Learning to read for understanding is a critical skill that all students must master to succeed in school. Literacy educators know that reading is a developmental process that begins in early childhood and extends throughout readers’ educational careers. The coronavirus pandemic has brought about new challenges for literacy instruction as learning in many school districts has transitioned from in-person instruction to distance learning models. A variety of factors exist that educators should consider as they provide their students with instructional continuity in reading and literacy.

**Equity**

To prepare students to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world, educators must create a classroom environment that places value on diversity and multiple perspectives. For many students, textbooks lack the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity that tap into their perspectives and interests. By adopting an equity lens, educators are better able to integrate culturally responsive practices and include resources, materials, and activities to ensure all students feel welcome, respected, and valued.

**Access**

The homework gap—the inability of students to do schoolwork at home due to lack of Internet connectivity—affects 27 percent of students across the nation, disproportionately affecting Indigenous, Black, Brown, and other Students of Color; students from under-resourced communities; and those living in rural districts. This gap is amplified as many districts transition to full-time or part-time distance learning models. Educators must consider the diverse circumstances of their students and provide multiple means of instructional delivery to accommodate all students equitably.

**Student Privacy**

Educators should consider student privacy and security when planning online activities. They should use caution if they are considering learning resources and applications that are not supported by the district; unsupported applications may not comply with federal and/or state student data privacy laws.

**DISTANCE LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRIMARY AND SECONDARY GRADES**

**Primary**

Research offers little information about the efficacy of remote teaching for early reading. Mastery of foundational skills is a high priority and teaching young children these skills often requires hands-on activities. Delivery of reading instruction online can present challenges; for example, ensuring that students have quality materials and are provided effective, engaging literacy instruction. To overcome these challenges, educators may want to consider:

- Sending a letter to parents/guardians in multiple languages outlining an action plan for home literacy learning that includes manipulatives and other materials that will be needed;
- Offering sessions for parents on foundational skills and activities to support early readers;
• Providing reading materials\(^6\) that encompass the diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of students and tips for parents on how they can support learning outside of the virtual classroom;
• How to continue shared and guided reading activities online\(^7\); and
• Recording and making lessons accessible\(^8\) for parental use.

Students who do not have Internet access or devices at home must be accommodated to ensure equitable access to instruction. For these students—in addition to the above—educators may consider:
• Offering a short course for parents on foundational literacy skills and activities;
• Sharing information about the Florida Center for Reading Research’s series of free videos\(^9\) demonstrating how parents can teach foundational skills at home; and
• Providing recorded lessons for use at home.

**Secondary** Students need to continue literacy instruction past the elementary grades. All students deserve instruction that is developmentally, culturally, and linguistically responsive to their needs as readers. Two important pillars of effective literacy instruction for this group of learners are self-efficacy and student engagement with a variety of texts. To incorporate these principles within a distance learning model, educators should consider how to:
• Promote self-efficacy by setting a clear purpose\(^10\) and goals\(^11\) for reading;
• Identify and promote the use of comprehension strategies\(^12\) for struggling readers;
• Allow for cultural diversity\(^13\) and choice in selection of reading materials to improve motivation;
• Scaffold reading by including activities that build background and vocabulary knowledge\(^14\); and
• Where practicable, incorporate participatory approaches\(^15\) that promote peer interaction.

**RESOURCES**


9 YouTube. “Florida Center for Reading Research.” Retrieved from youtube.com/channel/UCq2Fmhbg-Gr5xQoXPvKsKqjQ.


