

Advice and Best Practices: Affiliate and Advocates Scan

Recommendations Summary August 6, 2020

With the rapid closure of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, students, families, education workers and teachers were given an enormous challenge: navigate the emotional, practical, health and financial challenges of the first global pandemic in 100 years while simultaneously creating a remote learning system, almost from scratch.

In the face of that challenge, many education unions and public education advocacy groups published their best advice and flagged issues that needed particular attention. Their goal, like OSSTF/FEESO's, was to safeguard the wellbeing of everyone involved in emergency remote learning while nonetheless maintaining as much continuity of learning as possible.

This document (also attached) distills guidance from education unions and our allies to identify common themes and areas of agreement. The guidance offered in this series comes from fifteen documents published by eleven unions and advocacy groups. Documents were coded to identify common themes: education technology, equity, pedagogy, and teachers and education workers. Documents included in the overview provide direct advice and/or recommendations, as opposed to news releases or general statements about public education and COVID-19. The recommendations articulated here do not necessarily represent a consensus, so brief citations follow each recommendation to identify the source of specific advice.

Pedagogy

1. Education technology needs to be paired with professional development
2. Education technology must be paired with direct instruction on remote learning strategies and software.
3. Professional judgement is key to successful emergency remote learning
4. Seek out strategies already in use by colleagues
5. The importance of differentiation and adaptation of instruction and materials remains, but meeting these standards during emergency remote learning significantly increases workloads for teachers and educators.
6. Schools provide much more than a formal curriculum.
7. Be thoughtful about assessment and advancement.
8. Remote learning can be an opportunity for critically conscious curriculum
9. Attend to students' physical and mental wellbeing

Education Technology

1. Technology cannot fully replace classroom teaching and learning.
2. Design remote learning with age-appropriate limits on screen time.
3. Differentiate between types of screen time.
4. Ensure a focus on teacher training in order to make the best use of technological investments.
5. Ensure platforms are secure.
6. Ensure digital resources, activities, device/software purchases are used to support students and their learning and not the other way around.
7. Ensure access to 'Help Desk' tech support for students, teachers, and education workers.

Equity

1. Ensure equity is a cornerstone consideration when designing emergency remote learning strategies
2. Access to technology is a fundamental equity concern.
3. Students benefit from access to a quiet learning space and help at home.
4. Plan to Support Students with disabilities.
5. Plan for the needs of English and French language learners
6. Recognize the specific impacts of gender on emergency remote learning

Teachers and Education Workers

1. Allow teachers and education workers the full scope of their professional judgment
2. Think specifically about the roles of Education Workers
3. Create the conditions for robust collaboration
4. Prioritize health and safety
5. Ensure fair distribution of workloads