

How can schools provide high-quality distance and blended learning during the pandemic?

With coronavirus infection rates still high in many California counties, the delivery of instruction in the 2020–21 school year will be significantly altered. While distance and blended learning approaches have never been implemented at the scale we will see in this school year, there is a substantial and relevant evidence base that can support high-quality instruction even while traditional modes of schooling are disrupted.

Breaking Down the Issues

- With the abrupt end of in-person schooling in the spring of 2020, learning opportunities available to students varied enormously with some students receiving almost no distance instruction and others engaging in meaningful learning.
- Student engagement in available distance learning opportunities was uneven and inequitable in the spring, partially but not entirely due to students' challenges in accessing online learning.
- The move to distance learning reduces opportunities for many of the crucial social aspects of learning.
- Early elementary children and vulnerable student populations are most at risk from the move to a distanced setting.

Strategies to Consider

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|  | <p>Access to individual devices and broadband technology is an important but not sufficient step toward high-quality distance learning.</p> |  | <p>Successful implementation of distance learning depends on the extent to which schools and teachers shift to new pedagogies, such as the flipped classroom model, to ensure strong lesson design.</p> |
|  | <p>Synchronous class time is most effective when it is built around small-group peer interactions and direct teacher-to-student feedback.</p> |  | <p>Teachers will need additional daily planning time and training to redesign instruction and make the substantial instructional shifts necessary to provide high-quality learning experiences.</p> |
|  | <p>Students need reserved time to connect socially in ways that build community and engagement.</p> |  | <p>Priority for in-person schooling should be given to the students who are likely to struggle most with distance learning, including younger students and students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).</p> |

Strategies to Avoid

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|  | <p>Distance learning will likely be unsuccessful if teachers ask students to watch expository instruction for multiple hours each day.</p> |  | <p>Punitive practices for students who are not meeting expectations for attendance or engagement can be inequitable and will likely discourage student engagement even further.</p> |
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