

## Continuity of Learning: Pivot-Ready Learning Models and Considerations for Vermont Schools

### Purpose

The following document offers SU/SDs suggestions for developing or modifying their pivot-ready plans in the event of sudden school closures or when considering a change to their adopted learning models to adapt to current local conditions. SU/SDs should consider using the [Continuity of Learning: Pivot-Ready Self-Assessment Tool](#) to help create plans that are in accordance with the [Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#).

### Introduction

As school communities across Vermont continue to adapt to the COVID-19 situation, all SU/SDs should be prepared to pivot to different learning models in case of intermittent closures and/or extended periods of remote learning while maintaining Continuity of Learning. It is important for SU/SDs to develop and communicate clear pivot plans that are designed to protect the health and wellness of students, faculty, staff and the community while ensuring Continuity of Learning for all students.

The following instructional learning models have been adapted from [Pandemic Planning for Distance Learning: Scenarios and Considerations for PreK–12 Education Leaders](#) and [Decision Points for COVID Comeback Models](#) to reflect Vermont’s education initiatives while responding to our current state of learning. We encourage SU/SDs to review these resources as well.

**In-Person to Remote:** This instructional learning model presumes the delivery of content and instruction in-person, with the flexibility to quickly pivot to remote learning in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak and/or school closure.

**Remote to In-Person:** This model describes school re-opening in a remote learning environment with an eventual return to in-person instruction.

**Hybrid, including both synchronous and asynchronous models:** These models allow for staggered student in-person schedules (alternate days/hours) where some students attend in-person while others engage in either synchronous or asynchronous learning remotely (e.g., A/B days with remote learning (asynchronous/synchronous); a.m./p.m. hours; A/B in-person, remote learning weeks). These models can also allow for personalized student and teacher schedules, where some students and staff engage entirely online while others are in-person, as well as models where synchronous instruction occurs with in-person and remote learners simultaneously.

### Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information, please contact:  
Jess DeCarolis, Student Pathways Division, at [Jess.DeCarolis@vermont.gov](mailto:Jess.DeCarolis@vermont.gov)

The following are additional recommendations informed by current guidelines from national and state organizations to support SUs/SDs in ongoing planning as the 2020-2021 school year progresses.

### **Assess the Set of Guiding Principles Used as the Foundation for All Decision Points When Sustaining a Strong and Healthy 2020-21 School Year**

SU/SDs should continue to collaborate with education, family and community partners to ensure adherence to the guiding principles used to inform plans for Continuity of Learning. These principles should clearly state the core set of beliefs that shape decisions about how all students continue to receive equitable, high-quality education regardless of the learning model(s) employed.

#### **Sample Guiding Principles**

- Keep [educational equity](#) at the center of all decision points.
- Take a coordinated, SU/SD approach across all schools, CTE Centers, HSCP Providers, and Afterschool Programs when choosing/adapting learning models and schedules to ensure Continuity of Learning for all students.
- Incorporate the voices and insights of families, students and educators in the preparation of (or changes to) any plans.
- Consider the effectiveness of quality curriculum, instruction and assessment delivered in the current environment(s)/learning model.
- Maintain a flexible stance toward staffing distributions and scheduling.
- Ensure time and space for collaborative planning and professional learning.
- Be flexible and recognize that models that work at one grade level or in one environment/health context may not be feasible across the system.
- Strategically organize school resources to serve all students, including prioritizing access to remote learning models for the most vulnerable learners and families.
- Be *pivot ready* -- prepared for intermittent school closures and quick pivots to hybrid or fully remote learning models

### **Ensure that Instructional Learning Model(s) Chosen at the Start of the 2020-21 School Year Continue to Serve your Students, Staff and Faculty, and Families**

When assessing the local environment/health context, SU/SDs and schools should consider student demographics, family and community input, operational conditions, and provisions for student supports when assessing the effectiveness of their learning model(s). In conjunction with the school's physical space (e.g., school building, classroom layout, school grounds, cafeteria, etc.), schools should consider existing and future resource needs (e.g., [technology needs](#), PPE, etc.) to determine how to deliver the highest quality instruction for the learning model(s) they offer to their student population. SU/SDs and schools might consider surveying

staff, students and families to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the current learning model and make changes accordingly.

## **Develop and/or Evaluate Pivot Plans that Prepare and Allow for the SU/SD to Maintain Continuity of Learning in Response to Sudden School Closures**

Depending on the schedule and instructional learning model(s) within any given SU/SD, the pivot plan may only apply to certain grade bands or schools within your system. As you develop/assess your plans for sudden school closures, consider addressing the four design pillars (below) consistent with [Continuity of Learning guidance](#).

- **Communication:** Effective communication plans and routines are in place to ensure 100% reach when deploying critical information regarding pivot-ready plans to all stakeholders, including school and community safety information.
  - Have families and communities been engaged in the development of the pivot-ready plan?
  - How has the chosen pivot-ready plan and/or learning model been communicated in a transparent and effective way to ensure that families and students are informed?
  - How will the SU/SD and/or school ensure effective communication plans/routines and feedback loops among staff, between teachers and students, and between schools and family/community members to sustain Continuity of Learning?
  - What communication distribution mechanisms or platforms are in place that will ensure communication to all families, including those with limited internet access?
- **Structures for Student Success:** Consistently make available district-level/school-level supports to all students, including access to academic, social/emotional and technological supports that students and staff need when pivoting to a remote learning environment.
  - How are your learning model(s) leveraging your multi-tiered system of supports and educational support teams to ensure access to high-quality instruction and social-emotional, mental health and wellness supports during periods of school closure?
  - How are your learning model(s) leveraging your local comprehensive assessment system (LCAS) to ensure high quality, differentiated, inclusive and personalized instruction and assessment?
  - Are pivot-ready plans structured to be flexible enough to meet the needs of students and families K-12, including Flexible Pathways and Personalized Learning Plans for the appropriate grade levels?
  - If employing more than one type of learning model, how is the SU/SD ensuring that all students have access to appropriate technology and are receiving a

substantially equal educational experience, including support services and direct interactions (whether in-person or remote) with their educators?

- **Instruction and Feedback:** Pivot-ready plans prioritize grade level/cluster instructional content and ensure learning activities are designed to continue student learning when learning models change.
  - How does this plan support formative assessment, feedback and intervention that supports student proficiency for all students (e.g., assessment calibration, collaboration among educators, etc.)?
  - Does your pivot plan provide opportunities for cross-curricular design and teaming across educators to reduce demands on schedules, encourage project-based learning, and foster collaboration amongst students to enhance their learning?
  - How are expectations regarding synchronous and asynchronous instruction time with students, consistent feedback loops, and frequency of assessments consistently maintained across the SU/SD and different learning models (if applicable) and communicated to all stakeholders?
  - Are staff receiving the professional learning necessary to deliver the SU/SD's pivot-ready plan and meet the needs of learners, including effective teaching in an online environment?
- **Ensuring Accessibility:** Opportunities, supports and accommodations/modifications are in place to ensure that during periods of sudden school closure or changes in learning models all students, including those from historically marginalized populations, have access to targeted and appropriate supports.
  - Have decision-making tools or processes been established in the SU/SD pivot plan to determine which learning model(s) will best meet the needs of students who may need additional supports?
  - Are structures (e.g., design, modifications, accommodations, etc.) in place to ensure all students continue to have equitable opportunities and appropriate access to services and demanding content standards, high expectations and high-quality instruction?
  - How will the SU/SD and/or school ensure that pivoting to a different learning model and/or new schedule does not exclude student groups and families?
  - How does the pivot plan address communication needs of linguistically and culturally diverse families, economically disadvantaged families, and/or families that have potential disability barriers associated with communication?

## Determine the Additional Professional Learning Faculty and Staff Will Need in Order to Continue Supporting SU/SD Instructional Learning Model(s), Schedules and Pivot Plans for the Remaining School Year

- Engage faculty and staff in professional learning that promotes effective delivery and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment across all learning models to ensure they are pivot ready.
- Provide training necessary to use online/web-based teaching and learning tools and platforms.
- Provide professional learning to ensure consistent expectations, including synchronous and asynchronous instructional expectations, among teachers and staff across the SU/SD.

### Resources

- [Strong and Healthy Start: Safety and Health Guidance for Vermont Schools](#) Department of Health and Vermont Agency of Education (AOE)
- [Equity Lens Tool](#). AOE
- [Federal Education Funding Planning Guidance](#) AOE
- [Pandemic Planning for Distance Learning: Scenarios and Considerations for PK-12 Education Leaders](#). New America
- [Online Learning and the Younger Student-Theoretical and Practical Applications](#). The Learning and Technology Library
- [Reopening Schools After COVID-19 Closures: Considerations for States](#) ExcelinEd Policy Toolkit
- [Schools Decision Tool: Public Health Considerations for Reopening Schools during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#). Center for Disease Control
- [National Primer on K-12 Online Learning](#). International Association for K-12 Online Learning
- [National Standards for Quality Online Teaching](#). International Association for K-12 Online Learning.
- [Remote Service Delivery and Distance Learning](#). Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA)
- [Preparing to Reopen: Six Principles That Put Equity at the Core](#)