



Guidance for Equity and Inclusion for Distance Learning

For many of our students and families, the distance learning environment presents additional challenges. It is important to consider the diverse needs of our students, including those with special needs, English language learners, students in a variety of familial and living situations, and students whose families have a range of access to resources. We must continue to purposefully engage with students, families, and one another. It is incumbent upon us as educators to strive to minimize opportunity gaps during distance learning. As we continue with distance learning, please consider the following guidelines:



Be Accessible

- Make connecting with your students, especially those in traditionally marginalized populations, a priority.
- As some students are likely accessing content on mobile devices, check whether content is mobile-friendly.
- Since access to reliable internet may be a challenge for students due to a variety of reasons, provide options that take students away from their devices and the internet.
- Whether directing students to activities on- or offline, work with colleagues in Special Education and ELL as you plan for instruction.
- Ensure that your content (files, images, videos, etc.) can be translated by a screen-reader and audio content has visual captions. Add visuals to content and make directions as simple and clear as possible. Follow-up with video to help explain directions when possible.



Be Flexible

- The only truism during distance learning is that we will no longer be conducting business as usual. Be flexible in your thinking of how students can engage with your content and how they can demonstrate what they are thinking.
- Provide students with choices, including those that might pertain to a student's specific circumstances. For example, if directing students to observe nature by taking a walk, keep in mind that this may not be safe or accessible for all students for a variety of reasons, and provide flexible options.
- Likewise, practice flexibility with timeline suggestions, communication norms, and other policies that you may more strictly enforce in a traditional classroom environment.



Be Aware of Culture and Identity

- Culturally responsive practices exist in the virtual learning environment as well. Recognize that the differences students bring to learning can be assets for teaching and learning.



- Address microaggressions in our virtual spaces, integrate culturally relevant materials, take into account variation in students' capacity to manage distance learning, and understand that the current COVID-19 pandemic impacts marginalized communities differently.



Be Attentive and Proactive

- Reach out to students and families you anticipate will have a harder time engaging in distance learning.
- Work collaboratively with your colleagues from other departments, especially school counselors, your school leaders, special educators, and ELL teachers.
- Take note of students who are not regularly engaging with your online content or who are struggling. Share the information with school leaders and counselors.



Be Relational

- Continue to build strong, positive relationships with and among your students. This will be particularly important for marginalized students and/or those who are traditionally underrepresented in our schools and curriculum.
- Make sure these students see themselves and that other students see them.
- Rely on these relationships in order to gather feedback from students and their families how distance learning is impacting them and what shifts we need to make in this experimental new format.



Be Transparent

- Distance learning adds an extra layer of challenge for all students. Provide even more structure and clearer guidelines for everything you are expecting students to do.
 - Share learning progressions and the criteria for success.
- Approaching our lessons and learning activities with equity and inclusion in mind means considering the principles of universal design for learning and access for our most vulnerable students.
- Provide students with clarity on the purpose, tasks, and criteria for the success of any given assignment, and as noted above, be flexible in how students meet those demands.
- Provide feedback in multiple ways, including writing, video, and synchronously so students can better gauge what is expected of them.

As we work to support all students, remember to also rely on the support of your colleagues and the classroom communities you built in the first half of the year!

Adapted from: [Lexington Public Schools Guidance on Equity and Inclusion In Remote Learning and Maintaining Equity and Inclusion in Virtual Learning Environments](#); [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Remote Education](#); [Supporting multilingual learners \(MLLs\)/English language learners \(ELLs\) during the COVID-19 Shutdown](#); [Specialized Support for Students with Diverse Learning Needs Engaged in At-Home Learning](#); and materials developed by the [Wellesley Public Schools Office of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion](#)