Distance Learning

The impact of COVID-19 and the implementation of phased re-opening plans may require that some schooling take place at home through distance learning. Well-designed online courses and a proper home set up (environment) improve a student's (person) engagement in educational tasks (occupation). Below are considerations for school administrators, teachers, and school staff.

Habits and Routines

☐ Create and provide an orientation for students that addressed the tools and skills needed to be successful in an online learning environment.

☐ Set expectations for virtual class participation that promote a predictable routine (e.g., enter virtual classroom, turn camera on, mute microphone, participate in welcoming introduction).

- Collaborate with all educators and paraprofessionals involved in distance learning and create consistent expectations across courses.
- Communicate schedules and expectations to students and families through various methods (e.g., face-to-face instruction, email, flyers).

☐ Establish a consistent day of the week, across all courses, for assignment due dates.

☐ Routinely use tools to encourage participation, such as polling response systems.

Student Engagement

☐ Use virtual classroom tools (e.g., discussion boards, group rooms, video chat) to facilitate connections between students and staff.

☐ Use instant messaging tools to check in on distance learning students throughout the school day.

☐ Provide opportunities (i.e., virtual office hours) for students to connect with you outside of instructional time.

☐ Check in with students and families about how students are coping with the challenges associated with distance learning at home.

☐ Facilitate after school clubs and virtual lunchtime meet ups that may be successful despite social distancing.

☐ Provide groups that are facilitated by school counselors that allow students to discuss the disruptions.

Online Learning

☐ Identify students who need access to the Internet or an e-learning device to access virtual classrooms.

☐ Explore resources such as Quality Matters Emergency Remote Instruction Checklists and Webinars.

☐ Incorporate resources that help design a student-focused online quality course or classroom environment.

☐ Use standards and rubrics to design effective online classroom environments.

☐ Address accessibility challenges (e.g., universal design for learning, video captions and audio descriptions, color choice and contrast).

☐ Ensure access to Internet connectivity and appropriate Wi-Fi bandwidth.

☐ Use educational television access channels if available in your community.

☐ Test virtual learning tools before using them during instruction.

Learning Spaces

☐ Encourage students to remove unnecessary clutter and distractions from the learning workspace.

☐ Provide a list of materials that should be readily available within the student's home work space (e.g., glue, pencils, paper).

☐ Encourage students to organize the learning workspace so all learning tools (e.g., laptop, worksheets, books) are readily available.

☐ Encourage families to set up learning workspaces that allow for proper ergonomic positioning to prevent fatigue.

Homework and Projects

☐ Ensure assignments can be reasonably completed by students in the home and online environments.

☐ Provide simple written, bulleted directions for all assignments.

☐ Provide video clarifications for complex assignments.

Accommodations

☐ Identify students who need support to utilize technology for learning or other accommodations.

☐ Divide longer assignments and learning activities into manageable components.

☐ Provide reminders, as well as flexible due dates for assignments.

☐ Allow additional time for online tests.

☐ Use visual supports and animations to explain difficult concepts.

Resources

☐ Council for Exceptional Children—Best Practice for Educating Online

☐ Michigan Association of Administrators and Superintendents—National Distance Learning Resources

☐ National Education Association—Guide to Online High School Classes