Expedited evaluations or referral services for medical, dental, mental, and other health services
- Assistance to defray the excess cost of transportation
- Services and assistance to attract, engage, and retain homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, in public school programs
- ·Before- and after-school, mentoring, and summer programs in which a teacher or other qualified individual provides tutoring, homework assistance, and supervision of educational activities.
- The payment of fees and other costs associated with tracking, obtaining, and transferring records necessary to enroll homeless children and youths in school
- Education and training to the parents of homeless children and youths about the rights of and resources
- Coordination between schools and agencies providing services to homeless children and youths.
- Pupil services (including violence prevention counseling) and referrals for such services.
- Activities to address the particular needs of homeless children and youths that may arise from domestic violence.
- The adaptation of space and purchase of supplies for any non-school facilities
- School supplies, including those supplies to be distributed at shelters or temporary housing facilities
- Extraordinary or emergency assistance needed to enable homeless children and youths to attend school

How can my PSU respond to homeless students during the pandemic?
- Tutoring online or at a safe location before school, after school, weekends, or during summer break
- Access to summer educational programs and supplemental afterschool programs
- Purchasing educational technology hardware, software, and connectivity devices
- Educational resources for remote learning
- Mental health services and supports including Trauma-Informed training
- Establishing or adapting space for homeless education staff
- Outreach activities and for the delivery of services to homeless students
- Paying for the homeless liaison in part or in full

Questions to Consider:
- Does the expense meet the intent of the law and be categorized as one of the authorized activities?
- Does the expense cover services that apply only to the homeless education program and its efficiency?

- Is the expense reasonable in proportion to the rest of the program budget and the amount spent per student?
- Is the expense for supplemental services?
- Could this service be obtained from another source?
- Have you consulted with your homeless liaison and reviewed the program needs assessment?

Related Resources:
- NC Homeless Education Program (NCHEP) https://hepnc.uncg.edu/
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) https://nche.ed.gov/
- The Law & Non-Regulatory Guidance https://www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/legislation.html
- State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, Lisa Phillips @ lephilli@uncg.edu or call 336-315-7491

COMPONENT 15:

Describing the limitations that exist for implementation of quality remote learning based on each public school unit's local context.

<u>GUIDANCE:</u>

Variances between PSUs create many challenges. While many PSUs have resources that help them to prepare faster for remote instruction, others have limitations that create barriers to effective blended and remote learning.

All PSUs are encouraged to describe the limitations that they are navigating to implement quality remote instruction to share the context of your PSU.

Limitations may include:
- Broadband Connectivity
- Devices
- Professional Development
- Instructional resources/Digital Content
- Qualified teachers, licensed
- Transportation
- Child Care
- Child Nutrition

OPTIONAL COMPONENTS:

In the RI Plans, public school units are also encouraged to consider adding information regarding:

- Providing students and parents/families with remote learning strategies and behaviors to support success; and
- Impact on other existing programs, such as Transition to Kindergarten and Career and College Promise.

GUIDANCE:

Remote Learning Strategies and Behaviors to Support Success:

NCDPI encourages each PSU to clarify the behavioral expectations to support student and family success across a variety of remote instructional settings. It is critical to Develop, Teach and Model Behavior Expectations for Remote Learning. Consider defining standards for student engagement, the agreed upon acknowledgement system, appropriate responses to problem behavior and other procedures used with all students.

Resources:

- NCDPI SEL/Crisis Response Recommendation #5: Develop, Teach and Model Behavior Expectations for Remote Learning
- NCDPI SEL Resource:
- NCDPI MTSS Resource: Positive Acknowledgement System
- Creating a PBIS Behavior Teaching Matrix for Remote Learning
- CASEL: SEL 3 Signature Practices Playbook

Transition to Kindergarten:

Questions to consider for students transitioning into kindergarten during COVID19:

1. Do you have a process for families to register students for kindergarten and upload required documentation digitally (ex. Kindergarten Health Assessment form, immunization records, student and family information forms, proof of residency, etc.)? Can this be done digitally following digital security protocols to protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII)?
2. For families who have limited access to technology and/or internet connectivity, do you have a plan for creating a staggered schedule for in-person registration following safety guidelines and procedures for schools?
3. How will kindergarten staff connect with individual incoming kindergarten students and their families to promote a smoother transition and positive relationships? Will this occur virtually using a video conferencing tool so that the children, their families, and kindergarten staff can see each other? How will kindergarten staff plan for continued interactions, individual and class communication, and parent-teacher conferences during remote learning?
4. How will kindergarten staff inform families of the standards for kindergarten and most importantly, provide support for families as they support their child's instruction in the home?

5. How will you include typical transition activities into the district's remote learning plan (i.e. staggered entry, meet the teacher, classroom/school tours, etc.)? Think about how these could be accomplished virtually while making them as welcoming as possible, particularly for families who have not experienced kindergarten entry with an older child.

6. How will your schools conduct a Kindergarten Orientation with social-distancing in mind? Will there be a plan to host a virtual orientation? Will there be a plan to schedule an in-person Kindergarten Orientation following [safety guidelines and procedures for schools](#) for families with limited access to technology and broadband internet?

7. How will schools provide and review the Kindergarten Orientation print materials and forms to be completed by families if schools are closed at the beginning of the year? How will families return the forms once they have completed them? Can this be done digitally following digital security protocols to protect Personally Identifiable Information (PII)?

8. Does your communication plan to inform families and the community of new processes for kindergarten registration and transition activities such as Kindergarten Orientation include other child-serving agencies such as Head Start, NCPK, the local Smart Start/ Partnership for Children, your local health department, and the local HHS? Does your communication plan include various modes of communication such as the use of robocalls and email to families with children already in the school system, public service announcements, fliers in the windows of community stores and in doctors' offices, etc?

9. How might you work with local child-serving organizations to identify and locate rising kindergarteners and their families to begin making early contacts prior to the school year (email or phone)?

10. How might you work with your local NCPK contract administrator to review the list of rising NCPK students provided by the NC Department of Health and Human Services to reach out to families who the NCPK providers have lost contact with during the COVID-19 crisis?

11. Have you considered the virtual tools and platforms that are available for use by teachers and students for remote learning? Consider choosing the least number of tools possible and make them consistent across schools to lessen the burden of learning and juggling new technology on all families.

12. Have you created and communicated a process for training and supporting families and students in the use of the virtual tools and platforms that have been selected?

Career and College Promise:
PSUs are strongly encouraged to develop and/or modify a Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with the college partner to clarify all CCP opportunities, policies, and procedures, in relation to potential COVID-19 disruptions in learning.

Questions to consider for COVID-19:
- With the possibilities of needing to be flexible with blended learning, how will that occur with your college?

- How will CCP process for enrollment, communication, and implementation work during remote learning times for the 2020-21 school year?
- Is there a clear process for transitioning students in and out of school buildings? College buildings? How will requirements for K-12 schools impact the college and vice versa?
- How will there be an extra focus on social/emotional support for CCP students during this time, especially when they are in two different learning settings?
- What are the impacts for students who fail CCP courses, including courses used to satisfy high school graduation requirements? possible impacts on college admissions and financial aid?
- Are there needs to revisit course offerings to ensure success during this time of COVID-19?

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The RI Plan will be written following NCDPI guidelines and submitted by July 20, 2020 using the template and process shared with all public school units on June 5, 2020.

In addition, public school units shall submit feedback to NCDPI to support completion of any further reporting requirements so that NCDPI can submit the legislatively required report to the NC General Assembly/Joint Legislative Education Committee by September 15, 2020.

The report will include

- Identifying all offline and online resources by PSU
- PSUs who only used offline resources
- The number and percentage of PSUs that did and did not provide a plan addressing each item
- A copy of each Remote Instruction Plan

Note: The development of the SPLN-006 policy took into consideration feedback provided by Superintendents, Charter School Leaders, Superintendents Remote Learning Taskforce, CAO Advisory Group, CTE Steering Committee and internal NCDPI Directors.

Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction