Critical Readiness Factors

**Toolkit Section**: Plan to implement chosen instructional delivery model

# 1. Building LEA and School Calendars and Schedules

**Guiding Questions:**

* If substantial numbers of younger students will have remote learning, what community partnerships exist to provide before, during, or after school care for children whose parents/guardians are working? How are LEAs ensuring consistent communication with community partners?
* How flexible is a proposed calendar/schedule to different possible return scenarios?
* Have you worked with the Career and Technical Center (CTC) member districts to ensure students enrolled in career and technical education (CTE) have access to CTE?

**Suggested Steps:**

1. Create the LEA calendar to meet 180 school-day requirement (900 hours at the elementary level and 990 hours at the secondary level; [access the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s letter regarding temporary provisions to the minimum instructional time requirement](https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance/ReopeningPreKto12/Pages/InstructionalHours.aspx)) that recognizes both in-person and remote learning.

If the LEA and local governing board selects an instructional delivery model that includes time spent in a remote learning environment, then schedule opportunities for staff and learners to practice remote learning prior to implementing remote instruction. To ensure students enrolled in CTE programs have access to those programs, a common calendar among the CTC member districts should be considered.

1. Determine what form of class schedule will be used, especially at the secondary level.

This should include what form of schedule (8-Period, Block, etc.) will be used at the middle and high school levels during the academic year. LEAs should determine the ideal number of classes for a student who will be on remote learning for at least part of the time, which may be less than under a full in-person model.

1. Create arrival and dismissal plans for each facility and determine if a staggered start will be required.

These plans should not include specific times at this stage (e.g. 8:10am), but overview procedures and overall amount of time the process will require. It is important to consider variation in times when determining the overall length of the process. It is recommended LEAs use a queuing model for all calculations. Arrival and dismissal should include transportation time to and from the CTC.

1. Decide how students will move throughout the building, including the use of stairwells.

Building principals and assistant directors of CTCs, in consultation with LEA leadership, should determine if hallways and stairwells will be one way. A hallway or stairwell may also only be made one way at certain times of the day, such as passing periods or arrival/dismissal.

1. Create building bell schedule that includes consideration for limited student movement/longer passing periods.

Moving students safely from one classroom to another will require careful planning for secondary schools and likely involve longer passing times. Bell schedules should be developed with this consideration in mind. LEAs should also consider whether bell schedules for students on remote learning will be the same or different than those learning in-person.

1. Assign teachers to students and courses

Determine if any teacher looping will be used, which may aid in student assignment. Additionally, determine how students on remote learning will be assigned, such as creating teacher pairs where students rotating between a classroom and a remote setting have a different teacher for each. Ensure that ESL teacher assignments are adequate to guarantee ELs receive the necessary amount of both direct English Language Development (if required) and support for content learning.

# 2. Recruiting and Hiring Teachers and Staff

**Guiding Questions:**

* Where are the projected staffing shortages? What are the best sources of quality candidates for the needed positions?
* Can non-certified staff be used to fill staffing needs? Will an ‘expert teacher’ approach be used at any grade levels?
* Can contracts with outside providers of key services be modified to meet new needs? (e.g. speech and language, school psychologists, substitutes, etc.)?

**Suggested Steps:**

1. Determine whether new part-time or temporary positions will be needed for 2020-21 based on the chosen instructional delivery model.

This should include support staff positions that might need to be created if contracting companies cannot commit to providing staff for 2020-21 or meeting the demands of remote service delivery when full remote or hybrid models are required.

1. Review and revise job descriptions for 2020-21.

Include revisions to both job descriptions that will need to be filled due to vacancies, as well as those where teachers or staff will be returning to their previous roles as their job requirements will likely have shifted due to the instructional delivery model.

1. Post open roles for 2020-21 and consider the possibility of seeking candidates for hard-to-fill positions that will do remote work from other parts of the state (or out of state) if the role is anticipated to be remote the entire year.

Postings should specifically note if they are intended to be temporary for 2020-21 or a permanent position. Discuss anticipated openings with nearby or similar LEAs to determine if sharing staff during 2020-21 is possible to ease budgetary burden and/or leverage part-time people.

1. Create a process for remote hiring that addresses the unique requirements of 2020-21.

This should include a determination of whether hiring will be completed at the LEA or school level and previous experience of staff with remote learning.

1. Form a Hiring Committee comprised of LEA, school, and union leaders who will oversee the hiring process during the summer (and beyond, as necessary).
2. Practice a remote hiring process with current staff members. Use feedback from this process to refine remote hiring practices.

All members of the hiring committee should be required to go through this exercise as remote hiring will require more significant coordination.

**Additional Resources:**

[PDE Remote Recruiting and Hiring of Educators](https://www.iu13.org/schoolimprovement/remote-recruiting-and-hiring-toolkit/) Guide

# 3. Delivering Effective Remote Instruction and Support to Students

**Guiding Questions:**

* How will feedback from teachers, students, and families about what worked and what didn’t in the spring be integrated into remote learning plans for 2020-21?
* What are the goals for remote learning? How will it be assessed?
* How will teachers be supported in remote learning? How will students and families be supported in remote learning? Consider the needs of diverse learners including students receiving special education, students with visual, hearing, or speech impairments, and non-English speaking families and students. How will the expectations for remote learning be as rigorous as in-person learning?
* How will students have access to required CTE instructional equipment needed?
* How will technology, access, and the accessibility needs for all students be addressed?

**Suggested Steps:**

1. Create a remote learning working group that should include a representative sample of stakeholders (school-based staff, families, community partners, LEA-level staff, students) to analyze what worked and what didn’t in Spring 2020.
2. Map limited connectivity zones in order to prioritize geographic regions to allocate and prioritize connectivity resources.
3. Inventory LEA devices and determine what can be allocated to 1:1 remote learning and remaining unmet needs.
4. Create an instructional vision for remote learning using the remote learning working group.

Determine what is the same and what’s different from in-school learning, as well as from remote learning during the spring (e.g. will students on remote learning follow the same curriculum sequence as those learning in-person or will the sequence be adapted to better fit a remote learning environment?).

1. Determine what platforms will be used for remote learning and if additional training will be required for teachers and staff.
2. Based on instructional vision for remote learning, set 3-5 goals to assess its success and inform continuous refinement and improvement as needed. Ensure goals explicitly focus on the impact on historically underserved student groups.

Specific dates should be established for six-week cycles of data review and analysis broken down by student group

1. Determine a delivery method for teachers to receive support specific to remote learning (information, training, PD, etc.).
2. Establish systems of collaboration for teachers to connect to one another to co-plan, share best practices, and new learning with one another.

If a hybrid model is being used where some classrooms at a grade level are remote and others are in-person, special consideration should be given for how teachers will regularly connect to ensure equity across modes of learning.

1. Determine structure for baseline assessments and addressing students entering below grade level.

# 4. Identifying Student Needs and Providing the Required Services and Supports

**Guided Questions:**

* How and when will you initially assess the needs of students?
* Has the pandemic created new needs or exacerbated existing student needs?
* How will support staff be deployed to accommodate the unique instructional delivery models this year?
* What resources are available in the LEA or larger community to meet student needs? What additional partnerships or services are available for 2020-21 that might help meet the needs of students?
* What additional training will need to be provided to staff at the start of 2020-2021 to handle the unique needs of students? How will existing training be modified for new staff members? Consider training for staff on negative stigma around COVID-19 and racial bias, supporting social emotional learning during virtual instruction, recognizing trauma signs in students, and secondary stress.

**Suggested Steps:**

1. Create a plan to identify student academic and social and emotional wellness needs at the start of the school year.
   1. Ensure that the process will work (or is properly adapted) remotely, if necessary.
   2. Review pre-COVID-19 systematic, academic, and behavioral data for students, families and buildings.
2. Convene a team of educators to analyze data on student needs and set up the support structure/system.
3. Inventory what services and supports are available, to what extent they can be provided in-building and remotely, and where there are gaps.
   1. Identify gaps that exist in services provided and work to find new partnerships that can be created.
   2. Identify what support naturally exists in the school setting to foster relationships between staff and students that promote student social and emotional wellness.
   3. Consider partnering with other LEAs and Intermediate Units in the event that the LEA cannot provide the service or support on its own.

# 5. Providing Transportation and Food Services Consistent with Health Requirements

**Guiding Questions:**

* What is the capacity of the LEA’s transportation and food service providers to meet new health and safety requirements? What are the financial implications of meeting the new requirements?
* What model of food service will work best for the LEA based on the type of instruction provided in each building?
* Will the LEA be responsible for providing meals to students who remain on remote learning in the fall?
* What are the ramifications to the food service program if a non-instructional day is included in the schedule?
* When and where will students pick up meals during remote learning days?
* Will transportation services be shared across schools (or with other LEAs) in the fall?
* What changes to transportation services will be required to transport students to the CTC?

**Suggested Steps:**

1. If transportation will not be offered to all students in the fall, determine how students will be prioritized for transportation services.

This will likely take the form of both a prioritized list based on need (including disabilities), as well as a process for a lottery if excess space remains.

1. Convene stakeholders to review food service and distribution during spring and summer

This should include creating a list of practices, protocols, and systems that worked best. Include how you will promote and streamline participation in meal programs.

1. Assess existing food service and transportation obligations or commitments for out-of-LEA students (including local charter schools).

LEAs should consider how changing circumstances will impact these commitments, including the financial impact of such changes.

1. Determine how school spaces can be used for both food distributions to remote learners and students attending school in-person school.

If students will be coming into the building only to pick-up food, specific protocols should be created.

1. Estimate food service needs for students not in the building under various scenarios that could be enacted during the 2020-21 school year. If students attend career and technical centers/intermediate units/etc., how does that change the distribution methods?
2. Generate a list of alternative and/or innovative food delivery approaches, which should include contacting community organizations and partners who could potentially support food delivery for remote learners who cannot access the building or can provide food during non-instructional days.
3. Consider how to promote and streamline participation in meal programs.
4. Determine if the cafeteria will be utilized or if meals will be delivered to classrooms

Determine delivery methods, as needed (e.g. carts, trays, lunch line protocols, etc.), if food will not be served in cafeteria. Consider how food distributions can be designed to support continuity of education and provide supplies/packets during remote learning, perhaps through partnerships with Intermediate Units and local PBS affiliate stations.

1. Train staff, including teachers, on new food delivery processes for 2020-021.

If students will be eating in classrooms, teachers should be given clear expectations for what behavior is and is not acceptable based on social distancing requirements.

# 6. Ensuring Student and Staff Health and Safety

**Guiding Questions:**

* How does the LEA’s instructional delivery model affect existing health and safety plans?
* If the LEA changes instructional delivery models during the year, what modifications will need to be made to health and safety plans at that time?

**Suggested Steps:**

1. Review new local and state guidance along with existing health and safety plans and determine areas for revision and/or further additions.

Based on the LEA’s instructional delivery model, it is likely that elements of the existing health and safety plan will need to be adapted or further defined.

1. Revise health and safety plan in coordination with local public health officials.
2. Determine budget flexibility for a contingency fund for emergency use during the school year based on possible new health and safety requirements or a shift in the instructional delivery model.
3. Create a policy for how teacher absences during the school year will be handled (for both non-COVID and COVID-19 purposes). Decide if substitutes can work across buildings in the LEA.

Based on projections of teacher absences, a clear substitute teaching policy will need to be created. LEAs should determine if elementary students will still come to school if their classroom teacher is absent (at the secondary level a more complex plan will need to exist as students have multiple teachers).

1. Review existing plans and resources for supporting staff members’ social and emotional wellness and adjust as necessary for 2020-21.
2. Create a response plan for when a student or staff member becomes ill during the school day. Ensure there is a physical space in each building to isolate an individual who is ill.

The response plan should include steps for notifying families of the illness and when a student or staff member will be sent home, what to do if that student or staff member cannot immediately go home, and who else must be notified of the illness (e.g. other families from the classroom, LEA staff members, etc.) Prepare handouts/guidance prior to the return of school and include LEA and community resources.

1. Prepare plans for responding to worst-case scenarios, including an outbreak at the school or the hospitalization and/or death of a student or staff member.

This plan should include pre-made templates for communication, detailed descriptions on how and when the LEA or school will communicate with stakeholders, who will be responsible for coordinating with different state agencies, and what resources will be made available to students, families, and staff. Consider including community supports and information explaining how students can access the Student Assistance Program should they need social and emotional wellness support.

**Additional Resources**

[PDE Health & Safety Guidance and Plan Template](https://www.education.pa.gov/Schools/safeschools/emergencyplanning/COVID-19/SchoolReopeningGuidance/K12/Pages/HealthSafetyPlans.aspx)