

The ABCs of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Planning for 2020-21

K-5 In-person & 6-12 Hybrid Temporary Learning Models

No matter which of our Temporary Learning Models (TLM) you are teaching in, this school year is going to necessarily look and feel different. At the elementary level, classroom teachers may find that their students are necessarily divided into two groups with each of those groups in a different location for all or part of the day. At the secondary level, four out of five days, teachers will have half of their class with them in-person while the other half is working from home, while on Wednesdays all of their students will be learning remotely from home.

The complexities of these models have caused teachers to ask, among other things:

- As an elementary teacher, if I can only provide direct instruction to my students 50% of the time, does that mean we are only covering 50% of the curriculum?
- As a secondary teacher, if on two out of five days my students are working independently at home while I'm working with the "other half" in school, does that mean we are only covering 3/5ths of the curriculum?
- How can I successfully be the Teacher of Record for two groups of students in different locations?
- What are the students doing when they are not with me?

The answer to the first two questions is "of course not". We have curriculum that we are responsible for and standards that students need to be given every opportunity to meet, despite the Temporary Learning Models. How we accomplish that will depend, to a large extent, on the answers we discover to the final two questions.

Here are some common understandings we all need to have in order to provide our students with the best possible learning experiences this year.

Assessments:

Assessment is a critical part of the learning process. All students, regardless of the TLM they are participating in need and deserve to have their learning progress assessed through both formative and summative experiences. Whether an assessment has been created by an individual teacher, a building level team, or a district-wide team it should be focused on the essential learning, at the appropriate degree of rigor, for whatever is being assessed. At this time, we have every reason to believe that students will be expected to participate in New York State Assessments (3-8 ELA, math, and science), as well as Regents and AP exams for relevant courses. Our responsibility, therefore, is to continue to provide them with opportunities to be prepared for success on those assessments, as we would every other year.

Being in Two Places at one time:

This is clearly the most challenging part of our K-5 in-person TLM and our 6-12 hybrid model. As the teacher, you will likely have a group of students physically with you, and another group of students not physically with you. For starters, it is important that you realize you, personally, cannot be in two places at one time. Once you accept that, hopefully you can begin the mindshift necessary to plan for the two groups both effectively and efficiently.

For elementary teachers, it may be helpful to think about things that your students can do – meaningful tasks, not just "busy-work" – that do not require your direct instruction. In a typical elementary classroom, there are actually a lot of things that you, as the teacher, ask your students to do independently or with the assistance of

a paraprofessional, while you work with another group of students. Independent reading, working on a writing piece, practicing math problems (with or without the use of technology), playing a math game, doing word work, watching an instructional video, practicing keyboarding skills, listening to a read-aloud while eating snack ... These are just some examples of things that students can be doing while they are in the “other space” working under the supervision of another adult. This is also a time when students can be working and collaborating in Teams, for example, to help boost their skills with technology, if the resources are available in that setting.

At the secondary level, again, teachers need to be thinking about purposeful learning tasks for students to be engaged in on their “home” days that will allow you to keep the curriculum moving forward. What can you do with students on the days that you have them in front of you to set them up for success the following day when they are working from home? Could you record a brief “lecture” for students to listen to asynchronously and then prepare a response that they submit to you via Team? There may be independent research, reading and/or writing projects that they can be engaged with. Can they be collaborating, within Teams, with other students in the class who are also working at home on that day? How can you use experiences such as virtual labs or simulations to introduce new learning, or reinforce previously taught concepts?

Regardless of whether you are teaching at the elementary or secondary level, two things need to be at the center of your thinking:

1. How can you use your limited “face-to-face” time for aspects of your instruction that are most dependent on direct input and/or immediate feedback from you as the teacher?
2. This is one of those things that we are going to get better at as we get into the school year and learn from one another what works and doesn’t work.

Curriculum:

All teachers continue to be responsible for using the district-created curriculum documents to guide the planning of their instruction. As part of the Instructional Roadmapping work done this summer by collaborative teams of teachers representing every grade level and almost every course, decisions have been made to make necessary adjustments to the district-created curriculum for this year. Any adjustments made were decided upon through the lens of the “REAL” criteria (Readiness, Endurance, Assessment, and Leverage) and should not in any way disadvantage students in terms of their preparedness for high stakes assessments or next year’s learning.

Essentials:

Since the March closure, there have been ongoing conversations about “essentials” in terms of what to teach, and what not to teach. Unlike our work on essentials last spring when we responsively set aside some content, knowing that assessments were either cancelled or modified, we now have an obligation to assure that we cover all of the essentials for a given course.

The Instructional Roadmapping work done this summer used the idea of “essentials” to help teams of teachers decide those things that must get done in order for students to achieve the standards they must achieve, versus those things that could be abbreviated, or even eliminated, this year. Focusing on the essentials does not equate to reducing your curriculum requirements by 40% (or any other random number). Focusing on the essentials is about knowing those high leverage, most enduring, most necessary skills and concepts and going deeply with those things in order to maximize the learning time you have with students. Focusing on the

essentials means recognizing that students need to spend more time “doing” the work of the discipline. With carefully crafted learning experiences, they can be “doing” when they are not physically with you.

Grades:

Unlike last spring during our emergency COVID remote instruction, this year, regardless of the TLM, student work will be graded, in keeping with our PCSD Grading Philosophy.

Homework:

The term “homework” can mean many different things and can include activities that are meant to provide students the opportunity to practice skills taught in class, time spent on an independent reading assignment to prepare for a class discussion, or a long-term assignment that necessarily requires time spent at home to complete. Given the fact that many families are faced with different and challenging circumstances this year, it is more important than ever that we are thoughtful about the amount of “homework” expected of students. At the secondary level, students will already be expected to be working with a great deal of independence on their “at home” learning days, spending extended periods of time in front of a screen. Older siblings may be caring for younger siblings, as well as contributing to the family income by working after school hours. At the same time, it will be important, particularly at the start of the year, to expect students to independently complete “homework” tasks using the agreed-upon technology platform for their grade level in order to build the competence and confidence in utilizing those tools.

Given all of this, teachers, now more than ever, are being asked to be cautious, conservative, and thoughtful about “homework assignments” and focus on quality over quantity. Before assigning homework, consider the necessity and value that doing that work will bring to the individual student’s learning experience, balanced with the potential of additional family stressors.

Instruction:

Instruction in these TLMs will necessarily look different, not just because you won’t have all of your students physically with you at the same time, but because of the need to maintain social distancing. To the greatest degree possible, teachers will need to plan for whole group, rather than small group, instruction. Center based activities may be integrated into your instructional plans, as long as you are able to have students maintain the six feet of distance while working at a common center. The fact that in most classrooms the total number of students present will be significantly reduced from normal, may aid teachers in thinking about how to provide targeted instruction to students, despite the impact of distancing requirements. For all teachers it will be important to think about, and plan for cognitively engaging learning strategies to weave into your whole-group instruction on a regular and sustained basis.

Keeping kids apart:

Providing for a safe and healthy learning and work environment for all students and staff is highly dependent on two common practices: wearing a facemask and maintaining six feet of social distancing. Keeping students of any age six feet apart at all times may seem like a daunting task, and it will be challenging at times. It will challenge our thinking around what our instruction can look like, whether or not (likely not) we can have students work in groups, and how students will reasonably be able to socialize with one another. Our responsibility is to establish learning environments that plan for, and allow for, a minimum six-foot social distancing. This includes establishing routines and expectations in each of our classrooms, and modeling these

expectations by ALL adults in the school environment. We also recognize that we are working with children and at times, that six-foot barrier will, of momentary necessity, be broken but our default should always be “masks and six feet”.

Livestreaming:

Secondary teachers working in the hybrid model are not expected to livestream their instruction from their classroom to the students learning at home. This raises concerns about pedagogical practices as well as potential behavioral concerns since a teacher’s attention cannot be simultaneously focused on the students in the classroom and the students in the virtual classroom at the same time.

At the elementary level, if technology resources allow, a classroom teacher could livestream their direct instruction into their pod-partner’s room IF they choose to. Having the pod-partner present in the other room to supervise behavior while students are watching the livestream of their teacher makes this an acceptable, although not a required, practice.

Materials:

To the extent possible, students should have their own supply of materials which are not shared with other students in the room. However, there are many materials in the typical classroom that need to be shared among students in order for instruction to occur effectively. Those would include things such as, classroom library books, math manipulatives, science equipment, art materials, and much more. Before and after using any shared materials, students should wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer. Teachers may also want to devise ways to assign particular subsets of their classroom materials (i.e. books, math manipulatives) to individual children on a rotating basis, if necessary, if quantities allow. In addition, teachers will be supplied with products to be used to clean shared materials as appropriate.

Paper based materials and assessments may continue to be distributed and used in the classroom, provided you use hand sanitizer before and after handling those materials as well.

Two important concepts to remember when it comes to handling materials:

1. Transmission of the virus from an object that someone touches is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, however we are advising not to immediately touch your eyes, nose, or mouth after touching an object that could contain virus particles.
2. If something doesn’t belong to you, use hand sanitizer before and after use.

NYLearns:

Our district-created curriculum documents continue to live in NYLearns. Teachers should refer to NYLearns frequently to make sure they are accessing the most up-to-date curriculum and assessment documents. The documents created during the Instructional Roadmapping workshops over the summer have been uploaded into [NYLearns.org](https://www.nyllearns.org) for easy access. As a reminder, your NYLearns login is:

Last name *space* first name@pcsd.monroe.edu

Your password is the same password you use to log in to your computer on a daily basis.

To search for the Roadmapping documents for your course, use the department name, followed by Instructional Roadmapping 20-21, e.g. *Business Instructional Roadmapping 20-21* or *Elementary Instructional Roadmapping 20-21*. Links to all Roadmapping documents created will be found in the “Learning Activities” section of each template.

Planning:

Planning time continues to be provided to teachers at all levels, although it may be structured differently than normal while we are operating in our temporary learning models.

In addition, elementary teachers will have Wednesday afternoon for collaborative planning with their grade level colleagues and the additional staff members who are helping to supervise and support pods of students at that grade level. At the secondary level, the Wednesday remote day will run on an “X-block” schedule, providing for approximately 80 minutes of collaborative planning time for PLCs in grades 6-12.

Colleagues, K-12, are encouraged to take advantage of available technology resources, such as Microsoft Teams and Zoom for both synchronous and asynchronous shared planning experiences.

Report Cards:

Report cards are one of the ways that teachers communicate progress towards learning goals to students, parents, and other stakeholder groups. Report cards will be issued to all students, at all grade levels, this year. We expect to be using the same report cards and adhering to the same timetable for reporting as we have in past years.

Specials/Electives:

Students at all grade levels will continue to participate in, and benefit from, instruction in “specials” areas, encore classes, and electives. At the elementary level, the frequency and duration of special area instruction will be reduced during the time period that we are in the Temporary Learning Model, but all students will receive art, music, physical education, and library instruction from an appropriately certified teacher. Additionally, 4/5 science instruction will continue to be provided by our 4/5 science teachers. At the middle and high schools, students will continue to engage with their encore and electives courses as they follow their schedule each day. The scheduling of some of the encore classes at the middle school level has been adjusted from every-other-day to every day offerings and the delivery of choral music and physical education, K-12, will be adjusted to accommodate the requirements for greater social distancing.

Technology:

In an effort to streamline the delivery of instruction both in school and in the remote setting, the district has adopted a set of common technology platforms that teachers and students are expected to use: Seesaw (grades K-3), Microsoft Office Teams (grades 4-12), and Zoom. A significant number of new laptops were ordered over the summer in order to be able to provide appropriate levels of access for our students working in the hybrid model, grades 6-12. In addition, iPads and laptops have been ordered to support our elementary remote learners so that we do not need to pull devices from the buildings to support those families at home.

At every grade level, it is important that we begin the school year by engaging students in the use of these technology platforms so that they develop both the competence and confidence necessary to access learning from home should we need to pivot to full-time remote learning for all students.

Students should wash their hands with soap and water, or use hand sanitizer, before and after using any shared technology device in the school. In addition, teachers will be supplied with items to be used to clean shared devices in between use.

Who is Taking Attendance and How are They Doing That?

We continue to be responsible for daily attendance at the elementary level and period-by-period attendance for students at the secondary level. While this may seem a little extra complicated in these circumstances, particularly in cases where elementary students are in different locations in the building and half of the secondary students are learning at home while the other half are in school, we have developed procedures that we believe will aid in consistency and usability.

At the elementary level, the teacher of record for each class will call their pod partner in the “other room” to confirm attendance of those students and record the daily attendance in Infinite Campus.

For secondary students in the Hybrid model, on the “at home” days, students will use a Form in the Team for each class to record their attendance. A template Form will be provided along with supporting video documentation, explaining this process and providing directions regarding what you, as the teacher, will need to do to manage this process within each of your Teams.

You:

There is only one you and we need you to take care of yourself in order for you to be able to bring your best self to your students and your colleagues. Be sure to find time within the week to unplug, unwind, and enjoy whatever makes you happy and whole. Remember, these Temporary Learning Models are TEMPORARY; we will get through this and come out stronger as an organization on the other side!

Zzzzz:

Be sure to get your rest this fall. You'll need it in order to stay physically and emotionally healthy!