Scheduling Considerations for Districts, Schools, and Families for the 2020-2021 School Year

As districts and schools prepare to reopen with remote and hybrid schedules, they need to develop sustainable and developmentally appropriate weekly schedules that will also work for families. This tool includes scheduling guidance as well as sample schedules from experts in the field.

General Guidance

**Meet the needs of every student:** Consider the needs of all students, including multilingual learners and students with IEPs first. Identify the scheduling needs of these students (e.g., one-on-one time with a special educator once per day) and prioritize building these into your schedule. Walk through the schedule from these students’ perspectives to ensure it is supportive, manageable, and meets their needs. Additionally, plan ways for counselors, special education, and language support teachers to collaborate virtually and engage with their students regularly.

**Provide support to all families:** Ensure all families receive accessible, understandable guidance for supporting their students at home. This guidance should be in their preferred language and include specialized information for families of multi-lingual learners and of students with learning differences. Families should receive regular contact from teachers and consistent updates from their school(s).

**Keep it clear and simple:** Don’t overwhelm your staff and families with too many resources and schedules. Give specific advice about when and how to engage with the materials provided for asynchronous learning and how to engage in synchronous learning opportunities. When it comes to connecting with students or delivering feedback, don’t underestimate the power of the simplest solutions, e.g., teacher-to-student phone calls.

**Understand and prioritize the capacity and needs of your staff:** Just like students and families, school-based and central office staff are dealing with a lot right now. Any successful plan needs to account for that reality while also focusing on student learning. To that end, give staff opportunities to provide input on schedules and share their concerns and preferences. To the extent possible, factor this into scheduling decisions and be sure to prioritize the most important staff actions (PLCs, common planning). Consider what instructional routines need to be supported by a teacher directly (e.g., student discussion or feedback), what can be done independently, and how non-instructional staff can also help support families.

**Create multiple and varied opportunities for students, families, and staff to connect with one another and provide feedback:** As remote learning continues, provide opportunities for caregivers, students, and staff to engage with others socially, share their learning, and solve problems together. In addition, invite all stakeholders to share feedback on distance learning plans throughout the process. Calendly or youcanbook.me may be helpful for scheduling office hours or one-on-one check in calls to support staff, students, and families.

Guidance for Remote Schedules

**Ensure daily synchronous instruction:** Prioritize time for face-to-face instruction with a teacher in whole group and small group settings, particularly in math, ELA, and science. Record these lessons for students who cannot attend (e.g., due to childcare responsibilities among older students).

**Learning Time:** We recommend elementary students engage in 2.5-3 hours of learning a day, depending on age. Middle and high school students should engage in 3.5-4.5 hours of content a day, depending on age.

**Create connection:** All students need at least one consistent adult they connect with each day. Schedules should include dedicated time for social-emotional support.
Plan for consistency and flexibility. Provide day-by-day schedules with recommended durations for activities (e.g., 10 minutes of math fluency) and clear and consistent routines. Provide flexibility (e.g., web-based video, recordings) for synchronous learning, and keep it short and structured. Limit the number of logins per day to minimize technological difficulties and abrupt transitions.

Guidance for Hybrid Schedules

Schedule consecutive days: This allows for longer and more complex lessons. For K-8 students, scheduling two consecutive in-person days is preferable to single alternating days to allow for more complex and longer lessons (e.g., Socratic seminars or close readings) to be done in person. Two consecutive days also minimizes sanitation routines. For high school students, systems may wish to schedule one week in person/one week remote to allow for a week of deeper learning to be followed by a week of remote practice and application.

Optimize instruction according to setting: Students should engage on complex learning activities in person and work on lesson components that require minimal direction remotely. This helps ensure that teachers do not have to modify lessons to facilitate half the class being remote, and by necessity, weaken the more complex tasks. Because of this, it is not preferable for students on hybrid schedules to video conference into a live class on their remote days.

Determine which students will benefit most from in-person learning: If not all students will participate in some in-person learning days (e.g., certain grade levels are fully remote while others rotate in-person days), be thoughtful about which students to prioritize. Students with disabilities and multilingual learners, who faced disproportionate learning loss this spring, are likely to especially benefit from in-person opportunities. Younger students who have more difficulty engaging in remote learning and require at-home supervision may also be prioritized over older students. For any students who will be fully remote, ensure that they have dedicated time to build culture and socialize (e.g., advisory groups, extracurricular activities through community partners, etc.).

Provide child-care options on remote days: Some children will not have access to safe spaces suitable for remote learning (e.g., children of essential workers). Provide a safe, supervised space for remote learning to these families. For instance, partner with community organizations who have the necessary capacity or use un-used space in school buildings and have support staff supervise.

Avoid half day schedules: Schedules that split kids into two groups who attend either in the morning or in the afternoon are unlikely to work in practice. They do not allow time for the building to be sanitized between groups of students, they increase the cost of transportation and cleaning, and they require higher investment of limited staff time in non-instructional activities (i.e., arrival and dismissal).

Consider teacher workload: Managing both in-person instruction and distance learning in a hybrid schedule is likely to be new experience for teachers. Ensure that teachers have dedicated time to plan for and support both modes of instruction and consider how support staff can help with the management of distance learning activities and family support.

Sample Schedules and Resources

- **CCSSO Scheduling Guidance**: Review the scheduling section of CCSSO’s Systems Conditions Restart Guidance for key actions, detailed steps, and resources to support leaders in developing, launching, and sustaining new school schedules.
- **Decision Points for COVID Comeback Models**: ERS’s guidance on scheduling decision making that helps leaders identify and adapt the reentry schedules that are right for their communities.
- **COVID Comeback Models**: ERS’s collection of sample student groupings, schedules, staff roles, and system-wide implications that enable public health guidance and support social-emotional strategies.
• **Key Trade-Offs Calculator**: Use this ERS tool to understand which COVID Comeback Models are feasible and the key trade-offs and resource reallocations systems will need to consider.

• **Library of School Design Examples and Resources**: Browse Transcend Education’s library of remote learning and reentry models. These tools can be used as building blocks, inspirations, and templates you may use as a starting place and adapt to your own context.