

Common Language & Guiding Questions

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A Systems Model for Distance Education:

The multidisciplinary field of distance education has existed and has been growing for decades, with new models and research emerging regularly to add to an already robust body of knowledge and expertise. Scholars Moore and Kearsley (2011) have defined distance education as **“Planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching, requiring special techniques of course design and instruction, communication through various technologies, and special organizational and administrative arrangements”** (p.2). It is critical to emphasize “planned” within this definition to help us position the systematic considerations, resources, training, and development that are implemented to support distance learning.





Leadership

Strategic Planning: The process of defining a vision, goals, and objectives regarding a system that embeds distance education.

- What is your district's vision for learning?
- What is your district's current reality in distance education, and where does the district want it to be?
- Given this most recent crisis, what do you see as the role of distance education in your current or future plans?
- How does your district's current plan address and offer flexible processes under changing conditions to meet individual learning needs?
- Given existing resources, how might you prioritize your strategies?

Administration: The process of executing the action steps in the strategic plan includes prioritizing goals, continuous assessment, identifying and streamlining processes, and projecting future resource needs.

- How will data be collected before, during, and after implementation to assess the distance education system?
- What stakeholders will be involved?
- How will data be evaluated to execute the plan?
- Do you have measurable performance criteria for each one of your goals?
- Will observational and qualitative data be collected?
- How will the implementation plan be evaluated?
- What is your approach to monitoring data?
- How will data be differentiated?

Quality Assessment: The process of evaluating an entire system using multiple forms of data, make informed decisions (e.g., measure enrollments, student achievement, student satisfaction, parent/caregiver, satisfaction, teacher satisfaction, organizational reputation, and course quality, among others). Are the schools/districts meeting benchmarks to the performance criteria?

- Do you have processes, a culture, and a system in place to ensure distance learning meets established quality indicators?
- What quality standards will be used?

Policy: The process of complying with organizational, state, and federal regulations and guidelines.

- How do current policies support LEA goals?
- What are the policies that create barriers to your vision?
- What are the processes that you have in place to align with those policies?

Communication: The process of strategically and empathetically disseminating, creating, and collecting feedback on the information to support transparency, cultivate leadership, build community, and articulate clear expectations.

- Have you devised a scalable communication strategy?
- Does the communication strategy allow flexibility to meet just-in-time or urgent needs?
- Do you know which media channel(s) is/are most effective to meet your stakeholder's needs?
- What are other technologies or communication channels to expand the toolkit?
- How inclusive is the communication strategy?
- What technologies or media do you use to communicate? Do they allow for stakeholders to respond and react thoughtfully and constructively?

Human Resources: The process of recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and developing individuals for your organization. Also, human resourcing includes monitoring, supporting, evaluating to ensure quality and effectiveness.

- How does staff expertise align with the distance education vision?
- What expertise will be required to meet the vision?
- How are you redeploying existing resources that align with the vision?

Professional Development: The practice of supporting just-in-time and continuous education to broaden knowledge, develop skills, improve techniques, create professional learning communities, earn accreditations, and foster lifelong learning.

- Does the professional development plan incorporate distance education and asynchronous approaches?
- How are you evaluating existing gaps in skills and expertise, and how are you supporting and addressing those gaps?
- What is the process you are utilizing to identify and differentiate the needs?
- How do you prioritize and evaluate professional development needs?
- How are you deploying internal and external resources and expertise?

Support Services: The decision process of establishing and maintaining learning centers (e.g., library media centers, science labs). This includes determining the location, hours, equipment, staff, funding, and alignment to the strategic plan.

- How are you reconceptualizing the use of existing resources (internal and community)?
- What strategies have you employed to ensure that support services are inclusive to meet all stakeholders' needs?
- What learning support for technology will you offer for the community, parents/caregivers, and students?

Stakeholders: A group of people that represent an interest and can affect or be affected by decision-makers.

- Have you identified all the groups of people that comprise your stakeholder support for distance education?
- How will you include stakeholders in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating your plan?

PDE has provided the following tools to address leadership components of a distance education system:

[A Roadmap for Education Leaders](#)

Communication Tools:

- [Status Dashboard](#)
- [Communication Planner](#)

[Strategic Staffing](#)

Instructional Model:

- [IDM worksheet](#)
- [IDM Mock - UP](#)

Critical Readiness Factors:

- [Overview and Guiding Questions](#)
- [Critical Readiness Tracking Tool](#)

[Equitable Practices Hub](#)

NOTES:

Facilitation & Modality

Facilitation Models: Based upon time and space variables, the instructional process is structured synchronously, asynchronously, or via a blended approach.

- Does your approach align and support your curriculum and instructional framework?
- How does the facilitation model or models meet the needs of all learners?
- Have you considered developmentally appropriate and effective instructional processes for each model?
- How will the instructional approach enable flexible and collaborative learning experiences?

Multimodal Content: An inclusive combination of mediums (e.g., text, video, or audio) that enables students to interact in a multitude of ways and provides an equitable learning experience for all students based upon their personal needs, characteristics, or preferences.

- What are the ways you provide and support multimodal content to guide universal learning design?
- What sources will you utilize for multimodal content? Are they inclusive for all learners? How will you implement these tools across the curriculum?
- What resources will you need to provide to ensure the content is equitable for all students?

Technologies: A range of hardware and software with enabled technical features and functions that can be integrated into educational environments to facilitate administrative, teaching, and learning processes.

- What technologies are required to ensure equitable learning and teaching?
- What resources can be provided to ensure all stakeholders have optimal access to required technologies?
- How will technology solutions be centralized to ensure equity and access across the LEA?
- How will privacy and security be safeguarded for all stakeholders with the technologies utilized across the LEA?
- Will you incorporate large-scale solutions (e.g., school or district-wide licensed technology) to ensure consistency?

Social Media: The means of mass communication that uses interactive technology to allow participants to create and exchange information in communities and networks.

- What role will social media have in effective teaching and learning?
- How will social media meet the needs of and support all learners?
- How will privacy and security be safeguarded for all stakeholders with social media integrations?



PDE has provided the following tools to address facilitation and modality components of a distance education system:

[A Roadmap for Education Leaders](#)

Communication Tools:

- [Status Dashboard](#)
- [Communication Planner](#)

Instructional Model:

- [IDM worksheet](#)
- [IDM Mock - UP](#)

Critical Readiness Factors:

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- [Critical Readiness Tracking Tool](#)

[Equitable Practices Hub](#)

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Design & Development

Development Team: Based on the organizational structure, course development should include teams of two or more individuals to comprise, for example, author-editor models (2) or course team models (3+). An author acts as a subject matter expert, typically a teacher, and an editor acts as a learning designer, which typically includes teacher-leaders with skill sets in multimedia, user experience, assessment, learning management systems, and curriculum.

- How will teachers and staff be identified to participate in these models?
- What is the process and metrics for teams to organize to be effective, efficient, and timely?
- How will grade-level teams, subject-matter teams, or professional learning communities be created for course design, development, and effort distribution?
- How will roles and responsibilities shift to create a more streamlined, efficient, and high-quality curriculum?
- How will electronic course content, materials and resources be vetted to ensure course and curriculum alignment?

Course & Curriculum Design: The process of setting learning objectives aligned with standards, choosing equitable technology and media applications, preparing content and instructional strategies, and designing assessment procedures in advance of student access.

- What is your curriculum framework?
- How aware are your teachers of the curriculum framework?
- How will lesson and course learning objectives align with the curriculum?
- How will you identify and curate assessment strategies that support distance education?
- What level of personalization, student agency, and choice will be designed into the course and curriculum design?
- How will the course and curriculum designs be inclusive and equitable for all students?
- How will you include specialty teachers, including ESL and SPED, to incorporate universal design for learning resources and materials to meet all students' needs?
- What technology is required to support content specific goals (i.e. accessible math equation editor) and ensure equitable access (i.e. adaptable technologies)?
- What community resources (e.g., local colleges, museums, park service, cultural centers) do you have available to develop and incorporate relevant and meaningful resources and materials?
- How will the three types of interactions be implemented?

Content Design: The process of vetting, aligning, and embedding equitable content resources, materials, and applications in the course and curriculum design process.

- How will the content support the learning objectives?
- How will the content be shared (e.g., technological format) in the facilitation model?
- What is the process of vetting high-quality materials and resources?
- How will open educational resources (OER) be incorporated and leveraged to work within copyright policies?
- How will universal design be incorporated in the content selection process?
- How will the three types of interactions be implemented?

Interaction Three Types:

- **Student to Instructor Interaction:** In this interaction method, instructors and students exchange expectations, provide feedback, and respectfully challenge one another. In this way, the instructor does instruct the students through their interactions, but the student can also offer insights or changes to the instructor that can improve the learning experience for all participants.
- **Student to Student Interaction** In this interaction method, students communicate with one another, analyze each other's work, encourage one another's thoughts, and actively engage. This relationship does not presume one student having authority over another but an equitable platform for all students to share their learning.
- **Student to Content Interaction:** In this interaction method, it is expected that the students will actively engage the learning content in all of its media types. However, it also presumes that the content is well prepared and organized for access. This interaction type assumes that students will critically engage the content for both its literal and potentially metaphorical values.

Quality Assurance: The arrangements by which a LEA monitors its teaching and support for course design to promote improvement.

- What quality assurance processes and benchmarks are embedded within course design and development?
- How can the quality assurance process evolve and grow to support continuous improvement?
- What learning support will you provide for stakeholders?
- How will the current teacher and leadership observation system, supervision, and evaluation be modified to reflect face-to-face, synchronous, asynchronous and blended learning approaches?

Technology Integration: Integrating technology resources to align with the learning outcomes and activities and enable the student to build a deeper understanding of the content.

- Who will determine how technology will support the facilitation of course content and curriculum equitably?
- How will you implement technology (e.g., packets, learning management systems, datacasting, textbooks, social media applications, mobile devices) that will support the facilitation of course content and curriculum equitably?
- What technical support will you offer for all stakeholders?
- How will you evaluate technology to support the accessibility of tools, applications, and hardware to support the facilitation of course content and the curriculum?

User Experience: A learning-centered process of design that incorporates inclusivity, usability, accessibility, chunking content, and simplifying the learning interface to support positive emotions while supporting interaction in a learning environment.

- How does the learning environment support a human-centered design to provide a positive experience for all stakeholders?
- How will you develop and scale a process to test and collect feedback to ensure you meet all learners' needs?

Assessment & Evaluation: Assessment and evaluation is the systematic collection and analysis of formative and summative information by all teachers, and the students about learning at the grade, subject, school, and district-level - that utilizes the time, knowledge, expertise, and resources available, to inform decisions and provide meaningful experiences to build a foundation for lifelong learning.

- What is the process of assessment and evaluation?
- Who will lead the assessment and evaluation implementation and reporting efforts?
- What learning support is necessary for assessment and evaluation?
- How will the results of the implementation be evaluated?

Informal & Formal Recreational Learning Experiences: Designing informal and formal activities at a class, grade, school, or district-level to support physical, social, emotional, and mental well-being in a flexible and remote structure.

- How can existing group activities be carried out in various approaches (synchronous, asynchronous, and/or blended)?
- What is the expectation and methods for educators to engage with families and communities?
- How can these experiences be integrated and aligned in course design and facilitation?
- Who will coordinate these experiences?
- What level of support is needed for the community, parents/caregivers, and students?



PDE has provided the following tools to address design and development components of a distance education system:

[A Roadmap for Education Leaders](#)

Instructional Model:

- [IDM worksheet](#)
- [IDM Mock - UP](#)

Critical Readiness Factors:

- [Overview and Guiding Questions](#)
- [Critical Readiness Tracking Tool](#)

[Equitable Practices Hub](#)

Opportunity Culture:

- [Leveraging a Multi-Classroom Teaching Model to Accelerate Student Learning](#)

NOTES:

Teaching

Curriculum: Planned learning experiences designed to achieve both broad and specific educational goals. **Curriculum planning** involves “gathering, sorting, synthesizing, and selecting relevant information from many sources” to design experiences that enable learners to achieve the goals of the curriculum (p. 3, Parkay, Anctil, & Hass, 2014). Curriculum and instruction are interdependent.

- What is the curriculum development process for each of the facilitation models? Or, what method is used to map out the curriculum?
- Does the mapping method specify:
 - An organization that utilizes courses of study, units of study /modules and lessons
 - Content and process standards
 - Dispositions and mindsets (21 century skills)
 - Measurable learning goals/essential questions aligned to the standards
 - Sequencing of content and process
 - Methods for students to track progress
 - Assessments aligned to the learning goals with clear measurement criteria
 - Instructional materials (purpose and how they will be used)
 - Instructional strategies that are aligned to the learning goals which provide opportunities for active learning
 - Technology tools to support the learning goals and student engagement
 - Access and accessibility options
- What is the review and approval process?
- How is curriculum monitored and evaluated?

Instructional Strategies: The implementation of formal and informal inquiry to structure learning-centered techniques and assessment.

- How will the three types of interactions be implemented?
- How will learning-centered instructional competencies be defined and developed?
- How are learning activities aligned to learning outcomes?
- How are instructional strategies designed to meet the individual needs of students?

Instructional Technologies: Technical affordances and pedagogy that provide students with deep and meaningful learning opportunities.

- How will instructional technologies support learning outcomes?
- How will instructional technologies be implemented, communicated, supported and evaluated?
- How will instructional technologies be vetted to ensure accessibility for all?
- What other strategies, methods and technologies can be employed to ensure continuity, if an instructional technology is disrupted or creates an inequitable barrier?
- How will instructional technologies be centralized and scaled across an LEA?

Pedagogy: The utilization of effective teaching practices related to the content or discipline.

- How will the three types of interactions be implemented?
- How will teachers create clear learning goals?
- How will teachers model and demonstrate what students will need to know and be able to do? (i.e. direct instruction, worked examples, think-a-louds)
- How will teachers structure collaborative tasks?
- How will teachers engage students in guided and independent practice?

Assessment: The design of meaningful and authentic assessments that align with learning outcomes, criteria, and standards.

- How are formative assessments used by teachers and students?
- How will teachers and students monitor their progress toward learning goals?
- How is timely and specific feedback provided to students?
- What are the various methods used to provide feedback to students?

Teaching and Social Presence: The ability of teachers and students to project socially, cognitively, and affectively through the design and facilitation in online environments to support learning outcomes.

- How will the three types of interactions be implemented?
- How will teachers foster relationships and a sense of belonging?
- How will teachers understand and value student's identities?

Subject Matter Expertise: The ability to demonstrate content and structure contextualized to the discipline or content area by drawing connections to prerequisite and interdisciplinary content, provide accurate answers to content-related questions, guide student inquiry through informative feedback, and incorporate appropriate resources to support learning.

- Is learning support in place for subject matter expertise?

Classroom Management: The process of creating an inclusive learning environment, establishing a culture for learning, facilitating interactions with students, defining clear expectations, structuring routines and procedures, and developing a universal learning space.

- How will teachers create a classroom management plan for each facilitation model (synchronous, asynchronous, and/or blended)?
- How will teachers create an environment of respect and rapport for each facilitation model?
- How will routines and procedures support development of personal responsibility and student autonomy for each facilitation model?
- How will the three types of interactions be implemented?



PDE has provided the following tools to address teaching components of a distance education system:

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