

Helping educators provide instruction for English learner students during remote learning

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Promising practices for instructing English learner students

Given the unprecedented, sudden change in how teaching and learning is occurring due to COVID-19, we may now ask:

“How can educators **identify** and **apply** promising practices during remote learning?”

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine identified promising practices to support English learner students in their 2017 report, *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures* that we will use as a guide for this discussion.

Promising practices for instructing English learner students

Provide Access to Grade-Level Core Course Content

As with all students, first assess what kind of access families have to the Internet and whether students have devices at home.

Remote learning might mean using new resources and developing new lessons or assignments.

Ensure that new materials are aligned with grade-level content and standards.

- Adapt materials and routines previously used in the classroom may be useful for maintaining continuity and student familiarity.
- Develop assignments or activities that do not require technology.
- Create opportunities for collaboration with English learner specialists and content teachers to inform both development and application.

(August, Branum-Martin, Cardenas-Hagan, & Francis, 2009; August et al., 2014; Fillmore, 2014; Skinner & Pitzer, 2012)

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Support comprehension and writing related to core content

As students work independently at home, ensure instructions and materials are explicit and clear to help students to make progress on their own.

- Create a regular, consistent routine that reinforces content and language learning. This may be especially important for supporting their independent learning.
- Develop ongoing opportunities to assess student understanding (polling students during live instruction or through a shared message board) and respond with targeted supports where students are struggling with content (provide videos to further explain concepts or language).
- Continue to use graphic organizers, pictures, and strategic translations as examples of visual and language supports to help students comprehend content.

(August et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2011)

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Capitalize on students' home language, knowledge, and cultural assets

During remote learning, find opportunities to continue drawing on students' culture and home language.

- Make instructions and communications available in students' home languages.
- Communicate with parents to better understand home culture and student needs and to help build their skills to support student learning at home.
- Provide opportunities for students to connect schoolwork to their home cultures and languages. Use these opportunities to learn more about your students and demonstrate the importance of what they bring into their learning from home.

(Carlo et al., 2011; Dressler & Kamil, 2006; Gandara, 2017)

Promising practices for instructing English learner students

Use collaborative, peer group learning communities to support and extend teacher-led instruction

- Where live participation is possible, create opportunities for English learner students to meet with small groups of students to promote opportunities for content learning and language development in a peer setting. Consider strategic student groupings, such as mixing skill abilities.
- Consider structures and scaffolds to help English learner students participate (assigned student roles in a discussion, sentence starters).
- Reinforce or modify established norms for interactions to support respectful and productive interactions in this new setting.

(González-Howard & McNeill, 2016; Lesaux, Kieffer, Faller, & Kelley, 2010; Lesaux, Kieffer, Kelley, & Harris, 2014; Vaughn et al., 2009)

Resources: Supporting English learner students in a remote learning environment

- [Quick Chat: Shifting Classroom Practices to a Virtual Environment](#) webinar from REL Midwest and Region 9 Comprehensive Center.
- [Guidance for Navigating Remote Learning for English Learner Students](#) REL Midwest Blog Series on Supporting Specific Student Populations as schools shift to remote learning.
- [What are some specific practices used to support English learner \(EL\) students and their families?](#) FAQ on meeting the needs of English learner students in an online environment from REL Northeast & Islands.
- [Colorín Colorado!](#) A bilingual site for educators and families of English language learners.
- [Supporting Multilingual/English Learners during school closures](#) Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- [Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures](#) Publication from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine.