a family guide to
REMOTE LEARNING

As parents and caregivers of Massachusetts students, you may have questions about school this fall, like "How do I keep my child engaged during remote learning?" or "How can I support my child's use of technology?" But with so much uncertainty, it may be hard to articulate your concerns or know what questions to ask. This checklist is designed to help you communicate with your school about essential services during remote learning.

what to look for

♥ RELATIONSHIPS

Whether in person or remote, learning works best when there are strong relationships between educators, students, and families. Look for the following key practices to see how schools and educators are building and maintaining relationships with you and your student:

☐ **My child's school provides information through multiple channels** (for instance, calls, letters, emails, texts, and learning management system* messages) and invites me to communicate with them in multiple ways.

☐ **My child's school sets up opportunities for me to connect with other families**, such as through learning management systems,* social media, or parent groups, so we can get to know each other and share successful strategies for supporting learning at home.

☐ **My child's school has shared how to access school-based supports** (such as school counselors) and **community-based supports** (such as outside service providers) for any social, emotional, or mental health challenges my child faces.

☐ **My child's school emphasizes the importance of participation in remote learning**, including by contacting me if my student is absent or disengaged during virtual lessons, and **prioritizes relationship-building activities** like one-on-one check-ins, morning meetings, and conducting student surveys.

*Learning management systems (LMS) include Google Classroom, Schoology, Canvas, Blackboard, and Moodle

📖 INSTRUCTION

Remote teaching and learning may look very different from the classroom instruction that you and your children have experienced in the past. As you navigate the challenges of this new reality, including how to balance your own responsibilities with your child's learning, look for the following effective instructional practices:

- ☐ **My child's teachers share tips about how to structure learning time and set expectations.** They offer guidance on daily routines they use within their classes (e.g., morning meetings), so I can ask my child about them and adopt similar practices at home.

- ☐ **My child's teacher offers multiple types of instruction**, including both live and self-directed instruction, and **uses multiple strategies to keep students engaged**, such as opportunities for discussion, interactive games or activities, visual media, and content related to students' individual interests.

- ☐ **My child's teacher offers personal feedback** on assignments in a reasonable timeframe (understanding that teachers are balancing many responsibilities). I feel informed about my student's progress and areas where my child needs more support.

- ☐ **My child's school invites family and student feedback on the remote learning process.** This may include providing formal leadership roles on school-based committees or regularly hosting family forums to gather input on student progress.

FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

My child's school and teacher:

- ☐ Provide access to any necessary related service providers.

- ☐ Communicate with me about IEP meeting adjustments.

- ☐ Demonstrate how they will accommodate my child's needs in a remote setting.

FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN LEARNING ENGLISH

My child's school and teacher:

- ☐ Ensure communication with my household is in my preferred language.

- ☐ Communicate the value of reading and writing in my child's native language.

- ☐ Provide live instruction where my student may talk to other students and the teacher.

TECHNOLOGY

For learning remotely, your child will need a computer or other device (e.g., tablet), internet access, information about how to connect with class assignments and lessons, and a way to solve technology challenges as they arise. As parents and families, look for the following key practices to help students access technology and use it effectively:

- [ ] **My child's school has contacted me** to understand my family's and child's access to a device and the internet.

- [ ] **My child's school or district has a parent webpage** with resources, including information on how to access devices and low- or no-cost internet options, technology support or help desk information, and guidance for remote learning, available in multiple languages.

- [ ] **My child's school offers clear guidance on how to use technology safely and effectively.**

- [ ] **My child's school offers training for parents to learn how to navigate the online platforms** that students and families are asked to engage with.

LEARN MORE

These key practices are helpful starting points for you to understand your child's school environment this fall. It is important to note that our teachers and school leaders are working hard to adapt to remote learning and support student, family, and community needs, so it may take time to see all of these practices in action.

If you have identified practices from above that are missing in your school, have questions, or want to learn more, you can reach out to school leaders, teachers, or organizations in your community. You can also consult the following resources:

- Engage your **local school committee** for information regarding your district's specific plans and priorities. Your district's website will have contact information for your local school committee members.

- Visit the **MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website** for guidance on returning to school, including **Frequently Asked Questions about Returning to School for Parents and Guardians** and **Initial K-12 School Re-opening Guidance for Families**.

- Reach out to **Parent Villages** (Springfield), **Latino Education Institute** (Worcester), **Lawrence Community Works** (Lawrence) or other local organizations for parent-focused community-building programs and supports, particularly for families that speak a language other than English.

- Connect with **EdNavigator** to be paired with a personal education advisor ("Navigator") who can help you understand how to best support your child's success in and out of school.

- Utilize this **letter** created by local children's advocacy organizations to convey your preferred communication methods to your school.

- For families of students with disabilities, the Federation for Children with Special Needs offers **Fall Schools Reopening guidance** and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has a **list of parent advocacy organizations**.

RENNIE CENTER
EDUCATION RESEARCH & POLICY

BACK-TO-SCHOOL
BLUEPRINT

This checklist is part of the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy's
Back-to-School Blueprint*, a series of tools to help communities navigate the unique challenges of returning to learning amid the COVID-19 pandemic.*
Learn more at **renniecenter.org***.*