
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



SCHOOL REOPENING TOOLKIT: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic that caused extensive school closures during the 2019-20 school year has caused lasting changes in our educational system and changes to planning for the upcoming school year. Educators will need training, professional development sessions, and ongoing support to prepare for the reopening of school and adapt their practices to meet the needs of new, unique learning environments.

All information in the document is non-regulatory guidance issued for general informational purposes only. This document is not intended to constitute legal advice. Because local school board policy and unique facts make dramatic differences in analyzing any situation, the Tennessee Department of Education advises each school district to consult with the local school board attorney for specific legal advice regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school operations.

I. Reopening Overview

Our educational community must collaborate for the almost one million students counting on us and ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic does not cause lasting barriers in their educational careers. As the commissioner stated in the Reopening Overview Guide for LEAs, existing educational challenges have been intensified over the last six months.

As districts are planning to reopen schools, they will need to ensure staff feel supported, prepared and empowered to deliver instruction aligned with the district's reopening plans, and that staff have the skills and knowledge to effectively deliver strong instruction that re-engages students in multiple learning environments and accelerates their learning to ensure all students return to a successful path towards their futures. Districts will need to offer training to prepare teachers for learning environments as well as maintaining health and safety. Teachers will need professional learning to deliver instruction differently and to address learning loss. Finally, all educators will need ongoing support to effectively transition into post-COVID school settings. To ensure that districts have adequate training, professional learning, and ongoing supports, districts will need to consider many questions regarding their reopening as well as work with teachers to determine what they need to be successful.

II. Professional Learning Considerations

Professional learning plans may include training, or content that educators can complete independently or in a single learning session, collaborative digital or in-person learning, coaching, and/or on-going follow-up supports. When the school reopens in a post-COVID-19 environment, districts will likely need provide professional learning for teachers on a number of key topics: effective distance learning instruction, using the district's digital platform, health and safety, legally-required state trainings, use of new curricular materials, and shifts in pedagogy for online learning. As districts plan to support teachers, instructional leaders should determine survey teachers for their needs and determine what topics can be covered in a single training, which will need multiple touchpoints, and which topics should also be provided ongoing support.

**Note: While professional development and ongoing support are separated to facilitate district planning, research shows us that isolated professional development alone will not change practice. All professional development should also include ongoing support (TNTP, The Mirage, 2015).*

Regardless of this pandemic or the learning setting, effective professional development should include the following components:

1. Respond to the needs identified by teachers, leaders and staff;
2. Sessions that are of an appropriate duration to learn and apply new learning, but are also partnered with ongoing support that allow educators to truly learn new strategies and grapple with the implementation of those strategies;
3. Active engagement of participants rather than focus on lecture-based exposure;
4. A focus on modeling and demonstrating best practices for educators to apply and replicate;
5. Integration into discipline-specific content rather than isolated pedagogy and practice;
6. Differentiated support and teacher collaboration to implement new practices; and
7. Collaborative structures to expand professional learning into collegial support of teachers.¹

The following questions lead districts through a series of considerations in creating a professional learning plan for the 2020-21 school year.



A. Learning Environment

How has the learning environment changed?

Is your district using a digital platform for some or all instruction?

- Do teachers feel trained and prepared to use all of the technical aspects of your district platform including synchronous and asynchronous features?
- Can all teachers use the district's digital platform to replicate classroom experiences? (e.g., group discussions, academic feedback, checks-for-understanding)
- Have high-quality materials been transferred to the learning platform and do teachers know how to access learning content and prepare lessons with the online content?
- Does the digital platform allow teachers to design multiple entry points into digital lessons so that all student groups can access content and have opportunities for tailored learning supports?

¹ (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Desimore, 2009, Guskey, 2009).

- Is your district providing learning through distance experiences for some students/some of learning time, or for all students/all learning time?***
 - Have teachers been trained on how to connect with students in a non-digital distance learning setting including written and phone-based instruction, academic feedback, and checks for understanding?
 - Do teachers have resources, strategies and training to replicate classroom experiences to ensure students can master learning content appropriately? (e.g., downloaded video lessons that model instruction, feedback on student work, additional supports for guided practice)
 - Have parents been engaged and provided tools to partner with teachers to support learning experiences in practical and manageable at-home strategies?
 - Have high-quality materials and learning content been transferred to devices or packets conducive for the at-home settings as appropriate for the student's needs?
 - Do teachers have access to resources, strategies and training to provide scaffolds and learning supports for all student groups especially students with learning challenges?

- Are teachers prepared to teach using the identified opening schedule for their school (e.g., staggered schedules, condensed days, or other modified schedules)?***
 - Have teachers had the opportunity to complete pacing guides and vertical maps of standards to ensure that learning experiences can be maximized within the district's chosen schedule(s)?
 - Have teachers mapped out benchmarks/checkpoints to determine if students are mastering content or if additional scaffolds/learning supports are necessary?
 - Do teachers have a plan for how to integrate additional scaffolds/learning supports into the school's scheduling opportunities?
 - Do teachers have the skills and knowledge to make any identified changes to instructional practice that may be required due to the school's schedule or environment?
 - Do teachers have strategies to extend learning beyond the in-person instruction? (e.g., flipped classroom, video take-home lessons, classroom extensions that can be completed independently)

- Have teachers received professional development focused on the health and safety changes to their school environment?***
 - Have teachers participated in conversations around CDC guidance, district health and safety procedures, and operational safety changes for their building?
 - Have teachers had time to discuss and participate in developing changes for classroom procedures, hallway practices, electives, lunches, etc.?
 - Do teachers know what health and safety procedures have been implemented/ revised for their school? (e.g., hallway lines, material sharing in classrooms, carpets/reading time,

lab processes)

- Have teachers been trained on strong classroom management practices to establish strong classroom culture as well as behavior management techniques that address the whole child needs?

B. Lost Learning Preparations

How should teachers manage lost learning concepts from last school year?

- ***What scope and sequence decisions do teachers and instructional teams need to consider?***
 - Can the district provide teachers with existing scopes and sequences to identify fourth quarter concepts and standards?
 - Has the district created professional learning sessions that allow multiple grade level teachers to collaboratively focus on content-specific (math or ELA) concept mapping in elementary, middle and high schools?
 - During these sessions, how can teachers work collaboratively in vertical teams to align fourth quarter concepts with on-grade level content into integrated scopes and sequences?
 - How will entry-year benchmarks and diagnostic data be provided to teachers?
 - What professional learning is needed to help teachers use this benchmarking data?
- ***What are the district practices to help teachers use data in planning?***
 - As districts complete initial benchmarking, diagnostics, frequent progress checks, and curriculum-based assessments, are teachers prepared to group students, identify needs and understand student misconceptions? (See **Assessing Student Learning Toolkit** for more information).
 - Do teachers need assessment literacy strategies to understand the differences between skill-based diagnostics and standards/knowledge-based benchmark data and how to effectively use different types of data?
 - Do teachers need additional resources and learning around intervention vs. remediation?

C. Content-Specific Decisions

Did your district adopt and purchase high-quality ELA materials?

- What do my teachers need to do to understand the new ELA curriculum they will be using during the 2020-21 school year?***
 - Do your teachers know how to use the digital and print teacher resources (and student resources) to effectively prepare unit-based and lesson instruction and lesson in multiple learning environments?
 - Has your district instructional team prepared teachers to plan units differently given the launch of new high-quality materials and the COVID-19 learning environment changes?
 - Has your district instructional team prepared teachers to sequence lessons differently using knowledge-based outcomes and applied these practices to the COVID 19 learning environment changes?
 - How will teachers shift their lessons to ensure knowledge-based outcomes versus strategy-based outcomes?

- Have teachers had content-specific professional learning in transitioning materials and learning practices to digital, blended, and distance learning instruction?***
 - a. Have teachers had the opportunity to analyze and prepare effective pedagogical practices in multiple learning environments?
 - b. Are teachers prepared to look at their content and their practices and make adaptations for safety, digital learning environments and blended learning situations?

D. Ongoing Support & Collaboration

- Are teachers equipped with the resources to support the whole child?***
 - Does the district have clearly defined expectations for how teachers will manage student wellness, trauma, and student behaviors as a result of COVID-19 and learning loss?
 - Do teachers know the expectations for supporting the whole child in your school/district and have the knowledge and skills to meet those expectations?
 - Have teachers had opportunities to build systems within their classrooms to address re-establishing classroom culture, structure, and routines?
 - Can teachers attend professional learning to address additional whole child needs or in school/district strategies necessary to launch the reopening of school?

(See the department's **Wellbeing and Mental Health Toolkit** for additional resources).

- Do teachers have outlets to ask questions, problem solve and receive new health and safety guidance on a frequent basis?***
 - Has the district created structures for feedback loops around classroom and school procedures, guidelines, routines and points of contact for key topics?
 - If teachers struggle with expectations, does the school have additional resources (ie. coaching) to help teachers adapt practices to effectively maintain structure and safety?

- How will teachers be supported as they transition between learning environments, adapted learning schedules, or transient student populations?***
 - Have you added ongoing structured collaborative planning, coaching or walk through feedback, and opportunities for teachers to collaboratively problem solve learning loss situations?
 - Have you designated school or district instructional support to provide ongoing instructional guidance (both written and in person) to assist teachers in adjusting instructional practices to multiple learning settings and learning environments?

(See the department's **Academic Toolkit** for additional resources).

- How do teachers have opportunities to continue to deepen the use of high-quality ELA materials within the school year to solidify effective implementation of these resources?***
 - Will teachers have monthly sessions to unit prep and adapt based on changing learning schedules and student data and needs?
 - Will teachers meet weekly to lesson prep and share learnings from materials implementation weekly?
 - Who will provide teachers frequent feedback on classroom practices related to implementation?
- Do teachers have ongoing opportunities structured into new master schedules collaboratively work through pedagogy shifts?***
- Do teachers have ongoing opportunities dedicated to analyzing and planning around progress-monitoring data (for intervention and remediation)?***
- How will schools collaborate with teachers and stakeholders to ensure they have the resources and supports to meet student wellness needs?***

Another Consideration for Professional Supports for Teachers: Wellness Supports

- Do you have resources and supports available for teachers to re-integrate to school?***
- How can teachers alleviate stress or tension associated to social distancing or changes in traditional teaching practices, stresses of lost learning in students, or addressing ongoing stress in COVID 19 environments?***
- Has your district connected with community-based wellness organizations to provide teachers with wellness, exercise, and other stress-reducing activities?***
- Will teachers have access to crisis or emergency mental health supports in the event of high-stress situations?***

(See the department's **Wellbeing and Mental Health Toolkit** for additional resources).

III. Best Practices

After completing an analysis of the above considerations, the district's instructional leadership team should:

1. analyze what priorities the district will focus on and support school teams to determine additional focal areas for each school in the district,
2. determine what needs can be delivered through flexible training or through free available resources,
3. consider collaborating regionally to maximize resources to collectively plan training and summer professional learning, and
4. focus on creating flexible and ongoing support structures, sequences and delivery methods.

The state department will release resources and ongoing, flexible tools to support district training, professional learning and ongoing support through the instructional supervisor letter, commissioner's update for directors, and through the online learning tool (*coming soon*).

A. Training Recommendations

Many districts will be considering how to provide important training for teachers this summer. Several free resources are available including the Trevecca Nazarene University's [digital teacher training series](#) as well as an upcoming release of resources from TDOE.

Training is intended to provide content that educators can complete independently or in discrete learning sessions. During the COVID-19 environment, districts will likely be using training for the following: distance learning strategy, digital platform training, health and safety updates, mandated state trainings, overviews of new curriculum materials, and shifts in pedagogy for online learning. This type of learning must be supported in a job-embedded structures such as PLCs, weekly planning sessions, or in coaching sessions. As districts plan to support teachers, instructional leaders should determine what topics can be covered in training and which topics should be shifted to professional learning and ongoing support.

Many of the trainings mandated by state law (including Harassment, Intimidation, Bullying, Teacher Code of Ethics, and hazing) will be provided digitally. Districts can assign this training on-demand for all educators in Tennessee. See the link for a list of current trainings available [here](#).

When designing online training, district leaders should include:

1. A user's guide to support digital platform needs.
2. On-demand modules that allow for educators to demonstrate mastery of discrete or "bite-sized" content.
3. Use simulations, scenarios, and problem-solving opportunities for complex concepts or offer adaptive options for self-pacing.
4. Have non-digital options in the event educators cannot access digital content.
5. Include reference documents or guides to refresh learning as needed.

B. Professional Development & Ongoing Support Recommendations

Selecting Professional Development Providers

Many districts will be engaging with professional development partners as teachers will need multiple layers of professional support. When selecting professional learning providers, please look for the following:

1. Collaborative engagement on session goals, learner outcomes, and measures of learning success.
2. High levels of engagement strategies (virtual or in person), opportunities to check for understanding, and ways participants can get clarification within and after learning sessions.
3. Learning activities that include opportunities for practice, application with students, and checks for understanding.

Content-Specific Professional Learning

The research case for focused professional development on implementing high-quality materials is strong; a body of compelling evidence suggests that support for the implementation of high-quality instructional materials may be the curriculum effect's "secret sauce." One study spanning 6,000 schools and six states found that implementing high-quality instructional materials in the absence of high-quality instructional supports was not associated with improvement in student learning (Blazar et al. 2019). Other researchers have found that over half of the possible impact of shifting to a stronger curriculum is lost if the transition does not include a shift in teacher practice that specifically supports the new materials (Taylor et al., 2015.) Said another way, the curriculum effect is greatest on student outcomes when coupled with what the University of Colorado's Joseph Taylor calls "an integrated delivery model to drive change in teacher behavior."

1. Implementing High-Quality ELA Materials

In year one of the ELA adoption, TDOE recommends that districts focus on four items:

1. a focus on knowledge-based outcomes,
2. unit preparation,
3. lesson preparation, and
4. implementing the IPG for teacher feedback.

A suite of tools and guides will be available in the Online Learning Tool no later than August 1, 2020. In addition, your CORE ELA consultants are uniquely poised to support this work and have developed a suite of unit and lesson preparation tools to support teachers.

2. Teaching Mathematics in Digital Spaces

It is important for students to concretely represent mathematics throughout the learning process, and a digital learning environment, it is best practice that this continue. Adding manipulatives to the materials students have ready at the beginning of a digital lesson alongside their typical learning tools (e.g., paper and pencil) helps students be prepared and also signals manipulatives as an important tool when learning mathematics. Teachers may want to preview at the end of one learning session what materials will be necessary for the subsequent learning session. A digital learning environment may not afford students the opportunity to have conventional

manipulatives. Looking for creative ways to identify manipulatives readily available provides access to learning for students. While this type of teaching may be more challenging in a digital learning environment, it is an important step as students build a conceptual understanding of mathematics.

Best practice would also be for students to continue to be afforded the opportunity for reasoning and problem solving to be a part of their learning process. It is important that the task-based instruction students would receive in a classroom be mimicked as much as possible in a digital learning environment. Students should continue talking about mathematics and participate in mathematical discourse. They need to use and connect mathematical representations. Productive struggle in learning helps students as they build conceptual understanding, which ultimately leads to procedural fluency. These effective teaching and learning moments that are present in face-to-face instruction should continue to be equally fostered in a digital learning environment.

In regard to mathematics specific professional development, one potential focus is how to deliver content through a digital environment that still offers students opportunities to engage in a discovery learning process. While direct instruction can be a more natural way to deliver information to students in a digital learning environment, it is not always the best method for students to learn mathematics. Best practice is an appropriate mix of varying types of instruction in order to reach all learners. Professional development targeting how to effectively blend different types of instruction could be very beneficial to mathematics educators.

Additional professional development could focus on the vertical learning progressions that naturally exist within the Tennessee mathematics standards. Knowing and understanding these progressions will help teachers as they identify and plan to address learning gaps for each of their students. Understanding how the standards scaffold over time provides teachers the opportunity to address learning gaps as they teach on grade level standards to their students.

3. Foundational Skills

As preK through second grade classrooms are managing loss and gaps in oral language and reading skill development, the department has released a free, optional [foundational skills curriculum supplement](#). This supplement is designed to emphasize a sounds-first approach to build strong reading skills. In addition, the curriculum supplement includes an assessment and remediation guide that includes baseline diagnostics, ongoing progress monitoring, and intervention strategy to reinforce daily foundational skills instruction.

In addition, the department is releasing a series of free professional development videos, guidance and PLC documents to support teacher professional learning through the summer and 2020-21 school year. These resources will be available [here](#).

4. Pedagogical Support and Scaffolding for All Learners

As districts determine their needs for learning environments, the instructional leadership team should identify three to five key strategies to engage learners in developmentally appropriate ways, ensure students have opportunities for feedback, receive scaffolds and multiple entry points into lessons, and teachers have ways to review student work.

The instructional team should provide summer professional learning on these three to five key strategies and develop ongoing support for teachers. Ideally, these strategies will support all student groups and provide a strong continuum of learning regardless of the instructional environment.

(See the department's **Academic Toolkit**, **Special Populations Toolkit**, and **Access, Opportunity and Remediation Toolkit** for additional guidance).

IV. Sample District Plans

Sample District One: Sullivan County

As districts are working through their professional learning needs, a district needs a strong vision for their professional development and ongoing support. All educators - teachers, school leaders, and district instructional leaders- should have a clear vision on the why of the professional learning and how it connects to the overarching plan. When adopting HQIM for ELA, the materials are only one-half of the equation in the ongoing literacy revolution. Equally vital is a strategically designed plan for sequential, spiraled professional learning that is focused on content, is teacher- and student-centered, and is instructionally actionable and relevant (Achieve the Core, 2020). Sullivan County's has chosen to focus their 2020 professional learning support plan on high-quality implementation for ELA and have grounded their plan in an academic strategy that outlines their vision, provides a theory of action to be executed methodically, and is sequenced to build the capacity of all educators in the system.

Sample District Two: Marshall County

The Marshall County Board of Education approved the textbook committee's recommendation of their high-quality ELA adoption in April for K-3. As soon as the decision was finalized, high-quality material launch training was scheduled. Due to Covid-19, the professional development was delivered remotely. The training included the research and science behind the high-quality materials so the teachers would understand the "why" of the methods used by the curriculum. In addition, the training highlighted the components of the curriculum, paying particular attention to the online platform.

The ELA Curriculum Advisory Team was formed to include teachers who were involved in early implementation of CKLA from the past year's pilot, the instructional facilitators in each building and the supervisor of elementary instruction. The team will work together in creating professional development sessions in mid-June to develop a district pacing guide and make a list of helpful tips for each grade level. In late July, each K-3 teacher will attend an additional ELA professional development session in their buildings led by the Advisory Team. In October, teachers and administrators will be surveyed to determine the effectiveness of the implementation and areas where assistance is needed. Those areas will be addressed on the November 3, 2020 district professional development day.

V. Resource List

TDOE Quick Guide for Developing Professional Learning

https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/education/training/PD_Rubric_Quick_Guide_current.pdf

This guide provides a series of guided questions to prepare a professional learning, assess adult learning, and plan ongoing support after the professional learning has completed.

Trevecca Nazarene University's Summer Teacher Professional Learning

[Link](#)

Online Learning Tool

[Link](#)

This online learning tool is under development, and in August, will provide curriculum-based videos, lessons, teacher and student resources, and family support resources. Those resources will be launched in the full tool release on August 1st. The resources can be used in an online environment and as a downloadable resource. Extensive professional learning resources will begin loading into the tool through the month of July.

Achieve the Core Foundational Skills Series

[Link](#)

The Foundational Skills Mini-Course dives into the content of literacy foundational skills, with an emphasis on phonological awareness, phonics, and how these connect to early reading. Instructional recommendations and concrete recommendations for teacher practice are also explored.

TDOE has also created PLC guides and additional video options. These resources can be found here.

NCTM Webinars

Link: <https://www.nctm.org/100-Days-of-Professional-Learning/>

The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics is offering a series of professional development webinar opportunities over the next several months. The webinars cover a wide range of topics and are free to educators. This is an ongoing initiative that began in April and offers opportunities through at least October. Each webinar is recorded and posted on the NCTM site within a day of the live event. Some topics are categorized as general but there are also offerings that are grade-band specific.

PBSonline

Link: <http://www.pbs.org/teacherline/>

This resource provides content-specific free online modules for teachers and leaders.

USDOE Department of Educational Technology

Link: <https://tech.ed.gov/teachers/>

This resource provides extensive guidance, resources and supports for teachers and leaders when considering digital learning opportunities. Toolkits and concrete examples are included.