TEACHER
DIGITAL LEARNING
GUIDE

Other than statutory and regulatory requirements included in the document, the contents of this guidance do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies. [OET-FY21-02]

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

LEGAL DISCLAIMER

WHAT CAN THIS GUIDE DO FOR YOU?

This guide is designed to provide important resources and recommendations to support teacher implementation of digital learning. Digital learning is defined as "any instructional practice that effectively uses technology to strengthen a student's learning experience and encompasses a wide spectrum of tools and practices."1 Sections in this guide include key considerations, guiding strategies, resources, and reflection questions to help guide your thinking and planning in a way that will be specific to your unique situation and the unique needs of your students.

This "Teacher Digital Learning Guide" is part of a series of guides including the "**Parent and Family Digital Learning Guide**" and "School Leader Digital Learning Guide" intended to support teachers, parents, families, and leaders in leveraging the capabilities of digital tools and resources for teaching and learning.

INTRODUCTION

Digital learning and its supportive technology can help you as a teacher advance learning, mitigate learning loss, and create opportunities for social and emotional engagement. These benefits are possible when you and your students are in the classroom and when you are teaching students who are learning at home. To achieve these goals, access to devices and the internet must be available for you and all your students, and digital learning should be as nimble and accountable as possible.

When school buildings closed across the country in the spring of 2020, there were varying approaches and levels of success in transitioning from an in-person classroom to a remote learning environment. Schools that were able to ensure all students had access to technology had many more options for staying connected and supporting students, parents, and families.

In order to achieve the promise of digital learning, each of your students (and you!) need access to a device, the internet, digital tools and resources, and the skills, norms, and practices to ensure digital learning is empowering, engaging, and productive. While the pandemic has been challenging and uncertain, it has also provided an opportunity to rethink our approach to education and strengthen the partnership among parents, families, teachers, and leaders to best serve our nation's students.

Technology can help you achieve a myriad of teaching, learning, and assessment goals regardless of the educational environment in which you find yourself, whether virtual, fully in-person, a hybrid of the two, or an alternative approach, such as pandemic pods or micro schools.

This guide will help you understand how to use educational technology (EdTech) to support four key goals:

1. **Access, Digital Citizenship & Safety, and Privacy & Security:** Empowering students with the mindsets and skills needed to responsibly use devices and meaningfully, safely, and securely engage in digital learning.

2. **Personalize Learning for Students:** Meeting individual students' needs through EdTech-supported personalized learning.

3. **Collaborate with Parents and Families to Support Students:** Engaging parents as full partners in their child's success and connect with students in a virtual, hybrid, or in-person learning environment.

4. **Teacher Professional Learning and Well-Being:** Building pathways to continually learn and refine strategies for using technology to its fullest potential.

In each section, you will find tips, resources, and questions to help you make the best use of EdTech to support students and learn new skills to add to the timeless educator attributes of creativity, caring for students, and ensuring love of learning.

THIS SECTION IN 30 SECONDS

In a digital learning environment, students need access to devices, internet connectivity, and skills to support optimal learning. Before implementing digital learning, you should consider how to close digital divides, teach digital citizenship, and maintain privacy and security for the student data created by digital learning tools.

ACCESS, DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP & SAFETY, AND PRIVACY & SECURITY

1. ADDRESSING ACCESS

Key Considerations

Before a student can meaningfully engage in digital learning, they need access to a device and the internet. As a professional on the frontlines of an educational landscape that is increasingly digital, it is important for you to have a current understanding of what technology tools are available, what your school can and does provide, and what your families can access. Consider how to be prepared and build in sustainable flexibility based on variations in what your school may provide and what your students can access.

Additionally, you may need an understanding of your school or district's policies on software selection and use, resource sharing and tracking, inventory, and any insurance coverage of devices. If you are involved in the selection and evaluation of software for learning, consider thoroughly vetting tools by conducting **rapid-cycle tech evaluations (RCE)**,[2] and consulting evidence-based product certifications from non-profit organizations such as **Common Sense Media**, **International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE)**, and **Digital Promise**.

Guiding Strategies

In collaboration with your school or district:

- Take inventory through survey or other means of student access and establish a process for monitoring changes to access.
- Inform parents and families of local options for home internet access, and provide school or school system resources about free or low-cost home internet service options in their area or through resources such as the Federal Communications Commission's **Lifeline program**, the non-profit **EveryoneOn**, or the **National Digital Inclusion Alliance**.
- Coordinate with school system personnel to understand the current timelines and systems for procurement and maintenance of district devices and options for internet access and technical support and ensure that both families and students know where to direct questions.

- Reflect upon the needs of your students and ask your school or school system critical questions before adopting and using a tool to understand, for example, what internet speed is required for the tool to work properly, whether content can be accessed or downloaded offline, if the tool can be easily used on mobile devices, and the extent to which the tool meets accessibility standards for the unique needs of each learner (e.g., whether it is compatible with assistive technology software such as screen readers, whether it includes captions for videos).

2. TEACHING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP & SAFETY

Key Considerations

Although students may use technology in their personal lives, they may not yet have developed the awareness, dispositions, or skills to be responsible and ethical digital citizens. Good digital citizenship refers to the behaviors and actions students need to safely, ethically, and responsibly:

- navigate and participate online;
- exhibit critical thinking and problem-solving skills;
- know and understand their rights;
- evaluate online information for accuracy and trustworthiness; and
- **take ownership of their privacy and digital presence.**

Therefore, as students access the tools needed for digital learning, it is important that they are equipped with the knowledge and understanding of digital citizenship practices.

As a key facet of digital citizenship education, it is important to focus on student safety in the digital space and to incorporate material designed to teach students about an increasingly digital world. This focus will provide them the skills needed to protect their digital identity, develop appropriate communication skills and positive relationships, protect themselves from cyberbullying and potential predators, and understand the mental health and wellness aspects of screen time and making good choices online. You have an important role in helping students safely participate, learn, and create in a digital environment.

Developing your students' digital citizenship skills will require professional learning, intentional learning environment design, and collaboration with their parents and families. As the primary educators of their students, parents and families are essential to successful digital citizenship skill acquisition. Just as you may need additional resources to navigate this transition, your students' parents and families will likely need the same and supporting them will help you leverage them as partners.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Build your own understanding of digital citizenship by exploring resources like Common Sense Media's **Inside The 21st-Century Classroom report** on EdTech usage by K-12 teachers with their students and observations on its impact on learning; **materials from ISTE**, including access to **ISTE's virtual digital citizenship course** for K-12 teachers; and other resources, such as the materials for teachers, parents, and communities available through the **National Center for Missing and Exploited Children**.
- Familiarize yourself with general **guidance on screen time for the age group you teach**, and best practices for screen time during remote learning.

- Recognize that the **quality of screen time is more important than the amount of screen time**, and share guidance with students, parents, and families.

- Embed digital citizenship skills into your lessons. Help your students learn about safety and privacy issues including how to manage their online identity and reputation, how to identify and report suspicious behaviors or incidents, and how to protect their personal information.

- Utilize ready-made lesson plans such as the **free lesson plan materials from Common Sense Media and curricula materials available at CYBER.ORG, work which is funded through the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)**.

- **Learn about cyberbullying from the Federal Commission on School Safety** and understand the **forms of cyberbullying**, as well as the laws and policies and how to stop **cyberbullying**. Although cyberbullying often takes place outside of classrooms (and virtual classrooms), be cautious about incorporating classroom EdTech tools that allow peer-to-peer conversations that are not accessible and monitored.

- Explore the **FBI's Safe Online Surfing modules** for third through eighth graders.

- Host parent and family workshops, either in person or online, or develop other creative solutions to help them navigate digital learning tools in ways that promote their students' digital citizenship.

3. ENSURING PRIVACY & SECURITY

Key Considerations

You have an important role in protecting the privacy and security of student data online. Students increasingly share personal information online through activities like signing up for accounts. As a result, data about them is collected by devices, internet algorithms, companies, and third parties, which is then at risk to misuse or abuse.

With increased technology comes the need for increased vigilance to protect student privacy. Your school's leadership should provide devices and EdTech tools that have already been properly vetted. Alternatively, your school may have guidance on vetting and adopting tools that meet privacy and security obligations, in accordance with federal law, for the classroom and home access. Make sure you are familiar with available resources that may be shared to help partner with, and educate, parents to keep their students' information safe.

Reference the "**Parent and Family Digital Learning Guide**" for information on empowering parents in their role in digital learning and working with parents to protect the privacy and security of students.

Federal Laws Governing Privacy and Safety: FERPA, IDEA, and COPPA

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, known as FERPA, is a federal law that, where applicable, among other things, generally prohibits FERPA-covered educational agencies (e.g., school districts) and institutions (e.g., schools) from disclosing personally identifiable information (PII) from the education records of a student without the prior written consent of the student's parent or the "eligible student" herself or himself (i.e., the student if he or she is 18 years or older or attends an institution of postsecondary education). 20 U.S.C. §§ 1232g(b), (h), (i), and (j), and 34 CFR Part 99, Subpart D. FERPA contains specific exceptions to this general consent requirement that are set forth in 20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)-(b)(3), (b) (5), (b)(6), (h), (i) and (j), and 34 CFR § 99.31. FERPA also generally provides parents and eligible students with the right to inspect and review their education records, and the right to seek to amend information in their education records that is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's rights of privacy. 20 U.S.C. §§ 1232g(a)(1)(A) and (a)(2), and 34 CFR Part 99, Subparts B and C. For more information regarding FERPA, please visit the U.S. Department of Education's Student Privacy Policy Office's website at **https://studentprivacy.ed.gov**. Of note, the U.S. Department of Education released guidance to parents on FERPA in April 2020 titled, "The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act: Guidance for Parents," which is available at **https://studentprivacy. ed.gov/ sites/default/files/resource_document/file/FERPAGuidanceForParents.pdf**. This was aimed at operating during the COVID-19 emergency and in a virtual environment.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), where applicable, also contains confidentiality of information provisions that protect PII in the education records of children with disabilities. 20 U.S.C. § 1417(c) and 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.610-300.626. IDEA also generally provides parents with the right to inspect and review their child's education records, and the right to seek to amend information in their child's education records that is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of the student's rights of privacy. IDEA's confidentiality provisions generally require parental consent for disclosure of PII in education records, to parties other than officials of participating agencies, and generally incorporate the FERPA exceptions to the prior written consent requirement. Note that the IDEA confidentiality of information provisions incorporate some of the FERPA requirements but also include several provisions that are specifically related to children with disabilities. More information about IDEA and FERPA confidentiality provisions is available at **https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/ptac/pdf/idea-ferpa.pdf**.

The Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA), where applicable, generally gives parents control over what information is collected about their children online. Under COPPA, schools may, in certain circumstances, provide consent on behalf of parents to the collection of student personal information. The Federal Trade Commission recently clarified that "schools can consent on behalf of parents to the collection of student personal information—but only if such information is used for a school-authorized educational purpose and for no other commercial purpose. This is true whether the learning takes place in the classroom or at home at the direction of the school." More information about COPPA is available at **https://ww.ftc.gov/news-events/blogs/business-blog/2020/04/coppa-guidance-ed-tech-companies-schools-during-coronavirus**.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- **ConnectSafely.org** provides information on district policies and professional standards related to social media communications with parents, families, and students, and Edutopia.org provides the resource, **How to Create Social Media Guidelines for Your School**.

  - A best practice is to make your professional accounts for email and social media separate from your personal ones.

  - Refrain from saying anything online that you would not say in class; be even more careful, as online interactions lack context and tone, and, as a result, may be easily misinterpreted.

- Examine how your students manage passwords. Some school systems support a single sign-on strategy. If this is not the case, think about strategies for managing how students will create and keep track of multiple logins and passwords (e.g., recording all information in one place, either physical or digital). Make sure parents and families are familiar with the process, as appropriate.

- Learn about federal regulations, guidance, and best practices on student privacy at the Department's **Student Privacy Policy Office** website.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:
ADDRESSING ACCESS, TEACHING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP & SAFETY, AND ENSURING PRIVACY & SECURITY

Planning and Assessment:

- Do my students and their parents and families have access to the tools needed for supporting effective digital learning at home? If not, how can I facilitate their access?

- What data are collected and shared by the provider when the student uses or accesses the tools I am using in my teaching? Is data deleted and when is it deleted?

- Could the data collected by the provider be used to disadvantage students in the future, such as when they apply for college or jobs?

- What steps can I take to help identify and prevent cyberbullying?

- What district guidelines and resources are in place to ensure compliance with applicable privacy laws, regulations, and policies?

Teaching and Learning:

- How will I teach students to use new tools, ensure they can access technology support if they have trouble with the tool, provide opportunities for practice, and share expectations for its use?

- How do I plan to teach and model digital citizenship skills for my students?

Communication:

- How can I work best with my students' families to exchange best practices and resources for access, digital citizenship and safety, and privacy and security? My colleagues? My school leadership?

THIS SECTION IN 30 SECONDS

Personalizing learning can promote students' behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and relational engagement; foster student agency (i.e., student initiative, intention, and responsibility in pursuing their education); provide data that can be used to differentiate learning to meet each student's individual needs; and optimize assessment to best document student progress.

PERSONALIZE LEARNING FOR STUDENTS

Classroom learning has changed, quickly. Learning is now occurring in a variety of environments—synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid and virtual formats, school closures, and limited or rolling grade-level openings—with each impacting the learning experience of students. The current environment has created the demand to support students by leveraging EdTech and tools to empower the individual learner, foster engagement, develop agency and self-directed digital learning, and optimize assessments.

1. EMPOWERING THE INDIVIDUAL LEARNER

Digital learning and technology can move you toward meeting the needs of each student and providing an individualized approach to education. Tailoring support to each student's strengths, interests, learning styles, and time considerations allows for empowering the individual learner by focusing on their competencies and enabling real-time assessment.

Key Considerations

Once you have considered whether students have access to learning materials and resources to support digital citizenship, you can focus on leveraging EdTech to address your students' individual learning needs. Digital technologies, including assistive technologies, can empower

students to become drivers of their own learning, deeper thinkers, and stronger collaborators. EdTech can also provide you with supports for personalizing learning by allowing you to tailor assignments that address student interests, creating options for student choice and providing just-in-time feedback.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Recognize that your students bring their unique traits and characteristics to their learning circumstances; that includes things such as neurodiversity, disabilities, gender, culture, ethnicity, economic status, English language learning status, and more.

- Personalize learning by meeting the needs of individual students; tailor assignments to their needs, interests, and differences, and provide them with choices.

- Assess whether additional supports or resources are needed for your students to address any learning losses or gains that may have occurred, mitigate future learning losses, and build upon gains.

- Use EdTech tools to support personalization in multiple ways such as through apps, adaptive environments and problem sets, the availability of myriad topics of interest on the internet, games and simulations, the use of tools for creativity and self-expression, and the ability of students to develop and maintain their own portfolios.

  - Examples of these tools developed with the support of the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) include:

    - Math: **NumberShire**, **Teachley**, **Querium's StepWise Virtual Tutor**, **ASSISTments**

    - Science: **ChemVLab+**, **Happy Atoms**

    - English Language Arts: **A2i Platform**, **Moby.Read**, **MOCCA**

    - English Learners: **Uno, Dos, Tres, Listos!**, **STORYWORLD**, **Enfoque en Ciencia**

    - Social and Behavioral Development: **SELweb**

    - Early Childhood: **Molly of Denali**, **Individual Growth & Development Indicators**, **Cognitive ToyBox for Schools**

    - Special Education: **EdMod**, **KinderTEK**, **Go Phonics**, **Future Quest Island**

    - Classroom Discourse: **Class 5.0**

- Personalize learning for students with disabilities by ensuring they have access to instructional materials, aids and services, and assistive technologies that are tailored to their specific needs as identified in their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).[3]

- Familiarize yourself with information about the early impacts of COVID-19, like **this report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to Congress on the distance learning challenges in providing services to K-12 English Language Learning students and students with disabilities. (GAO 21-43)**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:
EMPOWERING THE INDIVIDUAL LEARNER

Planning and Assessment:

- Have I reviewed the learning strengths, weaknesses, and needs of my students—both academic and technological—to understand and prepare content, tools, and supports accordingly?

- In making instructional plans and selecting curricular materials, to what extent am I making decisions to empower all students, while keeping the most vulnerable populations in mind?

- How does my district account for the digital delivery and support of legally required needs, goals, and services for students with disabilities?

Teaching and Learning:

- How am I **basing learning personalization on data**, and what is the source of these data?[4]

- To what extent is research available to support the efficacy of the personalized learning tools that I am considering using for my students?

- Do I have a student or students who I think should be assessed for extra services, special education needs, or both—and if so, how do I ensure that happens?

- What additional supports or resources are available for my students to address any learning loss that may have occurred and to mitigate future learning loss?

Communication:

- How can I work best with my students' families to exchange best practices and resources regarding personalized learning? My colleagues? My school leadership?

- Have I communicated and connected parents and families to additional supports or resources available for my students to both meet their different learning needs and to address any learning loss?

2. FOSTERING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Key Considerations

Digital technologies can be powerful tools to help foster student engagement. Engaging students, either in-school or virtually, includes:

- supporting their social and emotional development;

- fostering relationships with you and classmates;

- partnering with parents, involving families;

- building practices such as personalization; and

- giving consistent feedback.

Learner engagement is made up of multiple components: behavioral, emotional, relational, and cognitive. In your planning, think about how to engage students in different ways.

Behavioral Engagement

Behavioral engagement considers student effort and participation in activities. The use of EdTech in digital environments provides the opportunity to be responsive to students' behaviors. EdTech can yield reports that include the number of interactions with course materials, assignment completion rates, or the extent to which each student participated in virtual discussions and other synchronous sessions.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Develop a method for tracking student digital participation using the data reported by your digital learning tools. Many provide login counts, number of posts, and number of interactions with materials (number of clicks a student makes).
- Determine what digital participation data are most informative and follow up with students who do not meet your participation goals.
- Foster student engagement by **tapping into research to increase engagement during remote learning**.
- Consider incorporating strategies such as those from **The Learning Accelerator to set up systems of accountability in digital learning**.
- Create norms and rules for digital participation in class. For example, in synchronous sessions, establish a procedure for students to ask and answer questions using the chat features of a videoconferencing tool. In asynchronous learning, students can provide comments in a shared document.
- Partner with parents, as the primary educators of their children, to support their child's efforts and participation.
- Communicate with parents and families to get insight into their child's behavioral engagement.

Emotional and Relational Engagement

Emotional engagement consists of both students' feelings about school and their relationships with others. With emotional engagement, feelings, attitudes, and perceptions toward school activities should be considered through students' level of satisfaction in the class, and the content of assignments.

Relational engagement addresses the connections in the classroom among students and their teacher. For some students, emotional and relational engagement will relate to how their family discusses and encourages schoolwork. In a virtual setting, it is particularly important to be aware of, and monitor, both emotional and relational engagement.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Explore frameworks such as **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** to support students with, and without, disabilities.

- Identify online tools (e.g., videoconferencing, conversational features in learning management systems including messaging tools and discussion boards, backchannel tools, collaborative games, or shared documents) that allow for students to collaborate in groups, engage in discussions, and share their ideas with one another.

- Check in with students frequently to acknowledge feelings and create a positive, motivating online environment.

- Use small group chat rooms to check in with groups of students, ask students to record short videos (using a tool like Flipgrid) or audio, create a blog to use as a reflection tool (make it private for just the student and you, or the class) or ask questions or make comments in a shared document with one student on their work.

- Connect learning activities with students' experiences and interests to increase personal relevance and positive feelings toward class; digital choice boards allow students to select the topics they wish to explore.

- Develop an online classroom community to support students as they collaborate in groups, engage in discussions, share their ideas with one another, and co-construct presentations and projects.

- **Partner with parents** to support their child's positive feelings about their school, classmates, and teachers.

- Communicate with parents and families to get insight into their child's emotional and relational engagement.

Cognitive Engagement

Cognitive engagement includes students' planning, self-regulation, progress monitoring, metacognition, and reflection while learning. Supporting and tracking this type of engagement through digital participation relies on your ability to gain insight into students' thinking, which underlies their interactions with digital learning.

Guiding Strategies

- Understand the strengths, weaknesses, and learning differences of your students as you design your digital learning lessons and experiences.

- Use an asset-based approach that highlights links between what students already know and the content and skills being taught.

- Partner with parents to support their child's **self-regulation**, **progress monitoring**, **metacognition**, and reflection.

- Communicate with parents and families to get insight into their child's cognitive engagement.

- Design personalized ways to motivate students, help them make meaning of information, and express their understanding.

  - Provide multiple ways for students to successfully engage with content, recognizing that each student is motivated by different things such as a powerful story, music, personal connection, and logical discourse.

  - Provide multiple representations (e.g., text, graph, video) when teaching a topic

to support all students, including language learners, students with sensory difficulties, and those who may process information differently.

- ◦ Leverage tools like text-to-speech programs to promote students' ability to process information in ways that are best for them.

- ◦ Allow students to express their knowledge in multiple ways. Provide students a choice menu of technology tools that they can use to present their learning (e.g., designing a report or comic, creating a digital storyboard, or explaining their thinking using an online recording tool).

- Provide frequent and meaningful feedback and help your students develop new ways to reflect on their learning. Use of a shared document—or tool that supports voice annotation—and asking students questions can encourage critical thinking or reflection to provide feedback on their thinking.

- Monitor students' progress, using tools like those provided by the U.S. Department of Education.

- Have students post or share their daily and long-term goals and provide structure for self-reflection. Students can create screen recordings to share reflections, and receive feedback from you, their peers, or both.

- Support both cognitive engagement and relational engagement by asking students to record videos discussing their thinking process.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: FOSTERING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Planning and Assessment:

- Have I done a baseline assessment of the strengths, weaknesses, and learning differences of my students and the digital learning skills necessary for them to be successful?

Teaching and Learning:

- What types of engagement do the digital learning tools I use support?

- How have I built in ways to optimize technology to provide frequent and meaningful feedback, and assess student progress?

- How am I utilizing EdTech to strengthen my students' personalization of their learning and keep students motivated and engaged with both content and each other to support their emotional, as well as academic, needs?

- How am I considering multiple dimensions of student engagement as I plan digital learning?

Communication:

- How can I work best with my students' families to exchange best practices and resources regarding fostering student engagement? My colleagues? My school leadership?

- Have I established regular communication with parents and families to provide them meaningful information about their child's academic progress, as well as their engagement and emotional well-being?

- Do I have a helpful mechanism for feedback from parents about their student's feelings about their learning and progress, their school, classmates, and teachers?

3. DEVELOPING AGENCY AND SELF-DIRECTED DIGITAL LEARNING

Key Considerations

Ensuring that each student can participate, engage, and learn in the digital space should be the center of your planning for developing agency and self-directed digital learning. When incorporating digital learning and new technology tools into your practice, quality is better than quantity. Start with the tools that are vetted, provided, and supported by your district, and consider how to use them in conjunction with your lesson plan content in a way that makes your students the drivers of their own learning.

It is important to consider optimizing your time, and that of your students, whether you are in an in-person classroom environment, teaching virtually, or in a hybrid model. Hybrid learning environments require thinking about which activities and lesson plan content make the most sense for the in-person, versus virtual, portion of your teaching. Regardless of your students' learning environment, you should ensure they understand the expectations of them and opportunities for digital learning engagement to help them acquire self-direction skills.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Self-assess readiness for teaching in a digital learning environment. An example for self-evaluation includes this **Teacher Readiness rubric** or, for a more comprehensive resource, the **National Standards for Quality Online Teaching** is a **benchmark for quality online instruction**.

- Consider these six promising **practices for remote digital environments**.

- Determine the appropriateness of synchronous and asynchronous approaches for different assignments and activities using **this document from Digital Promise**, or **this resource from The Learning Accelerator**.

- Provide students with clear learning objectives and straightforward presentations of materials and instructions, and let them know how and when to ask questions.

- Present information and assignments in small modular components.

- Model how to do the work, in live sessions or recorded videos.

- Differentiate instruction using these strategies from **The Learning Accelerator**, and these **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) guidelines**.

- Use self-assessment and reflection as strategies that foster deeper learning and help learners become more independent. For example, before moving on from one activity, have students use a technology quiz tool that allows them to submit answers and receive immediate feedback (e.g., Quizlet), or submit written, audio, or video reflections identifying their own strengths and weaknesses.

- Provide opportunities for active learning where students can ask questions, learn by doing, or actively think about a problem or concept (alone or with others) when possible.

- Use digital technology tools to create a shared space where students can generate questions (such as **Poll Everywhere** or a shared document). You can ask students to vote on questions and then create teams who work together to find answers or solve them.

- Explore these online learning resources curated by **ISTE**, and **Educating all Learners**.
- Explore the **Institute of Education Science (IES)'s blog**, which provides digital tools for **Early Learning**, **Math**, **Science and Engineering**, **Social Studies**, and **Special Education**.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:
DEVELOPING AGENCY AND SELF-DIRECTED DIGITAL LEARNING

Planning and Assessment:

- How do the technology tools I use facilitate my students developing self-directed learning?
- How can I leverage the strengths and mitigate the limitations of digital learning in a virtual or hybrid environment? In limited school openings or during rolling openings by grade level?
- When using a synchronous approach, what strategies will I use to support students who are not able to attend a session?
- How will I track or understand whether my students are engaged and participating during asynchronous learning times?

Teaching and Learning:

- How are my lessons helping to empower my students as learners?
- Am I showing students what is expected and encouraging them to reflect on their own progress?
- Am I having students do the thinking or am I leading their thinking?
- How am I monitoring and measuring the development of student self-agency?

Communication:

- Have I made my expectations for asynchronous learning clear and provided students with ample opportunities to ask questions, and do I have a way to intervene if students are going in the wrong direction or are not regularly checking in on assignments?
- How can I work best with my students' families to exchange best practices and resources regarding developing agency and self-directed learning? My colleagues? My school leadership?

4. OPTIMIZING ASSESSMENTS USING DIGITAL LEARNING

Key Considerations

Assessments are critical tools for personalization. In addition to providing you with data about student progress to inform your next move, assessments provide your students with information that builds agency and supports goal setting and self-regulation. Assessments can also help to reveal equity imbalances within your classroom. During times of school closures, assessments are especially important because your daily observation data is minimized.

While virtual learning (learning conducted remotely) presents new challenges for student assessment, the use of digital learning technologies opens new possibilities for assessments. As you develop your assessment plan, determine what you will do with the information from those assessments.

Technology apps can provide frequent formative checks that can guide you and your students in next steps for learning. Likewise, technology enables innovative possibilities for summative assessments by supporting new ways for students to demonstrate their learning in context.

Assessing and grading students based on their **mastery of standards or competencies aligned to personal learning pathways** provides new assessment opportunities compared to relying on seat time for advancement.5 Technology-supported assessment can provide flexibility and personalization to help ensure that each student masters a given skill or topic.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Explore this **Assessment and Data toolbox** from the Dallas Independent School District and consider a list of **digital tools, apps, how to pick the right digital tool**, and **formative practices workshops** from NWEA.

- Check for understanding using digital formative assessments to inform your next moves as a teacher and help students know where to go next.

    ◦ Use just-in-time opportunities (e.g., polling and student response tools) for students to show their understanding and receive feedback.

    ◦ Many digital systems provide teacher data dashboards that collect, summarize, and report on student work, so insights can be gained into student thinking in real-time. Data can be a helpful tool to identify student misconceptions, permit timely feedback, and adapt tasks accordingly.

    ◦ Use these dashboards to share anonymized samples of student work with the class to help your students learn from each other with examples that show common issues encountered by students or exemplary answers or solutions.

- Design digital summative assessments, like **these online labs**, that are appropriate without a proctor.

    ◦ Assessments that are performance-based (e.g., capstone projects, portfolios of student work, design thinking projects) have students demonstrate their learning in context, rather than recalling memorized information.

    ◦ Authentic and open-ended tasks allow your students to demonstrate their learning, can allay fears around cheating, and allow assessment of multiple standards, integration of the important skills of problem solving, critical thinking, and even collaboration.

- Have each student maintain a personal digital portfolio of their work so they can see their own progress, including writing samples throughout the year, reading (can record audio tracks as demonstrations of their reading ability), and mathematics.

- Communicate both expectations and progress with students, parents, and families on a regular basis.

- Identify whether other assessments may be needed for students who may have suffered any learning loss and continue on-going appropriate assessments to mitigate future learning loss.

- Leverage learning management systems and other technology tools to provide parents with just-in-time access to data on their child's progress in your class.

- Feedback with students and their parents and families on progress can be provided in a variety of formats; recording a voice memo may be more engaging and personal than traditional written feedback.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:
OPTIMIZING ASSESSMENTS USING DIGITAL LEARNING

Planning and Assessment:

- What data dashboards are available in the technology tools and applications we use to help me plan assessments for students with different learning needs?

- Have I planned other assessments for students who may have suffered learning loss and ongoing appropriate assessments to mitigate future learning loss?

Teaching and Learning:

- How do I use technology to help me give timely and actionable feedback to each student and in formats that are most helpful?

- How does the EdTech I am using provide feedback to students in real time?

- How can I keep track of each student's progress on mastery of specific skills and topics?

- How can I ensure that the grades I assign reflect the degree to which students have shown progress toward mastery?

Communication:

- How can I work best with my students' families to exchange best practices and resources regarding assessment? My colleagues? My school leadership?

- How will I communicate with parents and families about both their student's grades and assessment of their student's progress toward content mastery?

- Do I have a helpful mechanism for feedback from parents about their student's feelings about their learning and progress, their school, classmates, and teachers?

THIS SECTION IN 30 SECONDS

Digital tools can be used to bolster communication with students, parents, and families and increase student engagement in digital learning. By setting clear expectations and maintaining open lines of communication, you can leverage students' support systems both inside and outside of school in ways that are beneficial for students' social and emotional wellbeing.

COLLABORATE WITH PARENTS AND FAMILIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

1. COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS AND FAMILIES

Key Considerations

When parents and families are involved in education, students are more engaged.6 Increasing the adoption of digital learning provides new opportunities for parent and family engagement and the development of strong partnerships, especially when students engage in virtual learning from home.

Maintaining a two-way line of communication with parents and families is essential for ensuring clarity. Active listening and empathizing can help establish trust. Make sure families know that you care about their circumstances and will do what you can to meet their child's learning needs. Help parents and families understand the role they can play using straightforward language and deliver messages in ways that are easy to understand.
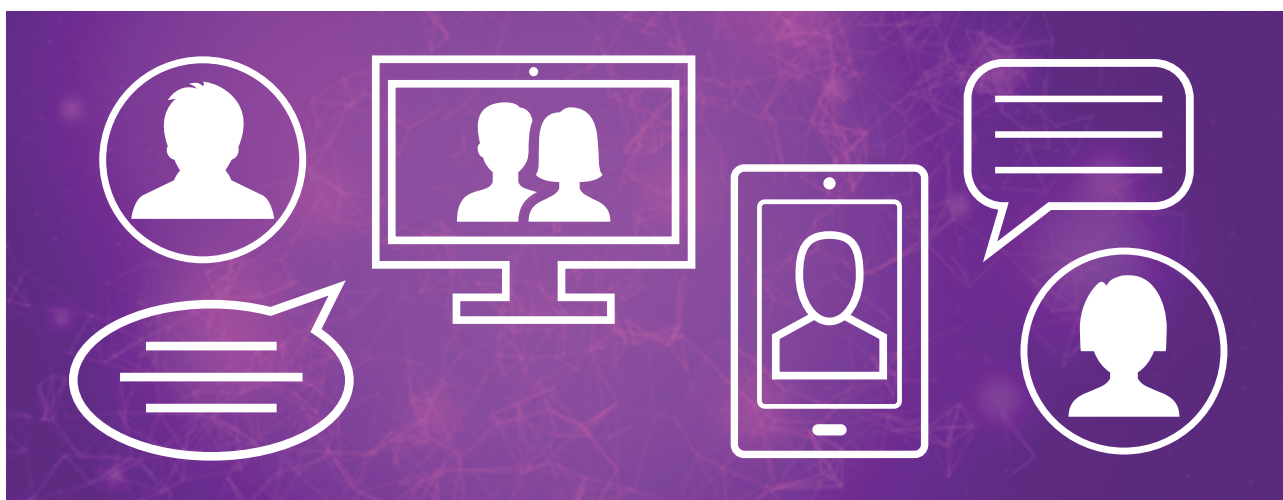
Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Build your understanding of the importance of family engagement by exploring resources like this summary from **Understood.org**.

- Select forms of communication (email, phone calls, text messaging and/or other platforms) that will best meet the needs of each of your students and their families. Opt for tools that log communication in case documentation is needed later.

- Coordinate with school leaders and colleagues to ensure that communication is streamlined and follows a consistent cadence. Provide clarity around how frequently and in what formats communication will occur and provide parents and families with options for contacting you with feedback, questions, and concerns as well as identifying when you will be unavailable.

- Use the system your school has created for a "one-stop" location where parents and families can find information quickly (e.g., school or class website with links or parent access to a learning management system).

- Ensure that parents and families receive communications in their home language and are informed of options for translation, over-the-phone interpretation services, or text messaging translation.

- Consider hosting 1:1 or small group meetings that allow for two-way communication (e.g., phone, online, in-person) when introducing new processes for the first time.

- Ask parents and families what goals they have for their child and get to know what resources are available to them to support their child. You can gather this information in a survey or by asking specific questions in an initial conversation.

- Share reasoning about how and why you make decisions about your activities. Make sure that parents and families know how you will communicate clear goals for assignments and provide the scaffolds and resources needed to help students and their families work toward shared goals.

- Invite students and their parents and families to preview your online learning system or website to see learning goals, materials, and criteria upon which students will be assessed.

- Keep communication brief and avoid using educational jargon in your communications (e.g., describe or name a learning management system rather than using the term "LMS").

- Identify and share strategies for maximizing family engagement, such as these **Tips to Help Your Child Focus and Stay Engaged During Distance Learning from Johns Hopkins School of Education**, resources from **Learning Heroes**, and **Supporting Young Children's Learning and Development at Home: Resources for Early Childhood Educators and Caregivers** from the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), an investment of the Institute of Education Sciences at the Department.

2. SETTING EXPECTATIONS AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Key Considerations

Partnering with parents and families is essential to help students succeed in school, especially when conditions require that learning occur in the home through virtual learning environments. Insight can be gained through engagement and conversation with parents regarding how their children participate. Families can help you learn how to better support your students.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Communicate with parents and families to understand their circumstances and their capacity to support their child's distance learning.

- Develop a plan for flexibility to support diverse student needs and family circumstances and lay out available options to meet those needs.

- Share how student participation—attendance, grading, behavior—in a digital learning environment will be tracked and measured.

- Communicate with parents and families as to when and how they will be contacted if their child is not participating in digital learning activities.

- Bring students into these conversations to fully understand their perspectives, build accountability, and empower them.

- If a student is not attending classes, determine whether there are systemic or individual barriers to participation (e.g., lack of access, understanding, or motivation, potential struggles with physical health or mental wellness, or if there are home-based responsibilities to which they must attend).

- Collaborate with the student and family to identify solutions that meet their unique needs.

- Use these strategies from **The Learning Accelerator for helping students set up structures for remote work**.

- Recognize that positive and trusting relationships between students and teachers, with encouragement by their parents and families, yields emotional connections for students that foster participation and engagement.

- Use your students' parents and families as a support system to motivate students to participate.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:
SETTING EXPECTATIONS AND SUPPORT FOR STUDENT PARTICIPATION

Planning and Assessment:

- What is the home environment of each of my students and how might I support their full participation?

- What additional supports or resources do any of my students need to address potential learning losses or mitigate future learning loss?

- What recommendations are most appropriate for the home context, grade level(s), and discipline(s) I teach?

Communication:

- What instructions will I provide parents and families around expectations and schedules for remote schoolwork?

- Do students, parents, and families know how, at what point, and from whom students should seek help when they are stuck with classwork?

3. SUPPORTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS

Key Considerations

Emotions and social relationships are essential components that drive learning and academic achievement. Your school is a community space that plays a pivotal role in the social development and mental well-being of students.

To help address these needs in the digital space, whether in the classroom, virtually, or in a hybrid approach, it is crucial that you work to build safe and supportive digital learning communities. Expressly address the social and emotional needs of your students. When working in a virtual learning environment, just as in your classroom, you will need to have strategies to get to know your students, and to foster and build trusting relationships for the digital space.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Connect with students before school starts with a video or email, personalizing it to each student to the extent possible. You can use EdTech tools such as Flipgrid or a shared document, or have them start a blog (that you continue to use over the school year).
- Ask students through prompts to send you a picture of "a favorite memory" or "when you felt proud" or "something that makes you happy or sad" as an open-ended starter to get to know your students.
- Develop activities that help students get to know each other (e.g., small group chat rooms around interest, get-to-know-each-other online games).
- Co-develop rules and respectful normative behaviors that create a welcoming online classroom space, much as you would in a physical classroom.
- Make space for informal connections and social support by regularly scheduling 1:1 or small group check-ins with students.
- Help students share their identities in the digital space in similar ways to how they would in your classroom. For example, create a website or photo gallery of student work. Students can take pictures of pen and paper assignments, or screenshots of online assignments.
- Enable connections between peers by providing opportunities for students to share experiences, engage in digital class discussions and small-group work, and support one another.
- Provide avenues for students to share questions, comments, and concerns that are related to instruction.
- Expand the classroom community by creating opportunities for students to connect with other classes (e.g., within the school, across the world) to share ideas and collaborate on projects.
- Support students in developing schedules and rhythms that include time for brain breaks. During those routine breaks, encourage students to move away from the screen (e.g., get outside if possible, draw, and move).
- Build consistent check-ins with students as a part of digital learning. These can occur at the start of each synchronous session or once a day if activities are asynchronous.

- If you have concerns, coordinate support with school or other district personnel as appropriate (e.g., special education practitioners, counselors, social workers, nurses) to work as a team in supporting students' social and emotional health.

    ○ Understand and collaborate with your school or school system on strategies for response if the safety of the learning environment for your class, or for an individual student has potentially been compromised.

    ○ Be aware of district and community supports that are available for students who need additional support, as well as the processes and protocols to follow in identifying students for timely referral to services.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS: SUPPORTING SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS

Planning and Assessment:

- Am I giving students supports that allow for differences in home situations?
- Do I have a way to understand how much time is being spent on tasks by students so that I can adjust or provide additional support, if necessary?
- Am I aware of different school, school system, and community supports for students?

Teaching and Learning:

- To what extent are learners invited to take ownership and responsibility in the online classroom by co-developing expectations and protocols?
- Have I modeled and provided examples of effective and appropriate online communication?
- Have I facilitated ways for my learners to get to know and trust me, as well as the other students, in our online environment?
- Have I facilitated ways for my students to build and maintain social and emotional connections with fellow students in a digital learning environment to foster their well-being?
- What is the right pacing for scheduling for learning and breaks?
- What tasks allow for flexibility?

Communication:

- To what extent have I ensured rules and norms are explicitly communicated to parents and families?
- How can I work best with my students' families to exchange best practices and resources regarding social and emotional support? My colleagues? My school leadership?
- How have I planned to implement a system of regular "well-being checks" with my students and to communicate any issues or concerns with parents, families, and, if necessary, my school leadership?

Resources

- **The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) site on social and emotional learning during COVID.**
    - **CASEL provides important information** on leveraging the power of social and emotional learning as students grapple with the impact of school closures, hybrid and distance learning environments, and uncertain return-to-school plans.

- The **Aspen Institute's** National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Learning explains how emotions and social relationships are essential elements that drive learning.

- Institute of Education Sciences: **Supporting the Social and Emotional Needs of Educators and Students: Skills for Now and Planning for When Schools Reopen**

- Institute of Education Sciences: **IES Expands Research in Social Emotional Learning**

- Institute of Education Sciences: **Measuring Social and Emotional Learning in Schools**

THIS SECTION IN 30 SECONDS

The transition to digital learning can, for some, be daunting, but digital tools can be used to ease this transition and equip you with the skills needed to digitize your craft. Digital tools can be used to increase your collaboration with colleagues, open new opportunities for professional development, and potentially automate portions of your work. Focusing on your professional learning and well-being requires intentionality, in collaboration with your colleagues, school administrators, and school system leaders.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND WELL-BEING

Digital teaching, in school or online, requires an additional set of skills beyond traditional teaching, and adapting new practices can be demanding. Maintaining a growth mindset can be helpful, as well as engaging in self-care, and setting boundaries on work, especially if you are supporting digital learning from home. Learn what supports and well-being tools are available to you in your district. Take time to acknowledge and celebrate the new ways you are supporting your students and reflect on what works and what does not work.

Recognize that navigating the changes in school-based, in-person learning, and a home-based distance learning environment requires support from your school, school system, and leadership team. You have a crucial role in researching and accessing resources which will benefit the individual needs of your students in this unique teaching, learning, and assessment journey.

Key Considerations

Professional learning is an ongoing process: learn with and from others. Learning to teach with digital technologies, including student access from home, changes the classroom system and will take time and support from your school and district leaders. Requesting and investing in professional self-development is very important consideration to empower teachers and benefits students.

The burden of transitioning to digital learning can be lessened when colleagues share ideas, capitalize on available tools, and co-create resources. Collaborating with others also provides information and resources that support inquiry and reflection.

Guiding Strategies and Resources

- Partner with someone who can play the invaluable role of thought partner and provide personalized support and guidance with implementation.
- Identify colleagues with whom you can share ideas, think through issues, and openly discuss successes and failures.

- Find out how you can work with a coach to get personalized support in implementing changes in your classroom practice if your district offers coaching as a form of job-embedded professional learning.

- Partner with other teachers in your school, district, or beyond to work together, record videos, or co-create lessons and resources to save time.

- Invite a colleague to join your online synchronous class to observe and provide feedback, co-teach, or teach so that you can observe them.

- Maintain connections with other educators. If the school building is closed or is open in a limited capacity, take advantage of EdTech and move to the digital space; create opportunities for spontaneous and informal conversations around what you are experiencing, tips, resources, and shared ideas.

- Join or create grade-level or subject-area discussions or find groups to collaborate with in online professional learning communities (PLCs).

- Learn with and from students, parents, and families. In times of transition to virtual learning, it is more crucial than ever that teachers remain attentive to the voices and experiences of students, parents, and families.

- Actively listening to students, parents, and families about their concerns and needs during this transitional time so you are better poised to provide personalized and flexible support.

- Look for new insights into the learning process as you use digital technologies.

- Find digital and on-demand professional learning opportunities, such as those supported by micro-credentials, that provide educators with flexibility to learn on their own time.

- Focus on one or two specific priorities at a time, such as supporting students' social and emotional health and wellness, connecting with families, and teaching digital citizenship.

- Rethink your workflow. Digital teaching has the potential to automate portions of the teacher's work and allow more time to connect, build relationships, and work with students individually and in small groups.

- Recognize that it can take time to set up and learn how to use EdTech, but it can automate processes, build efficiencies, and help you make more meaningful use of both digital and offline learning time. Systems exist that can help grade student work, personalize homework, and inform you about what your students know and don't yet fully understand (e.g., **digital math homework system**, **inquiry science system**).

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:
TEACHER PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND WELL-BEING

Planning and Assessment:

- Where am I on my journey to using EdTech to support each of my students?
- Does my school have a PLC, or are there other online PLCs I can join?
- How will I decide which technology tool best supports the instructional strategies I am using to support learning?
- What types of support are available as I bring more digital technologies into my teaching and connect in new ways with students and their parents and families (e.g., coaching, district workshops)? What else do I need?

Teaching and Learning:

- What steps am I taking to measure my progress and build in time for reflection?

Communication:

- How can I work best with my colleagues to exchange best practices and resources regarding teacher professional learning and well-being? My school leadership?

Resources

- ASCD provides clear strategies and tips for taking offline classes online.
- The Learning Accelerator provides research-based online professional learning resources.
- Digital Promise provides a wide variety of educator micro-credentials designed to support personalized and flexible professional learning.
- EdSurge: What Does Remote Professional Development Look Like for Online Teachers?
- UDL for Teachers: An Introduction to UDL
- Dynamic Learning Project (DLP) Strategy Menu
- Institute of Education Sciences: This research study examines how online math homework paired with teacher professional development can increase student achievement.
- Office of Educational Technology's STEM Innovation Spotlights
- Institute of Education Sciences: COVID-19 Evidence-Based Resources
- Institute of Education Sciences: How to Grow Teacher Well-being in Your Schools
- Institute of Education Sciences: Reflecting on Teacher Well-being During the COVID-19 Pandemic
- WestEd: Self-Care Strategies for Educators During the Coronavirus Crisis: Supporting Personal Social and Emotional Well-Being

NAVIGATING THE FUTURE

As a teacher, you are a valued partner in the development of children's futures. It can be daunting to contemplate your role in your students' education and success in these challenging times.

Yet, the systems of support and information to aid teachers in successfully navigating the current learning environment are deep and broad. It is important to seek and ask for the wealth of research, common resources, and EdTech available from school-based, community, industry, state, and federal sources. Capitalizing on and effectively utilizing technology to personalize learning will help meet the diverse needs of students, improve confidence, and empower and enhance their learning through increased opportunities for authentic engagement and participation.

Optimizing resources and EdTech will also help establish and grow much-needed connection and collaboration with parents, including the opportunity for innovation to reach and support low-resource families, so they may assist their students from home in their digital learning. Incorporating digital citizenship will support and promote academic success, and social and emotional health and wellness of students. Clear and regular communication with all parents and families will help establish mutual understanding and expectations for teaching, learning and assessment in your current learning environment, and as transitions in learning environments occur on the horizon.

As you work to meet the perennial demands on teachers, not only in these historically unparalleled circumstances but in general as well, it is important to seek and drive your own meaningful professional learning. Ask for high-quality professional development, innovate and collaborate with colleagues, and build on or establish new PLCs to address existing and emerging challenges.

Your success and that of your students can be helped tremendously by accessing and effectively using an array of technology, tools, and resources. Know, most of all, that while you are navigating unchartered educational waters—**you are not alone, and your efforts on the behalf of your students are valued and appreciated!**

ENDNOTES

1. ESSA Handbook (2017). Retrieved from **https://cdn.iste.org/www-root/Libraries/ Documents%20%26%20Files/Advocacy%20Resources/handbook-essa.pdf**

2. The Role of Research in K-12 District Decision Making (n.d.). Retrieved from **https:// symposium.curry.virginia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/WG-A-The-Role-of-Research- in-K-12-District-Decision-Making_FINAL.pdf**

3. Unless otherwise noted this guide does not address schools' responsibilities to provide services or modifications to students with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Information about the IDEA is available at **https:// osepideasthatwork.org/**. Information about Section 504 and Title II is available at **https:// www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html**

4. What is Data Based Individualization? (n.d.). Retrieved from **https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt. edu/module/dbi2/cresource/q1/p01/#content**

5. Introduction to Competency-Based Education (n.d.). Retrieved from **https://aurora-institute. org/our-work/competencyworks/competency-based-education/**

6. Family Engagement and What Research Says (n.d.). Retrieved from **https://www. understood.org/en/school-learning/for-educators/partnering-with-families/family- engagement-and-student-success**