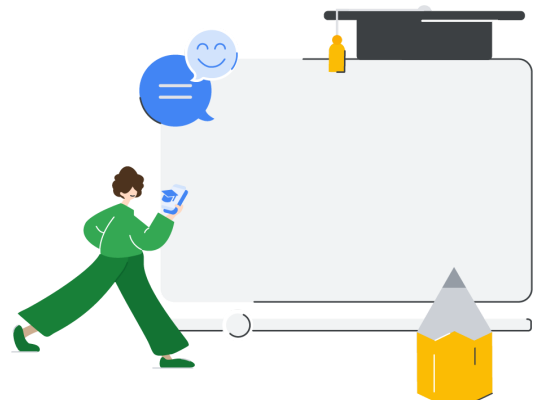**Google** for Education

Distance Learning Strategies for Education Leaders

About this guide

As more schools transition to distance learning due to COVID-19, Education Leaders are faced with the need to swiftly prepare contingency plans. This guide is meant to support building and system leaders as they take on this task.

Contents

Google for Education

Exploring distance learning pedagogies

Before building out your plan, we suggest exploring how you will approach distance learning pedagogies. Distance learning offers both complexities and opportunities that differ from traditional in-person teaching and learning.

To help you unpack these concepts, our teams at Google have created and curated various professional learning resources on our distance learning resource page. Individual trainings on tools and strategies can also be found on this page.

The following three resources serve as an overview of distance learning pedagogies to get started:

- Tips for Enabling Distance Learning through G Suite & Chrome (2 page strategy overview)

- With school closures, teachers can keep their lessons going remotely (blog post)

- Enabling Distance Learning with G Suite and Chrome (60 minute video webinar)

Later in this guide, we'll explore how to create a distance learning culture, prepare and support your staff, and communicate with families.

Getting to know Google for Education

What is Google for Education?

Google for Education is a solution built for learning and designed for the classroom that is easy to use, flexible and scalable, built for collaboration, and secure by design. It includes simple but powerful devices like Chromebooks, productivity tools like G Suite for Education with Classroom, and rich educational content in the Chromebook App Hub. To learn more about how to leverage the tools below to enable distance learning, check the tool-based trainings on our distance learning resource page.

What products are included?

G Suite for Education

- Gmail: Secure, private, ad-free email

- Calendar: Integrated online calendars designed for teams

- Drive: secure file sharing and collaborative documents

- Docs: Word processing for teams

- Sheets: Collaborative, smart, secure spreadsheets for fast-moving organizations

- [Slides](#): Beautiful presentations created together

- [Forms](#): Easy to create forms, surveys and quizzes

- [Sites](#): Effortlessly create impactful team sites

- [Meet](#): video meetings

- [Classroom](#): Communicate and collaborate with students from one central hub

- [Chat](#): secure messaging

- [Jamboard](#): a collaborative, digital whiteboard

- [Keep](#): Capture what's important and get more done
  - [Vault](#): Data retention and eDiscovery for G Suite

Chromebooks

- Secure, simple yet powerful devices that can be shared by students

Stay informed on updates from Google for Education:

- Sign up for [Chrome OS release notes](#) and the [G Suite updates blog](#).

- Sign up for our [newsletter](#).

- Follow the following for product launches and updates: [Google for Education blog](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), & [Pinterest](#)

Preparing your infrastructure for distance learning

In order to successfully leverage the tools above, your leadership team will need to take some steps to prepare devices and systems for distance learning. Below are some steps and strategies you may want to consider:

G Suite for Education

Getting going with G Suite for Education

- If you have never used G Suite for Education before: [Sign up here](#).

  - If you want more detailed support on how to get going with G Suite for Education, here is our [G Suite for Education Quickstart IT Setup Guide](#)

- If you currently use G Suite and want a set of best practices, go [here](#).

Google for Education

Best practices for using Hangouts Meet for virtual instruction

We are now making premium Hangouts Meet features available for schools for free until July 1, 2020. Please see here for the announcement and here for instructions on how to set it up and FAQs. We'd also recommend that you explore the following best practices for the smoothest experience:

- Provision G Suite accounts for each individual student and teacher. There should be no shared accounts.

- Only enable premium Hangouts Meet features for teachers, so they are the only ones who can record, livestream, and hold 250 person Meets.

- Limit Meet bandwidth usage for users in a specific organizational unit by setting the default video quality in Google Admin console.

- Livestream and record instead of having students join live. To keep things interactive, you can use Slides Q&A for engagement while livestreaming.

- When using Hangouts Meet, turn off your camera and only have your profile photo show.

- Many students may also have mobile devices where they can access G Suite, and they can join a Hangouts Meet from those devices.

- Turn on live captions in Hangouts Meet for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, or to help all students focus. While you can't record live captions, you can use the Q&A feature of Google Slides to capture and record questions and answers.

- If audio over the internet is problematic, try using a phone for audio.

- Encourage educators to join by phone or on their cellular network, or use their phone for audio during a video meeting.

- Other resources:
  - Requirements for using Hangouts Meet
  - Troubleshoot issues with Hangouts Meet
  - Hangouts Meet training
  - Amplified IT Guide to Going Remote with Hangouts Meet

Chromebooks

Schools with a 1:1 program

If you already have Chromebooks in your school, it's a good time to think about sending them home so students can continue their learning from home. Use this guide to prepare your school's Chromebooks

for home use. The guide covers responsible usage, provisioning content, enforcing school policies, communication strategies, and more.

Schools without a 1:1 program

If you don't have enough devices to go home with every student, below are some questions to consider:

- Are you able to repurpose carts of devices or classroom laptops to go home?

- Does your school have a BYOD program that can support student at-home learning?

- Can you send home a Google Form to explore what at-home computer and internet access is available?

- Do your students have mobile phones (many of the G Suite apps can be accessed from a phone, though at reduced efficacy)?

At-Home WiFi Access

For students without home access to Internet, below are some things to consider:

- Many G Suite apps work offline, and many features are available offline on Chromebooks.

- Many broadband providers are now offering low-cost or free Internet access to low income families, and you may want to share these with your school community.

- Do you have the capability to send home mobile hotspots?

Creating a distance learning culture

In addition to preparing the IT infrastructure for distance learning, leaders may also want to build out clear communication for their distance learning school culture. This includes what staff and students must do, and guidance for how families can support.

Below are some common questions education leaders may ask as they develop this culture:

What are the expectations for staff and students, and what is the guidance for parents?

- Create clear documents for staff, students, and parents to know what is expected (or requested of them), and how they can reach out for support.

Google for Education

- Consider creating these documents in a [Google Doc](#) so you can update them as needed without sending out new copies as you make changes. Be sure to notify staff when changes are made - and point to what those changes are, specifically.

- You can post these documents on a central information hub, such as [Google Sites](#).

What will the schedule look like?

Explore how you will create a schedule of learning to provide routine and structure for students, while allowing for flexibility given the variance of home situations. While building schedules, many school and system leaders consider how to create balance in the day so students are moving back and forth between analog and digital activities rather than sitting with a screen for vast amounts of time.

- Asynchronous options - allows for students to access internet when they can, takes advantage of flexibility

  - [Appointment slots](#) for student support

  - Self-paced student learning assigned through [Google Classroom](#)

    - Students submit learning artifacts to show completion of learning activity and qualify for completing instructional minutes

  - Use [Hangouts Meet](#) for group instruction, but record for students who cannot attend and make live attendance optional based on students' circumstances

- Synchronous options - hold to a traditional school schedule

  - Hold virtual lessons through [Hangouts Meet](#)

  - Take attendance through [Google Forms](#)

  - Give quizzes and assignments through [Google Classroom](#)

How will students meet instructional minute requirements, and how will you know if students are engaged and learning?

- Set instructional minutes for each learning activity, and indicate this in the [Google Classroom](#) total points. The number of points can equate to the number of instructional minutes. Use a rubric to determine what percentage of the instructional minutes they achieved.

- Design learning tasks / artifacts that students complete to show their completion - and have them submit through [Google Classroom](#)

- During a [Hangouts Meet](#), use a poll or [Google Form](#) to check in on who is "in the room" and leverage that to know how a student engaged with the content - live during a virtual lesson, or later during the recording.

- Ensure students aren't actually being asked to do more than they were in traditional learning settings (sometimes in distance learning scenarios, educators end up trying so hard to make sure students are learning, they overcompensate and assign work that cannot be completed in a given "school day" chunk of time).

How will students ask for additional help?

- Students can ask questions through Google Slides Audience Q&A during a live lesson through Hangouts Meet.

- Submit a Google Form to request extra help from their teacher.

- Use Calendar Appointment Slots to schedule "office hours" with their teacher.

How will you maintain school community / culture?

- Send out a daily or weekly video greeting the community. It can either be separate video for staff and students, or one that staff view and then post to their Google Classroom.

- Celebrate the wins through virtual shout-outs in a staff-wide Google Group

- Share news / updates often through a Google Site, Google Group, or school-wide Hangouts Meet livestream

- Make yourself available for standing office hours or use Calendar Appointment Slots to individually check in on teacher health - emotionally, physically, and professionally.

- Use Google Forms to check in with your staff, giving them an opportunity to reflect upon and give feedback on this experience.

What else can you consider?

- The culture and climate during an emergency closing can be stress-inducing for many staff and students. As a leader, you can serve as the center of stability. In daily messages, consider how you can model clear communication, sharing data-backed facts, and keeping the community calm.

- In addition to maintaining stability in the crisis, how is SEL (social and emotional learning) being considered in your school plan? Is the mental wellness of staff and students being attended to?

- How are students and staff maintaining a healthy balance between digital and analog life? As you review learning plans, see if teachers include time for screen breaks to reduce eye strain and allow students (and staff) to move about their home environments and - if safe - go for a walk outside to get fresh air.

Preparing and supporting your staff

We know this is a challenging time for your staff as they prepare contingency plans and continue teaching remotely. As mentioned earlier, the distance learning resource page can be a quick way to get your staff up to speed on distance learning strategies.

Google for Education

Here are some Professional Development strategies to support your staff in learning about distance learning pedagogies:

Face to face training options

- Use Teacher PD / in-service time to prepare staff for distance learning, and provide them with time to create new content, practice new applications, and develop learning plans.

- If possible, give teachers a chance to practice distance learning strategies live in their classrooms so they might troubleshoot while they're still with students.

Asynchronous options

- Use Google Classroom for Professional Development - assign articles, videos, and check for understanding through Google Forms. You can also create distance learning lesson plan templates and share out with each teacher so it makes an individual copy (or a group copy if shared across a department). They can then create their lesson plans and submit back to you.

  - Use the Google Teacher Center and our Distance Learning Resource Page to find helpful resources and lessons on e-learning strategies, and training on tools.

  - When sending out your expectations guide for teachers, include as many links to video tutorials and resources as possible. Much of your staff may have little familiarity with these tools and linking the resources directly from your expectations guide may ease their transition into distance learning.

Supporting teachers from afar

- Hold Virtual Staff Meetings through Hangouts Meet to keep staff up-to-date and allow them to share their experience and feedback.

- Create a staff-wide Google Group for quick communication, and department or grade level Google Groups for team communication.

- Have teachers add each other in Google Classroom to share lesson plans or duplicate assignments.

- As mentioned above in creating a distance learning culture, share kudos regularly and hold office hours for staff members to meet with you as needed.

Google for Education

Communicating with families

Include families in your distance learning plan by seeking their input (if time allows) and communicating your plans. Here are some potential strategies to try:

- Set up a Google Site for your school's COVID-19 response to share updates with families, and important information such as your school's distance learning and contingency plans.

- Share written guidance and suggestions for how families can support distance learning, as well as what the student expectations are during their time away from school.

- Help them familiarize themselves with the technology:

  - Send communication to explain how Chromebooks operate and how to assist students at home with our Guardian's Guide to Chromebooks.

  - Share information with families about how to manage their child's experience on Chromebooks, including which sites to allow and activity controls.

- Share internet safety curriculum and tips like Be Internet Awesome so families can help equip their students to be responsible digital citizens.

- To inform community members and families about school closures, consider using Google My Maps and My Business. Claim your school on Google Maps and update your information about your school, including adding details like school closures, links to your sick policy, FAQs for remote learning, and more

- Use YouTube to live stream community announcements.