## Professional Learning in the 2020-2021 School Year

### How will teachers be prepared to teach, whether in-person or remote, and meet the needs of each student?

In response to the pandemic, both the focus of what teachers and school leaders do and how they do it will continue to change in the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, the traditional structures in which educators learn must be adapted to support teaching and learning. The magnitude of the changes brought on by the pandemic requires leaders to pay close attention to supporting educators’ own social-emotional health and learning. Professional learning that accelerates all students’ learning must support educators in building new knowledge and skills while ensuring their own sense of self-efficacy.

Lessons from the spring, as well as research on remote learning outside the COVID-19 context, should shape professional learning in the 2020-2021 school year. Some key considerations are:

* Teachers need help with strategies that support remote and hybrid instruction.
* Many instructional resources used in spring remote learning were not core instructional materials. but supplements, providing students the opportunity to practice already-introduced content.
* To ensure equity of access to learning, all students need access to technology and the Internet.
* Clear explanations, scaffolding, and feedback on student work are critical in remote learning.
* Peer interactions can be a powerful engagement strategy.
* Strategies to support students learning in remote and hybrid environments are essential.

### The Content of Professional Learning

The chart below provides potential professional learning priorities for the 2020-2021 school year. Some of the topics in the chart are ones in which school districts/school systems are already deeply immersed and will continue to prioritize. Others may be new. School districts and school systems will determine the prioritization, sequencing, and intensity of these professional learning topics based on the scenarios for schooling and related scheduling and staffing plans. Professional learning for teachers will need to be differentiated based on the staffing structures and schedules. For example, the topic of engaging students in remote learning may be a top priority for a teacher who will be doing full-time remote teaching. It will be a lesser priority for teachers teaching in person though still necessary to ensure they are prepared if there is a school building closure. For all teachers, scaffolding to grade-level instruction will be a high priority. Educators should engage in professional learning in each of these areas before the school year starts and then throughout the school year to support deeper learning in each area. They will also need ample opportunities to share promising practices and troubleshoot challenges.

*NOTE: The topics listed are from a resource created by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) based on guidance from state education agencies and national and local organizations.*

Potential Topics for Teachers and School Leaders

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| **Teachers \*** | **School Leaders** |
| **Culture and Climate*** Community-building activities and academic instruction focused on:

1) Welcoming students 2) Supporting their social-emotional health and wellbeing; and3) Honoring their lived experience of COVID-19 and the protest movement against systemic racism* Strategies to support students’ social-emotional health and wellbeing
* Identifying student behaviors associated with trauma and trauma-informed practices
 | **Culture and Climate*** Communicating and building trust and relationships with teachers and families
* Welcoming teachers and students
* Focusing on community building, social-emotional supports, and honoring students’ lived experience of COVID-19 and the protest movement against systemic racism
* Ongoing strategies to nurture culture and climate
* Developing and managing a system to identify students and adults suffering the effects of trauma and systematically helping them access support
* Creating structures to check in with families most vulnerable and/or disconnected from school (chronically absent, mobile, non-English speaking) that account for all students and families in the school community
* See “[Teaching and Learning in the 2020-2021 School Year: Wellbeing and Connection](https://www.launchne.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidance-for-Wellbeing-and-Connection_7.23.2020.docx)”
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| **Family Engagement*** Asset-based framework for family engagement including best practices of supporting and partnering with families
* Strategies and structures to share expectations and supports with families and caregivers who can reinforce learning at home, including where they can get additional information in home language
* See “[Teaching and Learning in the 2020-2021 School Year: Student, Family, and Community Engagement](https://www.launchne.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidance-for-Engagement_7.23.2020.docx)”
* See “[Educators: Connected. Present. Engaged. Supported](https://www.launchne.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/CPESEducator.pdf)”
 | **Structures and Schedules for*** Ensuring student and staff safety and compliance with health guidance (See [Planning for a Safe Return to School in Nebraska](https://www.launchne.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/PlanningASafeReturn.pdf))
* Selecting and modifying the instructional delivery model, as needed
* Supporting collaborative planning and problem solving among teachers who teach the same grade/content/students
* Supporting intentional co-planning time and routines for ELD and content teachers in co-teaching settings
* Ensuring there is a coherent year-long plan, which includes teacher voice in the development, for how to use teacher professional learning time
* Providing orientation, initial training, and ongoing differentiated support and community for all teachers
* See “[School Re-entry Scenario Planning Process](https://www.launchne.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/NE.Scenario.Planning.July2020.pdf)”
* See “[ERS COVID Comeback Models](https://www.erstrategies.org/toolkits/covid_school_comeback_models)”
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| **Planning and Instruction*** Assessing student learning with the goal of supporting grade-level access and avoiding over-remediation
* Planning grade-level instruction, using high-quality instructional materials\*\* and the [Essential Instructional Content for 2020-2021](https://www.education.ne.gov/tl/essential-content-for-20-21/) to inform plans for scaffolding learning
* Culturally responsive and sustaining teaching practices that support student discourse, belonging, agency, and identity
* See “[Teaching and Learning in 2020-2021: Instructional Materials and Instruction](https://www.launchne.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidance-for-Instruction_7.23.2020.docx)”
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| **Teaching Remotely*** Student learning system for remote learning
* Strategies to **support students to learn remotely** (e.g., daily lists, checklists, reflections on learning)
* Instructional **strategies to introduce new content remotely**
* Strategies to **engage students and build community in remote learning** (e.g., engagement with peers)
* Principles of blended learning and how to apply them, and use/adapt curriculum to plan to deliver hybrid instruction
* See “[Teaching and Learning in 2020-2021: Instructional Materials and Instruction](https://www.launchne.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidance-for-Instruction_7.23.2020.docx)”
 | **Observation and Feedback*** Strategies to observe and monitor remote instruction and teacher collaboration
* Skills of feedback focused on supporting improvement
* Structure and system for providing ongoing coaching support to teachers to improve their practice
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| **Teachers of ELs and Students with Disabilities*** Remote instruction strategies (e.g., maximizing opportunities for speaking, checking for understanding) that provide supports to ensure ELs access to grade-level learning remotely
* Remote instruction strategies that provide differentiated instruction for students with disabilities and provide multiple ways for students with disabilities to engage with and access grade-level learning and represent their learning
* Additional targeted interventions to support students with disabilities’ specific areas of academic and behavioral need in accordance with their IEP
* See “[Teaching and Learning in 2020-2021: Instructional Materials and Instruction](https://www.launchne.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Guidance-for-Instruction_7.23.2020.docx)”
 | **Leadership Skills*** Effective and inclusive communication
* Collecting the right data to monitor critical priorities in all scenarios and adjust and improve appropriately
* Flexible thinking and action anchored in purpose
* Sharing leadership with teacher and teacher leaders
* Establishing high expectations and ensuring appropriate services and supports for students with disabilities and ELs
* Ability to be responsive in a dynamic environment
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**\*** Novice teachers and teachers new to the school system are included in this population. They have additional professional learning needs related to their experience in teaching, introduction to the school system’s curricular and instructional system, and teaching remotely or in a hybrid model. Initial new teacher training and ongoing support should align to these topics, differentiated to address these teachers’ specific needs (e.g., novice teachers whose spring practice was eliminated/curtailed by school closures).

The professional learning of instructional support staff will likely relate to the topics listed under teachers, differentiated based on their roles and responsibilities.

**\*\***Common instructional materials in which all teachers of the same grade/content teach the same lessons and use the same resources is critical to ensuring equity of access to grade-level learning for all students, productive collaborative planning among teachers, and a more manageable workload for teachers.