

EDUCATIONAL EQUITY & CORONAVIRUS



The Education Trust—New York

New York State is taking important steps to respond to the coronavirus, using transparency and facts to protect public health, reduce confusion, and prevent panic. While we hope that school closures are as brief as possible during this period, we also know that it is necessary to be ready for all possibilities.

Responding to the coronavirus through an educational equity lens starts by recognizing that vulnerable students are at particular risk when schools close for any length of time. As a result, planning by the state, school districts, and schools should include specific steps to ensure that school closures do not exacerbate educational inequities and that all students receive the services and support they need.

As school leaders revisit their emergency plans and develop new ones to respond to closures due to the coronavirus, here are 6 specific steps they should explore in order to promote instructional equity and preserve student well-being if schools close.

PROMOTE INSTRUCTIONAL EQUITY

1

Ensure equitable access to learning materials.



Schools should provide instructional materials to students when schools are closed. This could take the form of learning resources and grade-appropriate texts to keep students engaged and learning. Schools should not rely on remote or distance learning unless the school district has previously provided all students with access to required materials, including technology. Schools should also communicate to parents about their expectations and resources available, recognizing that many parents will not have access to personal leave or sick days to work with their children.

2

Work closely with teachers and counselors to provide support.



Schools should engage teachers in preparing instructional materials to continue students' learning. This can include providing grade- and instruction-appropriate periodicals, texts, links to instructional videos, and take-home activities. Where feasible, schools should provide training to teachers to prepare for these needs, if they have not already done so. Schools should also work with school counselors to anticipate and meet the needs of students who rely on school counselors and psychologists for socioemotional support, for postsecondary planning, and for whom additional time at home or away from school can itself be emotionally stressful.

3

Address the specific learning needs of students with disabilities, English learners, and students in temporary housing.



School districts should ensure that the learning materials made available meet the specific needs of students with disabilities, English learners, and students in temporary housing, and that outreach is conducted to these students and their families about the resources available. To support English learners, schools should also ensure that information about resources and support is available to families in multiple languages.

PROTECT STUDENT WELL-BEING

4

Provide breakfast and lunch to students who rely on school meals.



School districts should work with their food service providers to make meals available for students who are low-income for the duration of any school closure. Schools should offer grab-and-go meals — not provide meals in a group setting — at school sites and, to the extent eligible and geographically feasible, at sites in the community, including but not limited to food banks, food pantries, and other community feeding organizations. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is granting waivers so that affected states can provide meals in the community consistent with their summer meal programs, and schools should implement this option.

5

Coordinate with trusted community partners.



Schools should work with community-based organizations, faith communities, after-school providers, and other trusted partners to ensure clear and consistent communication to students and families about accurate coronavirus information and the resources and supports available. Schools should also connect with local organizations that may offer programming or other services for students when schools are closed, consistent with guidance from health officials, and make resources available at these locations. All communications and outreach should be in multiple languages to meet the community's needs.

6

Connect families to other services they may need.



While schools cannot be expected to do everything, they are a vital and trusted hub for students and their families in a time of uncertainty. Schools should work with their local government partners so that they are able to point families to health, housing, legal, and other resources — recognizing that this may be a period of additional economic hardship for families. All communications and outreach should be in multiple languages to meet the community's needs.



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