



**CONSIDERATIONS FOR
COHERENT AND EQUITABLE
INSTRUCTIONAL SYSTEMS**
SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2020



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

INTRODUCTION

The Mississippi Department of Education has partnered with a group of nine superintendents from a diverse range of school districts to outline the key issues districts need to consider as schools are operating during COVID-19.

The issues are divided into six topics:



Developed in collaboration with Instruction Partners and the superintendents' workgroup, *Considerations for Coherent and Equitable Instructional Systems* outlines a three-month timeline of strategies to consider as district leaders reflect on the start of the 2020-21 school year and plan for the remainder of the fall semester. This document is intended to be used as a resource and starting point that district leaders can modify in collaboration with local stakeholders and needs.

The strategies related to each topic will be updated in three-month intervals to help district leaders plan for each segment of the school year. This will help district and school leaders adjust to the unpredictable and changing nature of the COVID-19 outbreak.



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MISSISSIPPI SUPERINTENDENTS' WORKGROUP MEMBERSHIP

TODD ENGLISH, BOONEVILLE SCHOOL DISTRICT

JASON HARRIS, COLUMBIA SCHOOL DISTRICT

ADRIAN HAMMITTE, JEFFERSON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

TESS SMITH, LAMAR COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

CHARLOTTE SEALS, MADISON COUNTY SCHOOLS

LANCE EVANS, NEW ALBANY SCHOOLS

BONITA COLEMAN, OCEAN SPRINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT

MATT DILLON, PETAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

MISKIA DAVIS, SUNFLOWER COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

SEPTEMBER KEY ACTIONS

ACADEMICS:

- Continue to support the teaching of grade-level content with support for unfinished learning in the context of grade-level work.
- Use assessments to strategically support instructional decisions and preparation.
- Use the September stocktake reflection tool to step back on academic strengths and challenges and target improvements.
- Clarify priority groups of students for the year and create clear goals for the year and/or fall with attention to priority groups.
- Communicate goals across the system and create tracking systems towards those goals.
- Schedule monthly follow-up checkpoints to step back on the progress towards goals.

OPERATIONS:

- Use the September stocktake reflection tool to step back on operational strengths and challenges and target improvements.
- Identify any key operational, scheduling, or staffing updates needed to achieve targeted improvements.
- Make adjustments to the plan where needed and communicate the changes.
- Support staff health, wellness, and motivation.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:

- Conduct focus groups with families with attention to priority groups to inform the step back.
- Use the September stocktake reflection tool to step back on family and community engagement strengths and challenges and target improvements.
- Make plan adjustments and communicate the changes.
- Work with community partnerships and agencies to support families with additional needs.

COMMUNICATIONS:

- Conduct focus groups with staff to gather data about what is working and what is not.
- Use the September stocktake reflection tool to step back on where communications are working and target improvements.
- Establish or make adjustments to standing communications channels.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

- Continue to stay in close communication with the health department and key health constituencies to update status and plans.
- Use the September stocktake reflection tool to step back on health and safety plans and target improvements.

TECHNOLOGY:

- Use the September stocktake reflection tool to step back on technology strengths and challenges.
- Make adjustments to EDLA plans in order to strengthen content and address challenges.
- Provide ongoing communications and professional development to support staff in using new technology.
- Stay in touch with suppliers and providers to troubleshoot any challenges.

OCTOBER KEY ACTIONS



ACADEMICS:

- Continue to support the teaching of grade-level content with support for unfinished learning in the context of grade-level work.
- Conduct observations, student work review, and focus groups relevant to targeted improvements.
- Conduct a follow-up leadership check-in to monitor progress on targeted academic improvements for the fall.
- Continue to adjust plans based on areas of progress or challenge.

OPERATIONS:

- Continue to support staff health, wellness, and motivation.
- Conduct follow-up leadership check-in to monitor progress on targeted operational improvements for the fall.
- Continue to adjust plans based on areas of progress or challenge.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:

- Continue to support effective two-way street communications with families and the community.
- Conduct follow-up leadership check-in to monitor progress on targeted family and community improvements for the fall.
- Make adjustments to plans where needed.

COMMUNICATIONS:

- Continue to support effective two-way street internal and external communications.
- Conduct follow-up leadership check in to monitor progress on targeted communication improvements for the fall.
- Make adjustments to plans where needed.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

- Continue to monitor the health status of students, staff, and community and make adjustments to which scenarios the district is operating under where needed.
- Continue to check in with the health department and make adjustments to plans with new information about best practices.

TECHNOLOGY:

- Continue to support technology support needs and build fluency and comfort with technology and applications.
- Work with providers to continue to increase access.

NOVEMBER KEY ACTIONS

ACADEMICS:

- Continue to support the teaching of grade-level content with support for unfinished learning in the context of grade-level work.
- Conduct observations, student work review, and focus groups relevant to targeted improvements
- Conduct follow-up leadership check-in to monitor progress on targeted academic improvements for the fall.
- Continue to adjust plans based on areas of progress or challenge.

OPERATIONS:

- Continue to support staff health, wellness, and motivation.
- Conduct follow-up leadership check-in to monitor progress on targeted operational improvements for the fall.
- Continue to adjust plans based on areas of progress or challenge.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY:

- Continue to support effective two-way street communications with families and the community.
- Conduct follow-up leadership check-in to monitor progress on targeted family and community improvements for the fall.
- Make adjustments to plans where needed.

COMMUNICATIONS:

- Continue to support effective two-way street internal and external communications.
- Conduct follow-up leadership check-in to monitor progress on targeted communication improvements for the fall.
- Make adjustments to plans where needed.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

- Continue to monitor the health status of students, staff, and community and make adjustments to which scenarios the district is operating under where needed.
- Continue to check in with the health department and make adjustments to plans with new information about best practices.

TECHNOLOGY:

- Continue to support technology support needs and build fluency and comfort with technology and applications.
- Work with providers to continue to take efforts to increase access.



December: This committee will release the next round of considerations in November to be used to step back on semester one and plan adjustments for the second half of the year.



ESTABLISHING CLARITY OF FOCUS AND GOALS TOOL



Who are our priority groups of students? (Who is most at risk this year?)	
What are our goals for these groups this year and/or this fall?	
How will we know if we reach these goals?	
When will we check in to take stock on progress to these goals?	
How will we manage instruction for students who are quarantined?	
If we are forced to close, do we have realistic plans to transition and sustain a distance model of instruction?	



SEPTEMBER STOCKTAKE REFLECTION TOOL



CATEGORY	INDICATOR	YES	NO
ACADEMICS			
	We have a clear vision of success for the year		
	We have clear goals for the year		
	We have regular information about progress towards goals by priority group		
	We have an academic advisory committee with regular meetings		
	We have clear and supported norms in our work together		
	We have clarity about the priority content we are teaching in each grade and subject		
	We have established clear guidelines for how to support unfinished learning (in-person and virtual)		
	We have a systematic approach to foundational reading skills K-3		
	We have a coherent curriculum in K-5 math		
	We have a coherent curriculum in 6-12 math		
	We have a coherent curriculum in K-5 reading		
	We have a coherent curriculum in 6-12 reading		
	We have a coherent curriculum in science		
	We have a coherent curriculum in social studies		
	Teachers have been trained on core curriculum		
	We have effective continuity of learning plans for students in quarantine/virtual learners		
	We have a clear instructional model for quarantine/virtual learning		
	We have clear expectations for teachers of students in quarantine/virtual learners		
	Students in quarantine/virtual learners are able to stay on pace with priority learning		
	We have an effective PLC structure/grade-level planning structure to support collaborative planning		
	We have a clear instructionally focused assessment plan across our system		
	We have developed and communicated updated grading guidance if needed		
	Leaders and coaches are clear about what they are looking for in observations and monitoring of in-person instruction (i.e. walkthrough tools/key look fors this fall)		
	Leaders and coaches are clear about what they are looking for in monitoring virtual instruction (i.e. synchronous/asynchronous instructional monitoring)		
	We are sure that every student is enrolled in on-grade level tier 1 instruction		
	We have a plan to determine which students receive tier 2 and tier 3 support		

CATEGORY	INDICATOR	YES	NO
OPERATIONS			
	We know the priority for how time is spent across schedules		
	We have a schedule with appropriate time for each scenario		
	We have clarity about staffing for each scenario		
	We know how teachers will be assigned if we need to adjust		
	We have time scheduled to regularly step back on our plan		
	We are prepared to pivot when students go virtual/come back to school in person		
	We are prepared to pivot when teachers go virtual/come back to school in person		
	We are clear about who is accountable for the attendance and engagement of virtual learners		

CATEGORY	INDICATOR	YES	NO
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY			
	We have a clear social-emotional learning (SEL) priorities and supports		
	We have a plan for touching base with families regularly		
	We have ongoing ways for families to share feedback with attention to priority groups		
	We have plans to keep parents updated on student progress that includes or goes beyond progress report/report card communications		
	We have communicated clear expectations to family members about what to do if there is an exposure or quarantine		
	We have a way of identifying students and families with additional needs		
	We have partnered with community-based organizations to provide additional services		

CATEGORY	INDICATOR	YES	NO
COMMUNICATIONS			
	We have clear internal and external communications structures and routines		
	We have norms describing how we are interacting internally		
	We are clear about how decisions get made		
	We have a system for communicating decision-making about changes in schedules if needed		
	We have consistent communication channels		
	We know the order and structures in which communications are shared		
	We have a way to check in on the health of our internal culture		

CATEGORY	INDICATOR	YES	NO
HEALTH AND SAFETY			
	We have coordinated with our local health department on our plans		
	We understand the virus spread that will trigger changes in our plan		
	We have clarity about the health directives in each version of the plan		
	We have occasional step backs scheduled to assess and make changes to our plan based on updated information about the virus		
	We have communicated our health and safety directives to our families/community members/stakeholders		
	We have communicated our health and safety directives to teachers and students		

CATEGORY	INDICATOR	YES	NO
TECHNOLOGY			
	We have a common technology platform and teachers know how to use it		
	We know which families do not have reliable internet		
	We have a plan to address access for students without reliable internet		
	We know which families do not have access to enough devices for their students		
	We have a plan to address devices for students and families with needs		
	We have provided training on our technology platform to families and/or community members		
	We have clear expectations around how to integrate apps and tools within our curricular resource and teachers know those expectations		

Agenda Starter for Step Back Meeting:

Objectives

- What were the overarching wins and surprises of the first month?
- Step back on original plan:
 - What are we doing that is working?
 - What are we doing that is not work?
 - What are we not doing?
- Reflect against overall picture of essential elements and identify areas of focus
- Prioritize the biggest problems to solve
- Ensure common understanding of our priority groups and goals for the year and how we will step back against those goals across the year

Agenda (2 hours)

- Introductions and Framing (15)
- Clarify priority groups and Goals for the year (if not already clear in the plan) (15)
- Review of September Stocktake (can be completed individually and then compare notes or as a group) (45)
- Prioritizing focus and next steps (40)
- Schedule when we will meet in October and November (5)

Goals

- Ensure we are clear on priority groups of students and goals
- Align on what is working and what we want to improve
- Establish clarity about our focus and next steps

Plan Reflection

- What are we doing that is working?
- What are we doing that is not working?
- What are we not doing?

September Stock Take:

- Where are we aligned and in a good place?
- Where are we aligned and know we have work to do?
- Where are we not aligned?

Step Back Meeting Template

TOPIC		
ACADEMICS	AIM	NOTES
	Working:	
	Want to improve:	
	Focus for the fall:	
	How will we know?	
	What do we do?	
	Next steps:	

TOPIC		
OPERATIONS	AIM	NOTES
	Working:	
	Want to improve:	
	Focus for the fall:	
	How will we know?	
	What do we do?	
	Next steps:	

TOPIC		
FAMILY AND COMMUNITY	AIM	NOTES
	Working:	
	Want to improve:	
	Focus for the fall:	
	How will we know?	
	What do we do?	
	Next steps:	

TOPIC		
COMMUNICATIONS	AIM	NOTES
	Working:	
	Want to improve:	
	Focus for the fall:	
	How will we know?	
	What do we do?	
	Next steps:	

TOPIC		
HEALTH AND SAFETY	AIM	NOTES
	Working:	
	Want to improve:	
	Focus for the fall:	
	How will we know?	
	What do we do?	
	Next steps:	

TOPIC		
TECHNOLOGY	AIM	NOTES
	Working:	
	Want to improve:	
	Focus for the fall:	
	How will we know?	
	What do we do?	
	Next steps:	

GRADE SPAN		
ELEMENTARY	AIM	NOTES
	Working:	
	Want to improve:	
	Focus for the fall:	
	How will we know?	
	What do we do?	
	Next steps:	

GRADE SPAN		
MIDDLE	AIM	NOTES
	Working:	
	Want to improve:	
	Focus for the fall:	
	How will we know?	
	What do we do?	
	Next steps:	

GRADE SPAN		
HIGH	AIM	NOTES
	Working:	
	Want to improve:	
	Focus for the fall:	
	How will we know?	
	What do we do?	
	Next steps:	

ACADEMICS	HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR ACTION:
	Mississippi Instructional Materials Matter Guidance for Accelerating Student Learning Distance learning guidelines for ELA and Math Sample Pacing Guide for Tier 1 Instruction Roles and Responsibilities for Supporting Instruction Key Considerations for Instructional Planning Teaching Comes First (Assessment Whitepaper) Principles for Choosing and Using Assessments Grading Guidance Across the Reentry Scenarios Teacher Training Needs for Reentry Example Collaborative Planning Expectations Sample Observation and Feedback Structures Teacher Observation and Coaching Tracker MDE Instructional Planning Guides for English Language Arts K-12 (2020) MDE Instructional Planning Guides for Mathematics K-12 (2020) MDE Instructional Planning Guides for Science K-12 (2020)

OPERATIONS	HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR ACTION:
	Key Trade-Offs Calculator for Staffing and Facilities Tips for Planning and Facilitating Virtual Meetings IDEA Schedule Decision Tree Day in the Life Of (Simulated schedule from students and families perspectives) The Economics of Transitioning from Remote to In-Person School

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY	HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR ACTION:
	MDE SEL draft standards
	MDE SEL resources
	Engaging Students and Families
	Feedback Survey for Students and Families
	Platforms for Gathering Stakeholder Feedback

COMMUNICATIONS	HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR ACTION:
	Defining Trauma-Informed Instruction and Social-Emotional Learning
	Feedback Survey to Staff
	Executive Summaries of Trauma-Informed and Social-Emotional Learning Research
	Staff Training on SEL and Trauma-Informed Instruction

TECHNOLOGY	HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR ACTION:
	Distance Learning Platform Comparison Chart
	MS Connects: Information for Districts
	MS Connects: Information for Families
	Learning Keeps Going
	Common Sense Education EdTech Reviews and Resources