

CONSIDERATIONS FOR REMOTE LITERACY INSTRUCTION

A Back-to-School Resource for Educators

Learning to read for understanding is a critical skill that all students must master to succeed in school. Literacy educators know that reading is a developmental process that begins in early childhood and extends throughout readers' educational careers. The coronavirus pandemic has brought about new challenges for literacy instruction as learning in many school districts has transitioned from in-person instruction to distance learning models. A variety of factors exist that educators should consider as they provide their students with instructional continuity in reading and literacy.

Equity To prepare students to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world, educators must create a classroom environment that places value on diversity and multiple perspectives. For many students, textbooks lack the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity that tap into their perspectives and interests. By adopting an equity lens, educators are better able to [integrate culturally responsive practices](#)¹ and include resources, materials, and activities to ensure all students feel welcome, respected, and valued.

Access The [homework gap](#)²—the inability of students to do schoolwork at home due to lack of Internet connectivity—affects [27 percent of students across the nation](#),³ disproportionately affecting Indigenous, Black, Brown, and other Students of Color; students from under-resourced communities; and those living in rural districts. This gap is amplified as many districts transition to full-time or part-time distance learning models. Educators must consider the diverse circumstances of their students and provide multiple means of instructional delivery to accommodate all students equitably.

Student Privacy Educators should consider student privacy and security when planning online activities. They should use caution if they are considering learning resources and applications that are not supported by the district; unsupported applications may not comply with [federal](#)⁴ and/or state student data privacy laws.

DISTANCE LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY GRADES

Primary Research offers little information about the efficacy of remote teaching for early reading. Mastery of foundational skills is a high priority and teaching young children these skills often requires hands-on activities. Delivery of reading instruction online can present challenges; for example, ensuring that students have quality materials and are provided effective, engaging literacy instruction. To overcome these challenges, educators may want to consider:

- Sending a letter to parents/guardians in multiple languages outlining an action plan for home literacy learning that includes manipulatives and other materials that will be needed;
- Offering sessions for parents on [foundational skills](#)⁵ and activities to support early readers;

- Providing [reading materials](#)⁶ that encompass the diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of students and tips for parents on how they can support learning outside of the virtual classroom;
- How to continue shared and [guided reading activities online](#)⁷; and
- [Recording and making lessons accessible](#)⁸ for parental use.

Students who do not have Internet access or devices at home must be accommodated to ensure equitable access to instruction. For these students—in addition to the above—educators may consider:

- Offering a short course for parents on foundational literacy skills and activities;
- Sharing information about the Florida Center for Reading Research’s [series of free videos](#)⁹ demonstrating how parents can teach foundational skills at home; and
- Providing recorded lessons for use at home.

Secondary Students need to continue literacy instruction past the elementary grades. All students deserve instruction that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive to their needs as readers. Two important pillars of effective literacy instruction for this group of learners are self-efficacy and student engagement with a variety of texts. To incorporate these principles within a distance learning model, educators should consider how to:

- Promote self-efficacy by setting a clear [purpose](#)¹⁰ and [goals](#)¹¹ for reading;
- Identify and promote the use of [comprehension strategies](#)¹² for struggling readers;
- Allow for [cultural diversity](#)¹³ and choice in selection of reading materials to improve motivation;
- Scaffold reading by including activities that [build background and vocabulary knowledge](#)¹⁴; and
- Where practicable, incorporate [participatory approaches](#)¹⁵ that promote peer interaction.

RESOURCES

¹ Teaching Tolerance. “Student Texts.” Retrieved from tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts.

² NEA Today. (May 2020). “Coronavirus Brings ‘Homework Gap’ to the Forefront.” Retrieved from neatoday.org/2020/05/04/coronavirus-brings-homework-gap-to-the-forefront/.

³ Pew Research Center. (October 2018). “Nearly One-in-Five Teens Can’t Always Finish Their Homework Because of the Digital Divide.” Retrieved from [pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/26/nearly-one-in-five-teens-cant-always-finish-their-homework-because-of-the-digital-divide/](https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/10/26/nearly-one-in-five-teens-cant-always-finish-their-homework-because-of-the-digital-divide/).

⁴ U.S. Department of Education. (March 2020). “FERPA and Virtual Learning During COVID-19.” Retrieved from studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/ferpa-and-virtual-learning-during-covid-19.

⁵ Education Week. (January 2020). “There are Four Foundational Reading Skills. Why Do We Only Talk About Phonics?” Retrieved from [edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/01/24/there-are-four-foundational-reading-skills-why.html](https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2020/01/24/there-are-four-foundational-reading-skills-why.html).

⁶ readwritethink. “Classroom Resources.” Retrieved from [readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/](https://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/).

⁷ Collaborative Classroom. “Best Practices for Teaching Being a Reader Small-Group Reading Sets 1-5 Remotely.” Retrieved from [collaborativeclassroom.org/blog/best-practices-for-teaching-being-a-reader-small-group-reading-sets-1-5-remotely/](https://www.collaborativeclassroom.org/blog/best-practices-for-teaching-being-a-reader-small-group-reading-sets-1-5-remotely/).

- ⁸ Collaborative Classroom. "What I Have Learned Facilitating Online, Part 3: Five Best Practices for Recorded Sessions." Retrieved from collaborativeclassroom.org/blog/what-i-have-learned-facilitating-learning-online-part-3-five-best-practices-for-recorded-sessions/.
- ⁹ YouTube. "Florida Center for Reading Research." Retrieved from youtube.com/channel/UCq2Fmhb-Gr5xQoXPvKSkejQ.
- ¹⁰ Reading Rockets. (April 2016). "Should I Set Reading Purposes for My Students?" (April 2016). Reading Rockets. Retrieved from readingrockets.org/blogs/shanahan-literacy/should-i-set-reading-purposes-my-students.
- ¹¹ National Institute for Literacy. (2007). "What Content-Area Teachers Should Know About Adolescent Literacy." Retrieved from lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/adolescent_literacy07.pdf.
- ¹² U.S. Department of Education. (August 2008). "Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices." Retrieved from ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/adlit_pg_082608.pdf.
- ¹³ NCTE. (July 2018). "A Call to Action: What We Know About Adolescent Literacy Instruction." (July 2018). NCTE. Retrieved from ncte.org/statement/adolescentliteracy/.
- ¹⁴ AdLit.org. (2007). "Teach Vocabulary by Building Background Knowledge." Retrieved from adlit.org/article/39826/.
- ¹⁵ AdLit.org. "Classroom Strategies." Retrieved from adlit.org/strategy_library/.