

[The Governor's Emergency Order Number 17](#) extended remote instruction and support through at least May 4, 2020. This Order extended our remote learning period from the initial 2-week period to at least an additional 5-weeks, with the possibility of further extension through the end of the year.

Districts have done an outstanding job moving to remote instruction and support in an incredibly short period of time. Our teachers have embraced the changes and are working collaboratively with our families and caregivers to support all New Hampshire students. Our collective efforts have earned the praise not only across the State of New Hampshire, but also nationally.

Given the extension to May 4, 2020, the department wanted to weigh in with specific considerations for districts relative to an extended period of time with remote instruction and support.

These additional guidelines build on recently released guidance from several New Hampshire education associations. These associations provided a letter to its members outlining recommendations to school boards, superintendents and administrators, teachers, principals, special education, support and other staff, students and parents. These recommendations primarily reflect content from the Kansas State Department of Education Continuous Learning Task Force Guidance.

The department appreciates the efforts of these organizations. The department itself has put forth a great deal of guidance that can be found at www.nhlearnsremotely.com, a new website developed in response to the COVID-19 circumstances we find ourselves in.

The purpose of this guidance is to provide context to the recommendations made by the New Hampshire education associations in light of the breadth of previously provided guidance as well as add additional guidance for sustaining remote instruction and support over an extended period of time.

The areas covered by this document include those listed below. This is not an exhaustive list and as our circumstances unfold, we will likely add to this guidance. These areas should be considered a framework for the implementation of remote instruction and support. Each district will implement in unique ways that represent the values of their own communities. The importance of local control cannot be overemphasized. The individual circumstances of each community will differ and local districts need to be responsive to their communities.

Managing Expectations – Continue to hold high expectations for all of our students while embracing flexibility with our students, families, teachers and school leaders as we implement remote instruction and learning.

Planning and Advisory – Incorporate time to allow educators to prepare quality instructional materials, collaborate with colleagues, engage students requiring individualized advisory and to balance their lives.

Student Screen Time – Be mindful to avoid too much screen time and develop other creative instructional opportunities with resources at hand.

Asynchronous and Blended Instruction – Recognize that families and teachers have new responsibilities and challenges in addition to remote instruction and support. Be flexible with students, families and teachers.

Special Education/ESOL – Remote instruction plus remote support results in remote learning for our students. Remote support means that we do all we can to find creative ways of supporting our students with individualized education plans and non-English speakers.

Healthy Habits – The circumstances around us are incredibly disruptive. Take moments to be present with children, family members, colleagues and others. Take care of yourself so you can support those around you.

Mandatory Reporting – All children still need our diligence and support.

Instruction Hours and Attendance – This is a new instructional model and some of the old paradigms will need new perspective.

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Managing Expectations – Since the initiation of our transition to remote instruction and support, the department has been clear about the need to manage expectations. We want to be clear about what that means.

It does not mean that we have lowered our learning expectations for any of our students. We continue to embrace the concept of rigorous and relevant education that leads to bright futures for all New Hampshire students.

What it does mean is that we embrace a degree of flexibility with our students, our families, our teachers, and our school leaders, recognizing that the pivot to remote instruction and support was a significant one. We all recognize that it will not be perfect, particularly in the beginning, but we do aspire that it will continue to improve so that our educational aspirations for our students can be achieved.

It is not incongruent to hold the aspiration for rigorous and relevant education simultaneously to recognizing that the process for getting to that goal is a work in-progress. Everyone is learning in this process; students, families, teachers and school leaders, and that learning process by itself contributes to a goal of a model of continuous learning for our students.

Toward that end, and borrowing from Kansas, we encourage the system to recognize that:

- Less is more
- Be flexible, with students, families, teachers, ourselves
- Embrace creativity and problem solving
- Emphasize relationships
- Support all students
- Extend grace to one another

Planning and Advisory – In a traditional instructional model, it is customary for educators to set aside 15-20% of their time during an instructional day or across an instructional week for planning and advisory. During these times, educators are able to prepare instructional material for students, collaborate with colleagues across disciplines, engage with students requiring individualized advisory supports, among other activities. The nature of remote instruction and support, particularly as it is

implemented asynchronously, makes it more difficult to set-aside planning and advisory time. Educators tend to engage students and content continuously. As such, the department encourages the ideas for educators to:

- Set aside specific times daily for “office hours” making themselves accessible to parents and students for support.
- Structure the instructional week with time for planning and advisory, particularly to help students in need of individualized instruction. During these times, students that are not directly engaged by the teacher can continue to engage instructional materials that are designed for independent or group work.
- Work together as a teacher-teams to consider how they can balance duties across instructional days and weeks with respect to preparation and delivery responsibilities. This may be particularly important as community transmission becomes more extensive and we find that some educators are not able to engage even remote teaching responsibilities. There will likely be circumstances where teachers will find themselves covering for one another.

Such set asides of time should fit within the traditional model of 15-20% of a teacher’s time and would tailored to each district and vary by teacher, subject, age of students taught, and composition of the class, among other factors.

Student Screen Time – In any education setting, it is important to be mindful of the amount of screen time students experience, the concern being too much screen time. Generally, younger students should experience less screen time and older students can tolerate higher amounts. As well, not all screen time is equivalent. Active screen time, which occurs when a student is actively engaged with a device, can be tolerated more than passive screen time, which occurs when a student is passively receiving information through a device. Evaluate the purpose of screen time and balance it with meaningful activities such as physical activities or other projects to help keep the students engaged.

Online Instruction	Non-Online Instruction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Video (YouTube, Vimeo, etc.) • Online instructional platforms (Imagine Learning, Kahn, VLACS, BrainPop etc.) • Recorded lectures • Interactive classrooms (Zoom, Hangouts, etc.) • Discussion boards • Content based activities • Digital experiences (Nanowrimo, Google Expeditions, VR, etc.) • Quizzes, test and digital assignments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imaginative play • Creative arts • Music and movement • Outdoor exploration • Exercise • Fine/gross motor activities • Reading/writing

The department is deliberately not providing specific time guidelines for screen time hours as these will vary widely depending upon individual children and educators, the nature of the instructional materials, time of day, frequency during the week, among others.

Asynchronous and Blended Learning – Remote instruction and support is most easily adapted to the individual circumstances of a student and family learning environment through the inclusion of asynchronous and blended learning opportunities. This allows the student and the family increased flexibility to engage instruction and, early indicators are, that it solves many implementation problems. For example,

- A family may have limited numbers of devices for multiple students or Internet access. Asynchronous instruction allows students to share devices.
- Adults supervising remote instruction may themselves have work or other commitments. Asynchronous instruction allows them flexibility to schedule the instruction so that it is convenient to their individual work schedules.
- Teachers may also be balancing home and teaching responsibilities. Asynchronous instruction allows teachers to implement a more flexible schedule so that they can meet competing demands for their time.

Educators and school leaders are encouraged to incorporate asynchronous and blended learning to help accommodate the individual needs of students, families and caregivers, and educators. This does not, however, diminish the importance and role of group instruction as an important instructional tool where that can be effectively deployed. In all cases, some of the best practices for engaging students and Families and caregivers include the ideas of:

- Regularly connecting with students, families, and caregivers, with consideration to age and needs of the families and caregivers you are supporting
- Establishing regular office hours for communicating with families
- Focus on student progress and learning, less than assignment completion
- With a less is more approach, try to avoid busy work simply to fill a student’s instructional day
- Embracing flexibility around timelines, daily schedules and due dates, as students and families navigate uncertain and changing circumstances
- Select high interest and engaging materials, consider what materials students and families will have at home
- Give students a map of what the learning will look like for the upcoming week, to help set expectations
- Integrated instructional options

In order to be accessible to families, it may mean that teachers’ schedules vary. This may include blocks of time, perhaps several hours during the day. Teachers are looking for creative ways to engage their students and families, and administrators will have to allow flexibilities in support of this.

Educators are also encouraged to engage the New Hampshire learning communities on the Learning Designed platform, which is available for free, to collaborate with peers, and to access additional resources through the department COVID-19 web site at nhlearnsremotely.com.

Special Education - Ensuring that students with disabilities are not left behind during this epidemic has been a major priority for the department. We have taken a number of steps to ensure these students

are getting the education they are entitled to receive. This includes our “three-tiered safety-net,” designed to make sure no student is left behind.

- Special education services may be of a nature that they can be provided in a remote instructional environment.
- Special education services may be able to be provided in person, with limited cohort sizes and other preventative measures that allow in person service delivery in our schools or by one of our valued providers in accordance with HHS guidelines.

We recognize that many individuals have concerns about being in school facilities or having contact with students. School communities are encouraged to be sensitive to individuals who may have specific health risks or have regular contact with someone who has specific health risks when determining when in person delivery is appropriate.

- Finally, if we are simply not able to provide those services, we may need to revert to compensatory services, knowing that this is a last resort option.

New Hampshire’s teachers and school administrators have been an immense asset in ensuring the success of remote learning for all of our students. We are inspired by their commitment, innovation and flexibility to help all students, including those with disabilities, get the best education possible through this epidemic. The US Department of Education provided supplemental guidance on this subject, stating that remote services can be compatible with federal disability law. Since each support or service is so individualized, it is important that we look at each case and creatively make every effort to consider how we might support that student.

English as a Second Language – Instruction for our English language learning students will continue in a remote instructional environment. Instruction may also be provided in person, with limited cohort sizes and other preventative measures outlined in earlier guidance. ESOL teachers are encouraged to coordinate providing instructional support and resources with teachers in content areas to ensure students have access to appropriately leveled materials that enhance English language development and access to content.

Healthy Habits – The department leveraged Change Direction materials to create a [Healthy Habits](#) resource, making sure that our students, families and educators do not lose sight of self-care in these difficult circumstances. These resources are familiar to most middle and secondary as the Five Signs campaign that Judge Broderick made famous throughout our state. School leaders are encouraged to distribute more than one time to their communities to make sure the message gets through.

Mandatory Reporting – New Hampshire educators are always concerned about the health and safety of our children, and often are a first line of defense for the most at risk. Under New Hampshire law, all adults are mandatory reporters of suspected child abuse and neglect. While educators may not have direct physical contact with students during remote instruction and support, that does not relieve them of their reporting responsibilities. As such, educators should continue to be alert to signs of child abuse and neglect and continue to make reports when such actions are suspected. Such reporting can be made to 800-894-5533.

Instructional Hours – ED 306.18 (a)(1) and (2) require schools to offer 945 and 990 of instructional time for elementary and middle/high school, respectively. In working to meet that offering, schools had established school calendars for the 2019-2020 academic year. The disruption of that academic year by the COVID-19 response has raised a number of questions around if and how the instructional hours offering can be met. RSA 189:2 authorized the state board, or the commissioner when authorized by the state board, to reduce the amount of instructional time.

During this remote instruction and support period, any day for which remote instruction is offered is considered an instructional day. In addition, the period from March 16 – 20, which for some districts was a preparation period for remote instruction and support, also is considered as instructional days. Districts that believe they may have difficulty meeting the statutory instructional time, are encouraged to reach out to the department to evaluate the individual circumstances and determine if a waiver may be required.

Attendance – In a remote instruction and support environment, attendance will look differently than an in-person instructional environment. The approach to recording attendance is determined by local school districts. As a competency based education system designed to reward students for mastery of knowledge and skills, we have a great deal of flexibility around attendance. The principle objective in this remote instruction and support environment is for students to engage instructional material, and that can be the basis for participation and attendance. For some districts or classes, that may mean a daily check in, for others it may occur less frequently. As a general rule, the department sees frequent, quick check-ins with students an effective approach to monitor engagement.

State adequacy aid calculations are based on enrollment, not attendance and instructional hours offered.

While attendance is a flexible construct in this environment, it does not eliminate the possibility of truancy. RSA 189:35-a defines truancy as “Ten half days of unexcused absence.” While districts must develop their own definitions of attendance and excused absence, students engaging in remote instruction and support, which may include daily or weekly engagement of remote instruction, may be considered in attendance for the instructional day/week. Students habitually failing to engage in instruction should be followed in accordance with district policies by the district truant officer.