



# COVID-19 Considerations for Reopening Schools

## Evaluating Students' Academic Readiness

June 1, 2020

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In the fall of 2020, students across the state will return to elementary, middle and high schools after having abruptly left school in mid-March due to the COVID-19 crisis.

Superintendents and local boards of education had to quickly transition from in-person classes to non-traditional instruction (NTI). For many districts, the crisis was their first encounter with NTI. Many teachers had no experience or training in developing instruction through non-traditional means.

Teachers and instructional staff quickly developed activities for students. These assignments took many forms. Some schools asked students to attend virtual class sessions, some relied on paper packets, while others employed a blended model. Regardless, student instruction was changed across the state.

Parent responsibility and involvement in their children's education also took a different form. Moms, dads, grandparents, guardians and others supervised, managed and lead instructional activities. For many, it had been years since they thought about a book report or the Pythagorean theorem.

The impact of the transition to NTI is unknown. Therefore, it is important to understand the current academic level of students when they return and as decisions are made on how to continue instruction upon the return of students for the 2020-2021 school year.

Evaluating students' academic knowledge and skills is one of the first steps to take when students return. Assessment data will help guide curriculum and instruction based on students' needs.

Since Kentucky received a waiver from statewide assessments, those results are not available. Schools have and should consider other ways to determine gaps in learning and students' needs.

### **Diagnostic Assessments**

Schools should consider administering diagnostic assessments (i.e. Map, Star, DRA, etc.). Diagnostic assessments provide student-specific information on strengths and areas of weakness in performance and understanding of *Kentucky Academic Standards* (KAS). Diagnostic assessments will provide insight for teachers as they face the dilemma of where to start and what to teach.

### **Classroom Assessments**

Classroom assessments can include formative assessments, such as exit slips and anecdotal notes, or summative assessments, such as final exams. Classroom assessments are usually



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developed by the classroom teacher, individually or as part of a [professional learning community](#). One benefit of classroom assessments is that they can be customized to collect very specific information, personalized for their students.

### Interim Assessments

Like diagnostic assessments, [interim assessments](#) provide student-specific information. Interim assessments are often created by the local district or schools and administered at given intervals throughout the year. When given school- or district-wide, results can be used to compare and track the progress of entire classes or schools.

### Formative Assessments

[Formative assessment](#), as defined by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), is “a planned, ongoing process used by all students and teachers during learning and teaching to elicit and use evidence of student learning to improve student understanding of intended disciplinary learning outcomes and support students to become self-directed learners.”

### Administration Options: Be Creative

When and how assessments are administered also should be considered. The return of students to school in fall 2020 may be different from the opening of other school years. Tests may be administered at a variety of times and in a variety of ways.

In order to make data-informed decisions, administration of assessments should be completed quickly upon the return of students. The Center for Assessment recommends that education leaders [keep our focus on supporting deeper learning](#). Leaders should not be bound to stringent technical requirements.

#### In-Person Administration

When school restarts in the fall, students could return to their classrooms on staggered schedules or regular schedules with precautions. In-person assessments can be planned accordingly.

#### Virtual Administration

Students who have internet at home may take assessments that may be supervised. Through Google Meet or Microsoft Teams applications, teachers can observe students as they take assessments. Another possibility is teachers using polls, surveys or the chat areas of their virtual meeting rooms to gauge student understanding.



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### Mixed Model

When students return, there could be a combination of learning at home and learning in-person. Teachers can assess some students in person and others through an online platform, as appropriate.

### **Making Data-Informed Decisions**

After students have been assessed, teachers can make informed instructional and curricular decisions.

### Analyze the Data

After assessment data have been collected, it will need to be organized for analysis. The analysis of data assists educators in understanding where their learners are in regard to performance and understanding of the KAS. One of the most helpful means for organizing data is the use of spreadsheets that allow for sorting and filtering. Microsoft Excel and Google Sheets include many features that will assist educators in analyzing data by academic or demographic information.

### Interpret the Data

The next step in decision-making is interpreting the data from the assessments. This includes interpreting the current level of each student, looking to see which students have remained steady in their learning, which have excelled, and which are going to need extra support to reduce gaps in learning.

### Develop Plans

After determining the strengths and areas for growth in student performance and reviewing the scope and sequence of the district curriculum for instruction deficits, teachers can plan what happens next in learning. Some students might need enrichment learning, while others will need interventions.

When planning next steps, educators should consider the possibility that the return to school could include a variety of settings, including mixed models of in-person and virtual learning environments.

*(OAA: DAAS: js: jl)(COMM: tm, jg)*