

Continuity of Learning Plans

Guidance Document

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) is committed to assisting school communities during public health emergencies. Local school systems should be developing plans to support the “continuity of learning” in an alternate learning environment. Continuity of learning is the continuation of education during a prolonged school attendance center closure.¹ These plans are critical during this time as they outline temporary actions that support the continuation of teaching and learning for all students because of an interruption of the normal school attendance center operations.

Preparing for Continuity of Learning in an Alternate Learning Environment

An alternate learning environment is a space in which schools have an opportunity to innovate to ensure that all students, across all backgrounds, races, ethnicities, abilities, have equitable access to continued learning outside of a “traditional” classroom.

During this time, Nebraska's education mission remains the same - preparing all Nebraskans for earning, learning, and living. Each school district/school system will develop a Continuity of Learning Plan for an alternate learning environment. School districts/school systems will want to take some time (e.g. 5-10 days) to develop their Continuity of Learning Plans and should consider how they will serve all students, including students with disabilities and English Learners. This will allow the school district/school system to determine the best way to move forward. Each school district's/school system's plan will look different. It is most important to consider how you will serve each student during this time.

The move to an alternate learning environment will mean a shift in mindset and skills as well as a shift in delivery. School system leaders should change the message from “we are canceling school” to “we are moving to a different method for teaching and learning.” It can be overwhelming. A non-profit, Instruction Partners, [outlines steps to consider](#) to prepare for continued student learning, including a [planning guide](#) and a [school hierarchy of needs](#).

A school district's/school system's “Continuity of Learning Plan” will address two questions:

1. How do you plan to serve students?
2. How do you plan to serve students with disabilities?

How do you plan to serve students?

When planning for continuity of learning, a school district/school system may consider offering enrichment opportunities and/or educational opportunities. In an alternate learning environment, *enrichment opportunities* support the on-going development of particular knowledge and skills and the continuation of learning within a grade level. Enrichment opportunities can also help students build strong practices which are critical components of content area standards. These opportunities can be provided via multiple platforms and settings, may not require an instructor, and might be the same for all students. The opportunities can be provided by a parent, a caregiver, or through independent practice. *Educational opportunities* include standards-based instruction utilizing evidence-based teaching and learning practices. These opportunities are facilitated by an instructor in a synchronous, asynchronous, or blended learning environment. For example, an instructor might provide “live” or recorded instruction via a video conferencing platform that is aligned to their content area standards, has a method to collect student work, and provides feedback to students. As another example, a school might provide instructional packets to students with the expectation that teachers schedule small group weekly check-ins via telephone to provide feedback, answer questions, and engage in small group instruction (when possible).

If possible, school districts/school systems should consider a layered approach. This means if a district/school system is providing short-term enrichment opportunities, the school district/school system may also develop a plan that moves from providing only enrichment opportunities to providing educational opportunities. For example, third graders in a school might initially be given multiplication facts to practice using an online platform, and that particular enrichment opportunity was shared with the caregivers of all third graders. As school districts/school systems provide educational opportunities for students, **including students with disabilities**, the approach will look different for individual students. This could include telephone calls, web conferencing, instructional packets, or video chatting with small groups of students to provide more in-depth support. When planning for educational opportunities, plans should consider the provisions of special education and related services as directed per individual education plans.

It may be possible for some school districts/school systems to utilize e-learning as part of an alternate learning environment. Through e-learning, students access online instruction. Most typically, digital instructional materials are posted within a Learning Management System (LMS). It is important to note that taking a traditional school environment online is not a simple task. When making the decision to utilize e-learning, it is important to use an equity lens. Some considerations may include, but are not limited to the following:²

- Ensuring **all** students have access to the instructional materials, including technology (e.g. devices, Internet, etc.).
- Ensuring the e-learning system can effectively support the school's different learning and teaching needs, including the ability to provide differentiated instruction and one-on-one support for students who need it. Regardless of where the learning is happening, supports for students with disabilities and English Learners should be considered.
- Providing support to staff, students, and parents/guardians/caregivers on how the system works and the district/school system expectations.
- Ensuring the e-learning system is secure and will not allow for the release of protected student or staff information.

For more information about e-learning, visit the NDE [e-Learning Days Web Page](#).

How should we serve students with disabilities?

Educational opportunities provided to all students during a closure must include the provision of special education and related services as directed per individual education plans. This requirement ensures students with and without disabilities are treated equitably. This requirement is also required by federal and state anti-discrimination laws, including Title II of the ADA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and the IDEA.

School district/school system leaders should consider the use of accessible distance technology, the use of small groups of students with disabilities and access to nondisabled peers, instructional phone calls, and other content-based activities. School staff and staff from other impacted agencies and facilities (e.g. Level III Placements) should be included in planning efforts, as they bring expertise regarding services to students with disabilities, which can be embedded through the district plan. There may be "exceptional circumstances" (e.g. a student is medically fragile) that could affect how a particular service is provided, which may result in a later need to provide compensatory education. IEP teams should meet to determine the individual student's plan as outlined in the *Questions and Answers on Providing Services to Children with Disabilities During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Outbreak (March 2020)* document located at www.education.ne.gov/sped.

Submitting Continuity of Learning Plans

Each school district/school system will be required to submit a Continuity of Learning Plan by April 3, 2020. In this form, school districts/school systems will briefly describe plans to serve students and students with disabilities during this prolonged school attendance center closure. At the completion of the school year, districts/systems will report on their

Continuity of Learning Plans using a similar process in conjunction with the submission of Rule 10 Assurance Statements (if applicable) and specific waivers being requested. To submit a Continuity of Learning Plan, utilize the form located at:

<https://www.education.ne.gov/publichealth/colp/>.

NDE Contacts

If you have questions regarding Continuity of Learning Plans, please contact:

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Resources:

[NDE Resources for Coronavirus](#)

[NDE Office of Special Education](#)

[Continuity of Learning Webinar](#) (Host by NCSA on March 23, 2020)

[Models for e-learning](#)

[Content Resources for Nebraska](#)

[Scheduling in the Home Environment \(English\)](#)

[Scheduling in the Home Environment \(Spanish\)](#)

Endnotes

1 Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools,

https://rems.ed.gov/docs/Supporting_Continuity_of_learning_and_education.pdf

2 Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction,

<https://www.k12.wa.us/about-ospi/press-releases/novel-coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-resources>