Remote Learning Options (K-12) for the 2021-2022 School Year as a Result of COVID-19 Health Concerns

Effective April 15, 2021

Table of Contents

Background and Purpose

For the 2020-21 school year, in consideration of public health and safety measures made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Colorado Department of Education offered guidance and flexibilities to districts regarding acceptable practices related to remote learning to address:

- Instructional hours requirements
    - "CDE Policy on Instructional Hours and Attendance for the 2020-21 Academic Year"
- Funding requirements
    - "Addendum to the 2020 Student October Count Audit Resource Guide"

In both cases, the guidance provided was explicitly limited to modifications made to the educational process for the 2020-21 school year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; however, some of these modifications may continue to be necessary for the 2021-22 school year for districts across Colorado.

The purpose of this document is to outline requirements for continuing or implementing virtual remote learning options for students in grades K-12 during the 2021-22 school year as schools and districts begin the transition back to normal operation. For information regarding remote options for preschool students, please visit the "News" section of the CDE Colorado Preschool Program webpage.

It is important to note that students who are not enrolled in designated online schools or programs, but who are otherwise participating in 100% remote learning based on parent choice, should be the exception, and exclusively based on parent choice due to COVID-related health concerns. This is probably the last year CDE will offer these types of flexibilities.

Districts should be aware that although the intent of this guidance is to provide flexibility and to outline the assurances and documentation that will be required for the 2021-22 school year, the minimum expectations for virtual remote learning for 2021-22 will be increased from what was expected during the 2020-2021 school year.

Equitable Access

Students may not have equitable access[1] to the devices, internet service, and/or family support needed to most effectively engage in a virtual remote learning model that is reliant on technology. Ensuring equitable access to virtual remote learning—particularly for students of color, students/families living in poverty, English language learners and their parents/family, students with disabilities, migrant students, and students experiencing homelessness or in the foster care system—is critical to effective virtual remote learning. As districts design their virtual remote learning program, they should seek input from families and students, especially historically marginalized communities (i.e., families of color, families of students with disabilities), so that they may provide feedback regarding the district's proposed program.

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[1] Equitable access refers to each student having access to technology, information, and support regardless of their ethnicity, socio-economic status, age, physical ability, or any other characteristic. In determining equitable access, districts should keep in mind that all applicable federal laws for services for students with disabilities and English language learners are still in effect and should be considered when developing plans for remote learning.

Remote Learning Definitions

Remote Learning

For the 2021-22 school year, remote learning may be implemented in response to public health and safety measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

For purposes of this document, **"remote learning"** refers to teacher-pupil instruction and contact time that would normally occur in-person (on-site) but is instead occurring remotely (off-site) during the 2021-2022 school year, due to public health and safety measures or instructional needs of the students/districts and precautions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

- During remote learning, students are accessing courses from a location other than the school building where they would attend in-person learning, including when a school is offering "pod spaces" for students to do their remote learning with adult supervision and internet access.
- Remote learning may include various methodologies, including online learning; however, not all remote learning is only online learning (see asynchronous learning below).
  - *Note: We know that internet access is still a variable across the state. We also know that remote learning without online components limits students' opportunities to learn. If your district is struggling with internet access, and has a need to offer remote learning with no online learning components in 2021-22 (for example, via paper packets), please contact Kate Bartlett, Executive Director of School District Operations at CDE, for information about resources for getting families connected. bartlett_k@cde.state.co.us.*

Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning

While offering virtual remote learning, districts must ensure that instruction is being delivered either synchronously or asynchronously. Schools/districts must ensure that students have access to some synchronous learning for all classes. Schools and districts must also ensure access to live teacher/instructional support every instructional day of the school calendar. Unless there are significant barriers to doing so, districts should offer remote learning days that include daily synchronous and asynchronous learning activities. Districts must include a minimum of 20% of synchronous instruction for each course or class weekly, in the case of 100% remote learning options, or daily, in the case of hybrid or temporary remote learning options (see definitions below).

"**Synchronous learning**" is real-time teacher-to-student instruction.
- This could be in the form of whole class, small group, or one-on-one instruction
- Examples include live-streaming classes (via Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, Conference Calls, etc.), reading groups through a virtual platform, peer-to-peer breakout rooms, and other peer-to-peer learning activities, etc.

"**Asynchronous learning**" is teacher-to-student instruction that does not occur in real-time.
- Examples of asynchronous learning that involve daily teacher-to-student instruction for each course include, but are not limited to:
  - A recorded morning greeting, read aloud, and/or lesson where the teacher is modeling a strategy (e.g., a student was not able to attend synchronously at the scheduled time and views the recording at a different time)

- o Discussion board activity where students contribute to a teacher-facilitated class discussion at different times
- o Use of a choice board in which a student can choose how they will demonstrate learning of a concept (done independently but tied to the overall instruction with follow-up from the teacher)
- o Virtual field trip (tied to content) where students can participate at different times
- o Completion of work, a quiz, or a test that is meaningful and tied to content
- o Offline work that is facilitated by a teacher who has provided instruction and then releases the students to practice a skill or complete a project, then gathers students together to conclude the lesson or meets individually (similar to a "writing workshop" in an in-person class)

- Below are some examples of activities that districts may consider to be asynchronous learning that, if provided in isolation without daily teacher-to-student instruction for each individual course, do **not** meet the definition of remote learning:
  - o Posting assignments in Google classroom, or other platform, and giving students an entire day to work independently to complete and turn-in the assignments. Further, if the student needs assistance, they are expected to email the teacher who then has 24 hours to respond
  - o Students are provided a link to an app and told to "practice" (such as math facts, a reading app, etc.)
  - o Asking students to watch YouTube videos to supplant teacher instruction
  - o Providing a digital curriculum with pre-recorded videos that the student clicks through at their own pace (i.e., the digital curriculum is being relied upon wholly to "instruct" the students)

When possible, districts should consider remote learning days that include a balance of daily synchronous and asynchronous learning activities, when full-day synchronous learning cannot occur.

Remote Learning Scenarios

Remote learning may be implemented in response to public health and safety and instructional measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic in three different scenarios. **It is important to note that students who are not enrolled in designated online schools or programs, but who are otherwise participating in 100% remote learning based on parent choice, should be the exception, and based on parent choice due to COVID-related health concerns. This is probably the last year CDE will offer these types of flexibilities.** Please note, districts may also implement remote learning for emergency school closures within certain limits and guidelines; this guidance is available on the Pupil Count webpage.

100% Remote Learning Option[2]

- Refers to a 100% remote learning option implemented by the district/school and/or provided by the district to families who, because of public health and safety measures or precautions associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, do not want their student(s) to receive in-person learning for the duration of a term as defined by the district (e.g., hexter, quarter, semester, full-year, grading periods, etc.)
- Students access all courses from a location other than the school building where they are enrolled and would be attending if not for the COVID-19 pandemic, including when a school is offering "pod spaces" for students to do their remote learning with adult supervision and internet access.

Hybrid Learning Option

- Refers to traditional educational settings (i.e., brick-and-mortar schools) that are implementing a combination of both in-person and remote learning at the student level because of public health and safety measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - An example would be a district implementing hybrid learning in response to local public health guidance that requires physical distancing that is not possible without reducing the number of students in a school at any one time.
- Hybrid learning is not meant to include regular or pre-scheduled remote learning days in the school or district calendar. Rather, it is intended to be used to respond on an as-needed basis to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Students access courses from a location other than the school building for part of the school week or school day, including when a school is offering "pod spaces" for students to do their remote learning with adult supervision and internet access, and in-person attendance for the other portion of the week or school day.
  - An example would be students who are scheduled to receive both in-person and remote learning instruction based on an alternating schedule (i.e., A and B days, A and B weeks, etc.).

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[2] This guidance does not apply to districts utilizing an existing approved online school or program to provide remote learning to brick-and-mortar students (please see "Additional Considerations for Acceptable Remote Learning" below).

Temporary Remote Learning Option

- Short term/temporary instances when students are quarantined due to COVID-19 exposure/illness, or shift to 100% remote learning as a result of an executive order or local public health order suspending in-person learning, county COVID-19 dial levels indicate higher-risk, or other types of locally-determined precautions related to COVID-19.

Additional Considerations for Acceptable Remote Learning (associated with COVID)

- **Remote learning option through an <u>existing, approved Online School or Program</u>**: For the 2021-22 school year, districts with an existing, approved online school or program may continue to provide remote learning options for students within the district by utilizing the district's online school or program as a response to public health and safety measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. Any student enrolled in a brick-and-mortar school that seeks to participate in a fully online remote learning option through an existing approved online school or program with the district for the 2021-22 school year may continue to be enrolled in a district brick-and-mortar school; however, for funding purposes, **proof of Colorado residency, attendance, and scheduled hours requirements for the student will be evaluated based on the funding requirements for the existing online school or program as described in the "Online Schools and Programs" section of the Student October Count Audit Resource Guide.**
  - o Alternative Education Campuses: Online Alternative Education Campus (AEC) schools are not recommended as a remote learning option for students within the district attending traditional schools. AECs must certify that they serve a high-risk student body and that their methods of instruction are tailored to meet the needs of those high-risk students. Thus, enrolling traditional students in an online AEC is generally not appropriate, and other options for traditional students needing online instruction should be explored. If an online AEC enrolls or serves traditional district students, it may jeopardize the online school's eligibility to seek an Alternative Education Campus designation. Districts that only authorize an online program attached to an AEC should carefully consider their ability to provide appropriate instruction to both high-risk and traditional student populations and the potential implications for their on-going AEC designation.
  - o When placing a student in an existing, approved online school or program as a remote learning option due to health concerns where the student maintains enrollment in their brick-and-mortar school, the accountability for the student's learning will remain with the brick-and-mortar school.
  - o The assurances in this document apply to students receiving remote learning through an existing approved online school or program but maintain their enrollment in a brick-and-mortar school.
    - ▪ Note: Instructional Assurance #4 is not required for any district using an existing approved online school or program to provide a 100% remote learning option for brick-and-mortar students as a result of COVID-19 health concerns.

7

- **Remote learning—supplemental online courses purchased from Colorado Empowered Learning (CEL)/Colorado Digital Learning Solutions (CDLS)**: For the 2021-22 school year, districts purchasing supplemental online courses through CEL/CDLS, where the courses would be completed by the student off campus, will be responsible for ensuring that they meet all assurances (see below). It is not CEL/CDLS's responsibility to ensure satisfaction of the assurances.

- **Remote learning option provided by an online school, vendor, or program that is not an existing, CDE-approved Online School or Program:** For the 2021-22 school year, districts that wish to provide remote learning via an online school, vendor, or program that is not an approved Online School or Program in the state of Colorado must ensure that the program meets the requirements for synchronous and asynchronous learning described above, as well as all assurances (see below).

Required Assurances and Documentation

Districts who are wanting (or are anticipating the need) to implement one or more of the three remote learning scenarios described above due to public health and safety measures associated with the COVID-19 pandemic *must submit the following assurances* and ensure that corresponding documentation will be available upon request, if audited.

Assurances will be submitted electronically to the Office of Blended and Online Learning.

- Assurances must be submitted no later than June 30, 2021.
- The link to complete the Assurances electronically is available on the School Auditing Office Pupil Count website.
  - Districts must be prepared to attach documentation as outlined in Instructional Assurance #8 below.
- For technical assistance in completing or submitting the electronic Assurances form, please contact Rachel Matson at matson_r@cde.state.co.us
- For general questions about the requirements described in the Assurances or this document, please contact Renee Martinez at martinez_r@cde.state.co.us

Failure to provide these assurances, and/or provide the corresponding documentation upon request, may result in the district not being able to include remote learning time in the determination for funding.

Instructional Assurances for Remote Learning

❏ **Instructional Assurance #1:** The district will ensure that all remote learning will be supervised by teachers with applicable Colorado state licensure.
❏ **Instructional Assurance #2:** The district will ensure that each school providing remote learning will have a plan to monitor engagement and a plan to outreach when a student is not engaged or progressing academically.
❏ **Instructional Assurance #3:** The district will ensure that for each course, teacher-to-student instruction is provided either through a synchronous or asynchronous method each day the course is scheduled to meet, while also ensuring that students have access to a live teacher for instructional support each day of the school calendar, as described above.
❏ **Instructional Assurance #4:** The district will ensure that for each course, students are provided with at least 20% weekly synchronous instruction for each course. Note: Remote learning, as defined in this document, is intended to replace in-person learning experiences. Anecdotal feedback has concluded that many students have found greater success with remote learning that includes synchronous learning time as part of the model.
❏ **Instructional Assurance #5:** The district and school will ensure that their teachers will use appropriate research-based assessments to measure student academic growth and provide targeted support to students who are not meeting academic progress, and communicate those results with parents/guardians. Students should have varied opportunities to demonstrate mastery of skills, show academic progress, and receive meaningful feedback on their learning.
❏ **Instructional Assurance #6:** The district will ensure that students with an Individual Education Program (IEP) or Advanced Learning Plan (ALP) who are participating in remote learning will receive accommodations per their IEP or ALP, and districts will do everything possible to provide

equitable and appropriate access to instruction and services to these students, as well as students identified as gifted or talented, students from migrant families, students in foster care, and students experiencing homelessness. Considerations may also include targeted in-person services for these students, as appropriate. It is important to note that in addition to meeting a student's IEP/ALP, the student may need an accessible platform to receive instruction so that the noted accommodations can be actualized.

❏ Instructional Assurance #7: The district will remain responsible for administering the state assessments to its students as required by state and federal law. The district must have a plan for how to meet that obligation for its remote students, while taking into consideration health and safety needs at the time of state testing, as well as respecting parental decision-making regarding state content assessments.

❏ Instructional Assurance #8: With the district assurances, the district will submit a copy of their local board policy, resolutions, regulations, and/or governance documentation that is adopted specifically to address the implementation of remote learning during the 2021-2022 school year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Additional details below.

Student October Count (per pupil funding) Audit/Instructional Hours Assurances

At the time of the Student October Count (Pupil Count) audit, districts implementing a 100% remote learning option as described in this document must be prepared to provide the documentation listed below demonstrating that these assurances have been met at both the district/school and student level. (Students may also have additional documentation requirements as outlined in the 2021 Student October Count Audit Resource Guide, available in early Summer 2021).

❏ Audit Assurance #1:
Policy: The district will submit a copy of their local board policy, resolutions, regulations, and/or governance documentation that is adopted specifically to address the implementation of remote learning during the 2021-22 school year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This adopted local policy must include the following information:
- Definition of "educational process" that includes the use of remote learning and how its planned use is specifically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Description of how instruction will be delivered during remote learning
  o This includes synchronous and asynchronous learning activities that would demonstrate a student is "engaged in the educational process" (as described in the adopted local board policy)
- List of documentation the district will provide to evidence a student was in attendance during periods of asynchronous remote learning.

❏ Audit Assurance #2:
Calendar: The district will ensure that the 100% remote and/or hybrid learning calendar(s) will meet minimum state requirements for student contact days and equivalent planned teacher-pupil instruction and contact time pursuant to 1 CCR 301-39-2.06. These requirements may include both in-person and remote learning (synchronous and asynchronous) time.
- Student contact days:

- o At least 160 student contact days (unless a waiver allowing fewer days is granted)
- Instructional hours as defined in [1 CCR 301-39](#)-2.06 and 2.06(1) (total hours/ hours excluding conferences and PD allowances):
  - o Secondary schools: 1,080/1,056 hours
  - o Elementary schools: 990/968 hours
  - o Full-day kindergarten: 900/870 hours
  - o Half-day kindergarten: 450/435 hours
- At the school level, the district must be able to identify which schools are limited to a hybrid learning option and ensure this information is easily accessible to the community.
- For more information, please refer to the [School District Calendar and Instructional Hours Guidance.](#)

❏ Audit Assurance #3:
Instructional hours equivalencies:
- The district will ensure that it applies appropriate daily instructional equivalencies (pursuant to 1 CCR 301-39-2.06) when calculating instructional hours for the year. These instructional equivalences must be applied for both 100% remote learning and hybrid learning calendars where a portion of the instructional day or week is occurring remotely (synchronously and/or asynchronously).
- Further, for funding purposes these equivalencies must translate to instructional time per course (daily or weekly) to ensure that each student is scheduled to receive the minimum number of instructional hours necessary for full or part-time funding (see "Student Schedules" below).
  - o Remote learning instructional hour equivalencies should take into consideration the type of instruction being delivered remotely, including access to teachers and supports, and equivalencies **should not exceed**[3] instructional time the student would have received if taking the same or similar course in a 100% in-person setting as evidenced by the in-person calendar and bell schedule.
  - o The district will ensure that all calendar and bell schedules used in calculating instructional hours and/or determining funding eligibility are based on 2021-22 calendars and bell schedules, as there will be no flexibility to use prior year documentation for these calculations.

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[3] Consistent with guidance for approved online schools and programs, as well as other off-site courses such as work based learning courses, districts determine equivalent instructional hours based on 100% in-person instruction (i.e., if the student were to take the same or similar course 100% in-person, how much direct teacher-pupil instruction the student would receive). Additional information on equivalencies is provided in the audit resource guide. This is specific to equivalency calculations related to Student October Count and funding, and does not prohibit actual additional instructional minutes in a remote environment, if that is what is needed for students to access the content.

❏ Audit Assurance #4:
Enrollment: The district will ensure that all students participating in 100% remote learning for the 2021-22 school year are residents of Colorado as of October 1, 2021.
- Similar to students participating in an approved online school or program, the district must provide documentation evidencing Colorado residency that is dated within 365 days preceding, or on, the pupil enrollment count date for each student participating in the district's 100% remote learning option in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. For more information on examples of acceptable proof of Colorado residency for this purpose, please review the "Sample of Colorado Residency with Instructions" document found on the following webpage: http://www.cde.state.co.us/onlinelearning/resources.

❏ Audit Assurance #5:
Attendance: The district will ensure that it is able to document <u>daily</u> student attendance during periods of remote learning. It is important to note that districts should ensure their attendance system is aligned with their parent/guardian notification system to update parents/guardians in real time, whether or not their students are attending class.
- <u>Synchronous</u> learning participation may be documented by the licensed teacher facilitating the instruction, similar to the manner in which it is documented for in-person instruction (i.e., within the district's student information system (SIS)).
- <u>Asynchronous</u> learning participation should be evidenced by documentation clearly showing the student was engaged in appropriate asynchronous learning activities (i.e., log-ins, dated submitted assignments, etc.).
  o <u>For funding audit purposes</u>, the district must be prepared to provide affirmative documentation (i.e., beyond being marked present in the district's SIS) evidencing the student was engaged in the educational process and met the funding attendance requirements.
    ▪ For example: Documentation showing the student was actively participating on the pupil enrollment count date, <u>OR</u> if absent for any reason:
      1) established attendance during the current school year prior to the pupil enrollment count date, <u>and</u>
      2) resumed attendance within 30 calendar days following the pupil enrollment count date)

❏ Audit Assurance #6:
Student Schedules: The district must be able to clearly identify which students are participating in the 100% remote learning option. Further, the district acknowledges that students must be scheduled to receive the minimum threshold of teacher-pupil instruction and contact time, which may include a combination of in-person and remote learning (synchronous and asynchronous) instruction, in order to receive per pupil funding.
- <u>Full-time funding</u>: at least 360 hours of teacher-pupil instruction and contact time during the semester of the pupil enrollment count date

- Part-time funding: at least 90, but less than 360, hours of teacher-pupil instruction and contact time during the semester of the pupil enrollment count date

Data Reporting Assurances

❏ Data Reporting Assurance #1: The district will be expected to identify and report those students who, based on family choice, are participating in the district's 100% remote learning option as a result of COVID-19 health concerns. This status will be reported in the "Non-School Program" field of the Student School Association Interchange file within the Data Pipeline, and will be included in the following data collections:
  - **2021 Student October Count data collection:**
    - o District will report as of the pupil enrollment count date (10/1/2021) whether the student was participating in the district's 100% remote learning option as a result of COVID-19 health concerns, based on family choice.
  - **2021/2022 End of Year data collection:**
    - o District will report the student's most current participation status (in the district's 100% remote learning option as a result of COVID-19 health concerns, based on family choice) as of the last date of enrollment.

❏ Data Reporting Assurance #2: The district will provide data for each school that indicates the number of whole and partial days the entire school was forced to switch from in-person to remote learning as a result of responding to COVID health and safety concerns. Districts will report this information in the Report Card March periodic collection within the Data Pipeline.
  - Exclude days when the school was forced to switch from in-person to remote learning as a result of emergency school closures (i.e. due to severe weather or an emergency facilities issue such as a water leak).
  - Also exclude days when only a portion of the school community was forced to switch to remote learning, for instance due to the quarantine of a cohort of students.