

Conversation Guide on

DEVELOPING EXTENDED LEARNING PLANS



A Union of Professionals



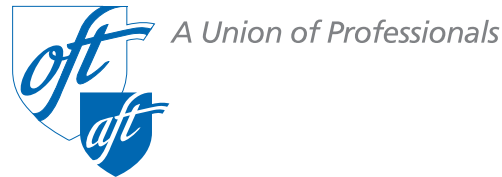
A Union of Professionals



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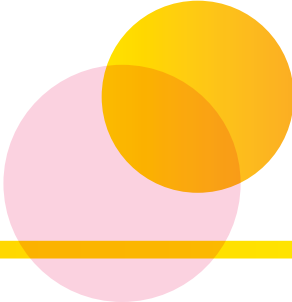
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OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

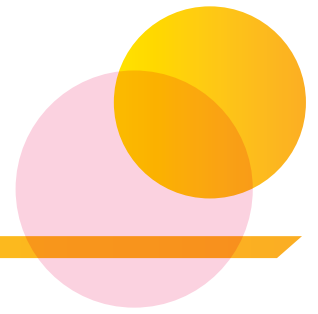
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CONVERSATION GUIDE ON DEVELOPING EXTENDED LEARNING PLANS



The OFT and the AFT have developed this document to facilitate conversations between locals and their administration as they work collaboratively to address the immediate needs coming out of the pandemic, as well as ways to approach learning in the future.

This document has been designed for union leaders to review while preparing to meet with administrators, rather than to share with them. *Each local circumstance is different, so this document includes questions to help guide decision-making rather than concrete recommendations.*

The principles that lead to authentic teaching and learning should be emphasized in any planning, with a focus on meeting long-term goals rather than short-term compliance. “[Learning Beyond COVID-19—A Vision for Thriving in Public Education](#),” jointly produced by the AFT and NEA uses those principles to provide a conceptual framework and additional research to support implementing extended learning in the context of addressing equity and excellence for all. It is designed for sharing with members, districts and other partners.

Through meaningful collaboration and shared responsibility, successful leadership teams enable district administrators, principals, union leaders and teachers—each in their own roles—to design and enact policies that *focus on student development, growth and achievement.*

The following questions and considerations can serve as a guide to thinking through strategies, policies and procedures with an eye on ensuring equitable access to a fair and just education for all students.

COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING

Learning beyond the COVID-19 pandemic is about

more than summer—it will take ongoing planning, communication and engaging stakeholders to ensure and maximize equitable distribution of resources, staffing, materials, and funding for all schools and students.

- Who should be involved in decision-making, and how should they be consulted?
- How will a broad and diverse cross section of stakeholders—including union leaders, district and school administrators, community-based organizations, parents, students, pupil services and instructional content leaders—be used to help determine needs, capacity and design?
- Are there established or new partnerships that can be engaged to provide planning support?

ENGAGING FAMILIES AND STUDENTS

- Will you survey parents and caregivers? Such a survey could:
 - » Build an understanding of what types of learning and activities they think should take place;
 - » Assess any challenges regarding transportation, food, equipment or supplies that families would need to overcome; and
 - » Solicit input and feedback on developing the programs.
- How will families be encouraged to support their children’s learning?

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Traditional school schedules, times and structures may not work in a “new normal.” Making these

determinations collaboratively will help ensure high-quality learning experiences.

- How will participation be encouraged and incentivized?
- Will certain grade spans be prioritized?
- Will certain populations of students be prioritized?
- When and how long will these programs be?
 - » Summer programming held over four to eight weeks would give educators the time necessary to collaborate and plan for learning that incorporates art, music, physical education and the core content subjects.
 - » It's important that learning opportunities build academic knowledge and engage students in meaningful, culturally relevant ways.
- Will transportation for students be provided?
- Will healthy food be provided to students?

LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

It is crucial to keep in mind that we are in uncharted territory, and the more we share responsibility in collective solutions, the more we can work to meet the needs of all students. Technology issues and concerns will remain a high consideration as learning continues. Maintaining or improving access should be part of the planning, even as students return to face-to-face learning. In addition, safety precautions in all aspects of schooling should be a priority.

- What COVID-19-related health and safety protocols will be in place? Who will be responsible for implementation and enforcement? Is there sufficient personal protective equipment and cleaning supplies?
- What indoor space will be usable during the extended learning times?
- Can instructional space be created outdoors?
- Will instruction utilize electronic devices (laptops,

The University of Chicago Consortium on School Research—which was led by Anthony S. Bryk, former president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching—identified, with a high degree of reliability, the organizational traits and processes that can predict whether a school is likely to show above-average improvement in student outcomes. Whether during a pandemic or not, there are five key organizational features to advancing student achievement:

1. A coherent instructional guidance system, in which the curriculum, study materials and assessments are coordinated within and across grades with meaningful teacher involvement;
2. An effective system to improve professional capacity, including making teachers' classroom work public for examination by colleagues and external consultants, and to enable ongoing support and guidance for teachers;
3. Strong parent-community-school ties, with an integrated support network for students;
4. A student-centered learning climate that identifies and responds to difficulties any child may be experiencing; and
5. Leadership focused on cultivating teachers, parents and community members so that they become invested in sharing overall responsibility for the school's improvement.

The consortium determined that these five features tended to reinforce each other, and that a significant weakness in any one undermined progress in terms of student performance. Schools with strong rankings on most of those traits were 10 times more likely to improve than schools weak in the majority of those capacities.

tablets, or iPads)? Are there sufficient devices available?

- Does the school or community have ample Wi-Fi connectivity?
- What resources (materials, personnel, dollars) are needed to provide meaningful learning experiences for students?

STAFFING

The pandemic has taken a large toll on educators, students, families and communities. It will be critical that affiliates and districts determine staffing capacity to meet potential summer programs, extended learning or changes in school structures. It is also imperative that designated staff have the qualifications and training necessary to be in the positions they have been assigned.

- How will the experience and expertise of staff be considered in assignments to maximize learning experiences?
- Will educators and school staff be surveyed to assess interest and capacity?
 - » Consider administering a survey during an all-district virtual meeting or training to help ensure a strong response rate.
 - » Elicit educators' thoughts on what programs should look like for children and educators (activities, skills/knowledge, transportation, food, equipment and supplies); the challenges that educators and families would need to overcome across those areas; and areas for additional support.
- Will paraprofessionals, student teachers, recently retired teachers and substitute teachers be recruited to meet shortages of certified classroom teachers?
- Will specialized instructional support personnel (therapists, counselors, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, behavioral specialists, school nurses, etc.) be on site to provide additional support?

- Are there enough staff with the necessary credentials and expertise to meet the needs of English language learners and students with disabilities?
- Will staff need professional development to deliver options created in the plan? What is needed to offer meaningful and comprehensive professional development for staff at all levels?
- Will staffing be structured so that students have a seamless transition to fall?
- Are there contractual issues that need to be addressed? Is a memorandum of understanding needed?
- How will we ensure educators are fairly compensated and additional work is compensated?

HARNESSING RESOURCES AND USING THEM EFFECTIVELY

- Are there community resources or agencies available to support social emotional learning?
- How can Title I, Part A funds; Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; and COVID-19 relief funds be used?
- Are there city and county resources that can support transportation, meals, or other supplies and equipment?
- Are there community organizations that can be solicited for additional resources?
- How do we identify and partner with community resources for providing additional learning (e.g., local museums, state parks, hospitals, businesses)?
- What is the role of community schools (called by different names, such as community learning centers in Ohio), and how do we establish this model locally? (Keep in mind the needs that a community school or community learning center help to meet for students and their families.) How does establishing one support long-term goals?
- How can regional educational service entities

connected to state departments of education (called by different names, such as Educational Service Centers in Ohio) be partnered with when they are available to a district?

- Are there grants available to support additional learning?
- How do we “do the best with what we have (maximize our resources)?”
- What are constraints or limiting factors (size of campuses and/or staff, air conditioning available for summer experiences, numbers of community partners that can be accessed, or other constraints particular to your local)?
- How can we make these programs sustainable beyond using additional federal and state money that is “temporary”? Should any programs that are developed be permanent?
- If resources outside the school community are necessary, how will outside organizations and academic “resources” be vetted and kept cost effective? (Keep in mind that the best approach is to use district personnel rather than hiring outside vendors.)
- How can your state federation or the national AFT help in providing research/resources to support teacher and student success?

DIAGNOSING STUDENT WELL-BEING AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Diagnosing student learning needs and assessing their well-being are extremely pressing given the disruptions to schooling caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. We need to ensure that our students who have been hardest hit during the pandemic—students of color, rural students, Indigenous students, English language learners, those with special needs and all those underserved by our education system—receive the support they need. We should maximize student learning time and engage in meaningful academic and needs assessments, created in concert with educators, that support effective instruction. This is what educators do frequently in their classrooms.

Any assessments given should be aligned to standards and inform teaching and learning. States and districts should review all assessment programs to limit the loss of learning time to excessive testing, and to prioritize assessments that provide teachers with crucial information. Districts and schools will need to establish appropriate diagnosis of students’ learning levels and needs given the truncated traditional school year, and focus on formative assessments that allow teachers to adjust instruction in a timely manner. These diagnostic and formative assessments should be teacher-friendly and accompanied by access to relevant instructional resources and supports to fill gaps. We need to use this data to guide instruction, identify and share best practices and partner with families to support student learning.

Consider using diagnostic testing at the beginning of the year, and make use of formative testing throughout the year to assess learning and learning gaps during schooling disruptions. You may also consider assessing students on content from the previous grade level. Research shows that as students advance through grade levels, there are learning gaps happening under the surface. With widespread school closures due to the coronavirus pandemic, this “iceberg effect” will impact more students. Provide support to teachers, ensuring educators have the resources they need to adapt such assessments to remote learning when necessary.

- How do we assess the social emotional needs of students?
- How will students’ current levels of learning be assessed?
- What diagnostic assessments currently exist at each grade span (K-2, 3-5, 6-8, 9-12) and what additional assessments are needed, if any, to understand how students have progressed toward grade-level learning.
- How do we determine which students need to be assessed? Do we need a triage system to ensure we help those most in need?
- What specific assessments will be used to collect the data and make good decisions?

- What is the role of common assessments?
- Is there a role for state testing results in this process?
- How do we help students monitor their own learning to help them “own” it?
- How do we triangulate data to make good decisions (considering both assessment and contextual data)?
- What contextual data should be considered in decision-making?
 - » Attendance
 - » Student surveys
 - » Family surveys
 - » Logistical concerns in terms of access to the instruction
 - » Other pertinent contextual data in your district environment
- How should programming prioritize standards that are essential as a foundation to continued learning?
- What are reasonable expectations for students and teachers in providing learning opportunities?
- How should short- and long-term goals be developed?
- How do we manage expectations for student learning? (Getting students up to speed will not be accomplished overnight or in a simple summer session. Further, summer sessions and time outside the school day may be difficult for the most vulnerable students to access.)
- How do we manage expectations for teachers? (Is there support available to ensure teachers are able to accomplish what the plan asks them to do?)
- What considerations need to be given to equity concerns in delivering instruction?
- What extra resources (time, personnel, dollars) are needed to serve special education students and English language learners?
- How does just-in-time learning play a role in the process?

STANDARDS/CURRICULUM/EXPECTATIONS

Consider using the summer months for curriculum realignment and developing project-based and performance assessments that can be done in classrooms or remotely. States, districts and schools should ensure educators have access to meaningful professional development on diagnostic and benchmark testing; project-based learning; and performance assessments, with a focus on remote instruction and trauma-based instruction.

Districts should consider using standards-based report cards to provide educators, parents and students a clear understanding of progress toward learning goals. Schools should consider hosting virtual curriculum/data nights for families where educators explain the learning standards students are working on, assessments used to measure learning, how to understand results, as well as how families can support learning at home.

- How should programming prioritize crucial prerequisite skills?

TEACHING AND LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Schooling may not look at all like it did in previous years, and a district’s academic response will need to be closely integrated with its social emotional and mental health response.

- How will families be engaged to support their students’ learning?
- What structures, time, support, and opportunity for meaningful collaboration do educators and staff need to assess where students are, and to develop plans to meet short-term goals?
- What structures, time, support, and opportunity for meaningful collaboration do educators and staff need to develop and meet long-term goals?
- How do we plan and implement the different

configurations of instruction to provide for student learning?

- How do we provide students with the proper resources and materials for their instruction, taking into consideration that some students may need to continue in a virtual environment?
- How will non-academic support services be provided and delivered to meet the social and emotional needs of all students?
- What provisions will be made to provide time for planning learning experiences?
- How do we ensure teachers and paraprofessionals/support personnel have collaborative planning time?
- How do we plan for more support for immuno-

compromised and medically fragile students?

- How do we maximize cross-curricular opportunities to ensure students are getting all the content they need?
- What are the options for creating learning experiences?
 - » Reconfiguring the school day;
 - » Ensuring the collaborative use of staff to share responsibility for student learning;
 - » Bringing in resources during the regular school day to support student learning;
 - » Community partnerships to take advantage of resources like museums, state parks, zoos, hospitals, places of worship, etc.

The Council of Great City Schools has identified key instructional guidelines that may be helpful as you are planning for instruction, curriculum and assessments. "In many ways, the instructional challenges that school districts will be faced with in the 2020-21 school year will be unprecedented. Students will be returning to school with significant anxiety and likely trauma, as well as considerable unfinished learning from the past school year. However, while the scale of the challenge (owing to the shared nature of the educational disruption) may be novel, unfinished learning is nothing new. Addressing skill gaps, incomplete learning, and misconceptions is a necessary and natural part of the teaching (and learning) process, although it is one with which educators have traditionally struggled. All too often, unfinished learning leads to remediation or pull-out interventions that serve to further isolate students and impede their access to rigorous, engaging grade-level content—this is how something as natural as unfinished learning leads to intractable achievement and opportunity gaps. Addressing unfinished learning in a constructive manner is therefore essential not only to a

district's short-term response to the current pandemic, but long-term commitment to educational equity and excellence."

The council identifies six overarching principles for supporting students with unfinished learning. In planning instruction for the coming school years, districts should (1) **stick to grade-level content and instructional rigor**, and (2) **focus on the depth of instruction, rather than the pace**. To provide this grade-level instruction, districts will need to help teachers (3) **prioritize content and learning**. In order to continue to reflect a district's instructional vision and commitment to equity, educators will also need to (4) **maintain the inclusion of each and every learner** and (5) **identify and address gaps in learning through instruction, avoiding the misuse of standardized testing** to place kids into high- or low-ability groups or provide low levels of instructional rigor to lower-performing students. Finally, districts should consider (6) **focusing on the commonalities that students share in this time of crisis, not just on their differences**.

- » Adding an “in between” grade;
 - » Before-school programs
 - » After-school activities;
 - » Summer sessions; and
 - » Creating a summer camp-like experience for children who wouldn’t otherwise participate in such an experience.
- How do we eliminate any stigma connected to needing extra help?
 - How do we deal with students whose families

decline to participate in experiences outside the school day? What are ways these students can receive services during the regular school day? What are the logistics for making that happen?

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Consider having students start the school year with a teacher from the previous grade (like looping) to allow the relationships to school and school structures to be re-established with a familiar adult. The teacher starts the school year already knowing what each student’s last school year looked like; this would also be a good practice for creating a comfortable testing environment for students. Balance academics with other needs—take the time to do benchmark/diagnostic testing, focus on social emotional learning, rebuild relationships, and set class routines and structures. Ensure educators have additional planning time, and implement vertical planning teams in addition to grade-level teams to provide a professional learning community where educators can collaborate around student learning needs. Because classrooms will include even greater variation in student readiness and achievement levels, educators will need to understand learning standards or goals at the grade levels preceding and following the one they teach.

- How do we provide for greater student engagement, inquiry and deeper learning to make their learning experience interesting and not “drill and kill,” which becomes “test prep” rather than deep learning?
- How do we address the social emotional needs of students that impact their ability to learn?
- What is the impact of stress/trauma on the students’ ability to engage, and how do we add the supports they need to ensure engagement?
- How do we respond when students/families are not engaging or decline additional learning opportunities?
- How do we make project-based learning and cross-curricular projects a part of learning so students are actively engaged?
- How do we encourage critical thinking, cultivate

RESOURCES ON MEANINGFUL TEACHING AND LEARNING

Problem-Based Learning (Cornell’s Center for Teaching Innovation)

<https://teaching.cornell.edu/teaching-resources/engaging-students/problem-based-learning>

Project-Based Learning Works

<https://my.pblworks.org>

Resources to Help you Design and Implement Powerful Learning in Your Classroom (Edutopia)

<https://www.edutopia.org/blog/pbl-how-to-refine-driving-questions-andrew-miller>

Supporting Students with Disabilities During the Covid-19 Pandemic (AFT’s Share My Lesson)

<https://sharemylesson.com/collections/supporting-students-disabilities-during-covid-19-pandemic>

Trauma-Informed Resources for Students and Teachers (AFT’s Share My Lesson)

<https://sharemylesson.com/collections/trauma-informed?theme=322713>

curiosity and help students find answers to things they are most interested in, explore, solve problems or create something new, and teach the information to others?

- How will differentiation occur?
- How do we foster student ownership of learning?
- How does just-in-time learning play a role in the process?
- What should the length of sessions be to ensure student interest is maintained?
- Should “activity packs” be developed for students who may not be able to participate face to face?
- How do we make remediation interesting and effective?

MEETING THE NEEDS OF OUR MOST UNDERSERVED STUDENTS

- How will these programs meet the needs of our most vulnerable students?
- How will these programs meet the unique needs of young children, English language learners and students with special needs?
- How will these programs meet the needs of students who are experiencing distress and trauma, including homelessness, food and economic insecurity, and challenges in family relationships.
- How will programming be trauma-informed?
- How will staff serving traditionally underserved populations be supported to provide meaningful experiences for students?
- What additional resources and staffing will be needed to serve all students equitably?

CONCLUSION

Now is the time to look at the long-term direction of public education, and how we can reorient our

priorities and resources to help students recover and thrive academically, physically, and emotionally from the disruption and trauma stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. The union needs to be a partner in these discussions to ensure educators have the time, tools and resources to provide these opportunities; the collaboration of leaders is key to making this happen.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

American Rescue Plan State Fact Sheets (AFT)

https://drive.google.com/drive/mobile/folders/1MWnT4xb1sEjyDk5nD2GBxPYcOT9Jd_H?usp=sharing

Every Summer Counts: A Longitudinal Analysis of Outcomes from the National Summer Learning Project (RAND)

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR3201.html

Learning Beyond COVID-19 – A Vision for Thriving in Public Education (AFT and NEA)

https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/learning_beyond_covid_web.pdf

Leveraging Collective Bargaining, and Educator and School Staff Voice, to Reopen Schools Safely: Case studies on how AFT affiliates have laid the groundwork for reopening schools safely (AFT)

<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/reopen-schools-case-studies.pdf>

Restart & Recover: Considerations for Teaching and Learning (Council of Chief State School Officers)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gGXFpPnVdy-pBIGiiztG0_3QRucEhx0iaSvoESnWJQ/edit

Restarting and Reinventing School: Learning in the Time of COVID and Beyond (Learning Policy Institute)

<https://restart-reinvent.learningpolicyinstitute.org>

Summertime Experiences and Child and Adolescent Education, Health, and Safety (National Academies)

<https://www.nationalacademies.org/our-work/summertime-experiences-and-child-and-adolescent-education-health-and-safety>

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