

# Congrove Distance Learning Model

Overview Structures & Operations Instructional Design & Delivery Learning Community Systems for Improvement

## Overview

The Congrove Distance Learning Model provides education policymakers, district leaders, educators, families, and students with one example of what high-quality, equitable distance learning looks like in action. It builds directly on CSDE’s extensive guidance on Fall 2020 school reopening and draws on comprehensive research—including extensive conversations with Connecticut superintendents, principals, educators, and families—into how districts and schools in the state and nationally met the challenges and opportunities posed by the Spring 2020 transition to distance learning.

This model is designed to achieve eight standards for high-quality and equitable distance learning, which span the creation and maintenance of a strong **Instructional Core**, **Positive Learning Environment**, and **Systems for Improvement**. These standards and a set of planning steps are described in the companion document “Actualizing *Connecticut Classrooms for Continuous Learning: Guidance and Tools for High-Quality, Equitable Distance Learning*.” Together, these documents set districts up to deliver high-quality instruction in a distance-learning setting, create a strong distance-learning community, and continuously improve distance-learning service provision. We suggest that you quickly review both this and the companion document before deciding which to review in depth first.

The Congrove model assumes that:

- Each student has a device appropriate for distance learning (i.e., a laptop or desktop) and reliable internet connectivity
- Staffing is relatively constant and mirrors pre-COVID composition

### Congrove Model Overview

- Students with the most severe IEP needs and students of essential workers are served in-person.
- All other students are served remotely.
- All schools aim to meet a high standard of service delivery and actively work to accelerate student learning and close opportunity and achievement gaps.
- Student learning and health are every staff member’s priority. Flexibility in how [staff collaborate to support student learning and families is essential](#).
- Distance learning breaks the boundary between school and home. School [staff and families form strong family-school learning partnerships](#) to facilitate student learning.

### District Profile

Grade Span	K-12
Length of In-Person Student Day	6.33 hours
Length of Remote Student Day	Elementary: 4.25 hours Secondary: 5 hours
Length of Instructional Staff Day	7.5 hours

# Overview

## Congrove Distance-Learning Theory of Action

**If Congrove engages all students, families, educators, and administrators in equitable, high quality distance learning by**

**Structuring operations** to maximize synchronous learning; student collaboration; staff planning time and teamwork; and individual, small-group, and family support

**Designing and delivering effective e-learning instruction** that builds from engaging, standards-aligned, coherent, digitally accessible, and culturally responsive-sustaining curricula; applies student-centered pedagogy; develops digital literacy; and uses on-going assessment and mastery-based grading and promotion practices

**Fostering a positive distance-learning environment** that communicates clear and high expectations, nurtures relationships and a culture of learning, and enables meaningful collaboration in integrated settings

**Utilizing systems for improvement** to monitor progress; make strategic and innovative organizational decisions; and engage in collaborative, inquiry-based professional and community learning

**Then Congrove will**

- ✓ Safeguard the safety and wellbeing of students, families, and staff, and strengthen their sense of community
- ✓ Grow students' academic and social-emotional learning
- ✓ Decrease and eliminate disparities in access and outcomes (by race, income status, IEP status, and language status)
- ✓ Accelerate students' and educators' ability to learn, evolve, and improve themselves

**As a result, Congrove will** develop connected, focused, empowered, and masterful learners and career-ready graduates.

# Structures & Operations

## Sample Student Schedules

The student day is organized around **subject-specific learning periods** and **flex-time periods**<sup>1</sup>. This schedule provides structure to students, families, and school staff to help build routines, set and communicate learning expectations, ensure appropriate levels of synchronous instruction, and allow time for strong operational planning.

- During each **subject-specific learning period**, students engage in a) synchronous instruction and feedback, which may be in whole class, small group, or 1:1 settings; and b) independent and small group work time.
- During **flex time periods**, students engage in electives and in asynchronous or synchronous independent or small group work that meets their learning needs. Instructional staff may use flex time periods to provide timely feedback to students in written or verbal form or to check-in with families. Students with unfinished learning may meet with an interventionist, paraprofessional, or teacher in a 1:1 or small group setting. Flex time can also be used for individual and small-group counseling.

Early Elementary Student Schedule (K-2nd Grade)			
Mins	Mon., Wed.	Tues., Thurs.	Fri.
10	School-Wide Morning Message		
15	Small-Group/Circle Time (SEL focus)		
25	Reading		
30	Flex Time / Elective (Art, Music, PE/Health)		
25	Writing		
45	Lunch (off video)		
35	Math		
30	Flex Time / Elective (Art, Music, PE/Health)		
30	Social Studies	Science	Soc. St. / Sci.
10	Small-Group/Circle Time (SEL focus)		

Late Elementary Student Schedule (3rd-5th Grade)			
Mins	Mon., Wed.	Tues., Thurs.	Fri.
10	School-Wide Morning Message		
15	Small-Group/Whole-Class Advisory (Staff-led SEL focus)		
40	ELA		
30	Flex Time / Elective (Art, Music, PE/Health)		
45	Lunch (off video)		
40	Math		
30	Flex Time / Elective (Art, Music, PE/Health)		
35	Social Studies	Science	Soc. St. / Sci.
10	Small-Group/Whole-Class Dismissal (Staff-led SEL focus)		

## Structures & Operations

Secondary Student Schedule			
Mins	Mon., Wed..	Tues., Thurs.	Fri.
10	School-Wide Morning Message		
15	Small-Group Advisory		
50	Period 1	Period 4	Period 1/4 (alternating)
35	Flex Time for Student Practice, Collaboration, and Support		
45	Lunch (off video)		
50	Period 2	Period 5	Period 2/5 (alternating)
35	Flex Time for Student Practice, Collaboration, and Support		
50	Period 3	Period 6	Period 3/6 (alternating)
10	Small-Group Advisory Dismissal		

### Weekly Individual Learning Plans and After-School Support

At the end of each week, students and families receive a **weekly individual learning plan** for the following week. These plans include the coming week’s class schedule, the teacher’s (and other instructional staffs’) availability for additional support, important assignments, links to class sessions, and resources for the student. The plans also include family resources to support student learning.

These plans are modified to include supports and services for students with IEPs and 504 plans and English Learners.

As discussed further on page 6, instructional staff will be available to support students and families after school hours each day. This support can be arranged with the staff members in advance and/or this support may take the form of drop-in hours. Staff members will share their availability in the weekly individual learning plan and may adjust additional support hours to meet family and student needs.

## Structures & Operations

### Sample Instructional Staff Schedules

Instructional staff schedules allow educators to develop close relationships with and support students and families; maintain high expectations and establish routines; and regularly engage in professional learning, collaborate, plan, problem-solve, and improve with colleagues.

Elementary Staff Schedule			
Mins	Mon., Wed.	Tues., Thurs.	Fri.
30	Shared-Student Team Meeting	Faculty Meeting	Shared-Student Team Meeting
10	School-Wide Morning Message (facilitated by School Principal)		
15	Small-Group Circle Time/Advisory (Staff-led SEL focus)		
40	ELA		
30	Flex Time / Student Feedback & Support		
45	Lunch (off video)		
40	Math		
30	Flex Time / Student Feedback & Support		
35	Social Studies	Science	Social Studies / Sci.
10	Small-Group/Whole-Class Dismissal (Staff-led SEL focus)		
45	Professional Learning and/or Faculty Meetings		
60	Team Collaboration & Individual Learning Plan Prep		
60	Family-Teacher Check-ins and Drop-in Hours <sup>+</sup>		

<sup>+</sup>Teams will coordinate schedules to meet family and student needs.

Secondary Instructional Staff			
Mins	Mon., Wed.	Tues., Thurs.	Fri.
30	Shared-Student Team Meeting	Faculty Meeting	Shared-Student Team Meeting
10	School-Wide Morning Message (facilitated by School Principals)		
15	Small-Group Advisory (Staff-led SEL focus)		
50	Period 1	Period 4	Period 1 / 4
35	Flex Time for Student Practice, Collaboration, Feedback, and Support		
45	Lunch (at-home, off video)		
50	Period 2	Period 5	Period 2 / 5
35	Flex Time for Student Practice, Collaboration, Feedback, and Support		
50	Period 3	Period 6	Period 3 / 6
10	Small-Group Advisory Dismissal (Staff-led SEL focus)		
60	Professional Learning and/or Faculty Meetings	Team Collaboration & Individual Learning Plan Prep	
60	Family-Teacher Check-ins & Drop-in Hours <sup>+</sup>		

<sup>+</sup>Teams will coordinate schedules to meet family and student needs.

## Structures & Operations

Collaboration and flexibility have never mattered more. Providing high-quality distance learning and supporting students, families, and colleagues requires constantly improving how we work together and how we serve students.

### All Staff

Both instructional and non-instructional staff lead small-group **advisory sessions** with students to begin and end each day. These groups provide an opportunity for staff to develop meaningful relationships with students, provide social-emotional support, and monitor student needs.

### Instructional Staff

We define instructional staff broadly to include **general education and special education teachers, para-educators, content specialists, and instructional coaches**. Working daily, instructional staff within each grade and/or content area will flexibly divide roles and responsibilities based on strengths and constraints. Joint responsibilities include designing coherent academic and social-emotional learning units; developing weekly individual learning plans; incorporating social-emotional supports throughout interactions with students and families; communicating with and supporting families; and providing synchronous instruction, student feedback, 1:1 interventions, and small-group support.

Instructional staff will **coordinate their daily Family Check-ins and Drop-in availability to provide after-school support** to families with constraints that limit students' ability to fully participate in remote learning during school hours.

### Non-Instructional Staff

Non-instructional staff provide essential supports to students and families, including by serving on support teams:

**Care Team:** This team helps students who have been most adversely affected by COVID-19 cope with grief, stress, and anxiety, and connect their families to community resources as needed. (*See page 11 for more on this.*)

**Resource Team:** This team (librarians, nurses, counselors, instructional coaches, and digital learning specialists) works with instructional staff to ensure that all families and students have the resources, materials, devices, and connectivity that they need to be fully engaged and successful learners.

**Meal Team:** This team manages week-day meal preparation and delivery and works with partner organizations to coordinate weekend meal support.

Non-instructional staff further support student engagement and learning by providing other resources, including hosting and recording book read-alouds and coordinating library book distribution. Staff can also support by coordinating virtual events that build school community.

# Instructional Design & Delivery

Instructional staff co-create and deliver **coherent units** that are **aligned to prioritized learning standards** and include **student learning objectives, engaging and learner-centered work, and aligned assessments**. As they design coherent units, instructional staff collaborate to create weekly individual learning plans. While these plans will be similar for groups of students in the same subject areas, grade bands, or mastery levels, they are modified to include support and services for students with IEPs and 504 plans, English Learners, and family needs.

Instructional staff collaborate throughout the week to deliver instruction, provide feedback to students, and strengthen family-school learning partnerships. How instructional staff share responsibilities will differ based on each team's members. When determining how best to collaborate to design and deliver instruction, teams will consider team members' strengths, at-home responsibilities, and other constraints.

## Learning Management System

All grades and classes use Google Classroom as the primary Learning Management System (LMS). Both elementary and secondary schools use consistent Google Classroom layouts across classes and grades, with some variation between the two levels.

## Designing Instruction

**Priority Learning Standards:** With a focus on the depth of student learning and not the pace, instructional teams will prioritize content by leveraging the structure of college- and career-ready mathematics and ELA/literacy standards. Other content areas will similarly prioritize learning standards and adapt scope and sequences to develop deep student learning.

**Coherent Units:** Instructional staff will develop coherent units centered on priority learning standards. These units will include learning objectives, appropriately challenging learning experiences and supports, and assessments.

**Learner Framework:** Instructional staff will design engaging, flexible learning experiences within each unit that empower students to own their learning and engage in productive struggle using the CSDE's Learner Framework Model<sup>2</sup> that is designed to be:

- **Learner Connected:** Students will engage in learning that transcends location, connecting them to a strong and deep set of supports.
- **Learner Focused:** Students will be empowered to develop and reflect on their understanding of their needs, strengths, and interests.
- **Learner Led:** Students will be empowered to take ownership of their learning.

# Instructional Design & Delivery

## Academic Support Strategies

### Flex Time

Instructional staff can use this time flexibly to meet student needs, and in the case of many students, this time will not consist of synchronous learning. Students can work independently, collaborate with peers, and complete enrichment activities. Instructional staff can also use this time to provide student feedback and **accelerate learning** for students individually and in small groups.

Students with the most unfinished learning may spend Flex Time with an interventionist or other educator supporting learning in small-group settings. Instructional staff use this time to re-teach prerequisite content to fill gaps “just in time,” pre-teach upcoming material, and review new materials. Students may cycle in and out of this intervention.

### Team Meeting

Instructional staff meet every day to plan, analyze student work, adapt curricula for student and teacher needs, and build content knowledge. Staff also collaborate to design weekly individual learning plans, including for students with IEPs and English Learners (see page 11). Once a week, content teams collaborate across campuses to share best practices and resources and to collectively problem solve.

## Measuring Learning

### On-Going Assessment and Mastery-Based Grading

In line with CSDE’s **Learner Demonstrated** framework, learning is designed so that students can progress at their own pace based on demonstrated mastery.

Students will

- Engage in challenging learning experiences based on prior knowledge and learning needs
- Engage in productive struggle
- Progress at a pace that fits learning needs
- Demonstrate evidence of learning in multiple ways
- Recognize the importance of mastering a skill over traditional measures for demonstrating mastery
- Advance or go deeper after demonstrating mastery

### Monitoring Student Learning

Using formative practices and mastery-based grading, instructional staff will closely monitor student progress, log student learning centrally, and collaborate to coordinate supports and student enrichment.

# Instructional Design & Delivery

## Grading Policies<sup>3</sup>

Distance learning provides an opportunity for instructional staff to continue the mastery-based learning practices established pre-pandemic in all core classes, engaging and empowering all learners while allowing them to build and demonstrate proficiency in a variety of ways and at a pace that fits their learning needs.

In **Science, Social Studies, and English courses**, student grades will be based on (a) rubric scores from final student work projects and (b) scores from content assessments.

In **Mathematics courses**, student grades will be based on (a) end-of-unit assessment scores, (b) scores from content assessments, and (c) rubric scores from application problems that accompany each unit.

Individual assessments are scored on a 4.0 scale, with two mid-levels (2.5 and 3.5) to allow instructional staff to recognize students who are progressing toward the next level of mastery.

Mastery Levels	Mastery Description
4.0	Exceeds Mastery
3.5	Mastery
3.0	Mastery
2.5	Partial Mastery
2.0	Partial Mastery
1.0	Insufficient Mastery

## Calculating Grades

To determine a cumulative grade for the end of a grading period, instructional staff aggregate a student’s performance on summative assessments using a common formula, producing a grade on the 4.0 scale. While a student may not achieve mastery on all learning objectives for a unit, their end-of-course grade may reflect an aggregate score between 3 and 4.

End-of-course grades are calculated to the first decimal place and reflect a student’s mastery as described in the following chart.

Mastery Levels	Mastery Description
3.6 - 4.0	Exceeds Mastery
3.0 - 3.5	Mastery
2.0-2.9	Partial Mastery
1.0 - 1.9	Insufficient Mastery

## Grade Reports

In addition to course grades, student grade reports also include a written description of academic areas in which the student has excelled and academic areas of growth.

## Student Promotion and Graduation

Course promotion and graduation both depend on demonstrating cumulative mastery (receiving a “passing” score) and demonstrating achievement of all graduation competencies. In some cases, students will receive a cumulative score of 3.0 or higher for a course without demonstrating aggregate achievement on a specific standard required for graduation. In accordance with CSDE guidance, Congrove recognizes academic achievement that is close to--but not yet--proficient.

# Instructional Design and Delivery: Students with IEPs & English Learners

Each week, instructional staff collaborate to develop tailored **weekly individual learning plans** that meet the needs of students with IEPs and 504 plans and English Learners. These plans, which include family resources, are shared with families at the end of each week. An instructional staff member will explain to the family the plan, how to support the student, and who to contact with questions.

Special education and English Language Learner coordinators will review the plans before they are shared with families. If a plan is changed after it has been shared, a member of the instructional staff will communicate the change to the family.

## Strategies for Students with IEPs

**In-Person Services:** Students with the greatest needs will be served in person. The district will coordinate with families to assure transportation, services, and safety logistics.

**Synchronous Support and Related Services:** Students with IEPs will receive additional synchronous supports and related services during Flex Time and on Fridays (or more frequently, as a student's IEP requires).

**Family-Teacher Collaboration:** Instructional staff and related service providers will work with families to model effective strategies that can be used to support student development at home. Additionally, teachers will work with families to monitor student progress on developmental and learning objectives.

## Strategies for English Learners

**Accessibility:** All family communications, including instructions for content learning, will be made available in the family's home language. Additionally, translators will be available for family-teacher check-ins and drop-in hours.

**Learning Acceleration:** Instructional staff will meet with students during Flex Time and during Family Check-ins and Drop-in Hours to support English Learners and enable them to participate meaningfully in general education classes. These supports include: providing multiple exposures to vocabulary and explicit language instruction, activating background knowledge, using home language strategically, modeling metacognitive strategies, pre-teaching texts to be taught in content areas, and other research-based strategies.

**Practice and Collaboration:** Through small-group and one-on-one synchronous learning opportunities, English Learners will continue regularly to engage in live speaking and listening practice and form relationships with educators and peers. Students will also collaborate to practice producing written and spoken components of content-specific projects.

**Enrichment:** For enrichment, students will be able to access Edgenuity and its built-in supports for English Learners.

# Learning Community

## Social-Emotional Support Strategies<sup>4</sup>

**Advisory:** All Congrove students will start and end their day with small-group advisory to strengthen the sense of belonging among teachers, staff, and peers. During this time, staff mentor students and reinforce social-emotional competencies. Students and advisory staff may also coordinate 1:1 mentoring or family check-ins.

**Shared-Student Team Check-Ins:** Throughout the week, staff will meet at regular intervals to identify students who may be struggling socially, emotionally, or academically. During this time, staff keep track of warning signs for specific students. For students who appear to be experiencing hardship or who have been absent or without communication for more than two days, staff will coordinate planned outreach, including by involving designated campus administrators. Staff may also make referrals to the Care Team as needed.

**Care Team:** This team helps students who have been most adversely affected by COVID-19. Through one-on-one check-ins, counseling sessions, and partnerships with outside organizations, the Care Team helps students cope with grief, stress, and anxiety. The team also connects families to community resources as needed. The Care Team meets daily to problem solve together. This team manages referrals to outside organizations. Each Care Team member has a caseload of no more than ten students.

## A Tiered Approach to Social-Emotional Support

All students receive social-emotional support and have the opportunity to develop close relationships with peers and school staff through small-group advisory sessions that meet at the beginning and end of each school day. Social-emotional skill development is also interwoven in teacher pedagogy designed to empower and connect students, building their capacity to collaborate and engage in healthy and meaningful relationships.

By maintaining close relationships with students, developing clear channels for staff to identify and communicate student needs, and preparing additional social-emotional supports, the district will meet student needs as they arise. When student or sub-group specific needs arise, the school implements responsive tiered supports. For example, when a student is absent two or more days without communication, the school will launch its student re-engagement services. Advisors, teachers, and administrators coordinate family outreach and try to communicate with families through multiple channels, including home visits. Other tiered supports include providing mentoring, counseling, and similar services; creating and implementing alternative schedules; engaging in more frequent family communication and support; and adjusting the balance of synchronous and asynchronous instruction.

The Care Team offers further support to students and families, collectively problem solving, co-creating solutions, and monitoring results to ensure that all students are able to engage fully in school. The Care Team may also coordinate in-person services for students and families, as needed.

## Learning Community: Family Engagement

All staff will recognize that families are more critical than ever as partners in providing high-quality distance learning; will break down boundaries between school and home; will build strong relationships and collaborate with families in new ways; and will communicate with families in caring, thorough, coordinated, and predictable ways.

**Weekly Check-ins:** Each week, or more often as needed, instructional staff will conduct a video or phone check-in with each family. Staff and families will discuss the student's weekly individual learning plan and student progress; how educators and families can support student learning; student social-emotional wellbeing; family wraparound needs; and connectivity and device issues.

**Unit Overviews:** Before beginning a new unit, instructional staff will provide families with a unit overview. The overview will describe what students will be learning and what lessons, assignments, and tasks to expect. Staff will also provide family resources to support and reinforce student learning at home.

**Translated Communications and Student Instructions:** All communications and instructions to families will be translated into the family's home language.

**Website and Email Updates:** The Congrove website will include an easily accessible Distance-Learning Information page with district-wide announcements and resources. Each school will have its own easily accessible [school page](#). If public health or other considerations require immediate changes in school operations, staff will update families by email, phone, text, or other preferred forms of communication.

**Professional Learning:** Every other week, families at each school will be invited to learn alongside instructional staff in virtual professional development sessions. These sessions will focus on effective teacher-family collaboration to support student learning and will include opportunities for families to share their experience supporting students at home. All sessions will be recorded for families who are unable to attend.

**Coffee Hours:** Every other week, district administrators will host a virtual coffee hour for families to build relationships, including by answering questions, providing updates, and soliciting feedback. These sessions will be recorded for families who are unable to attend.

**Services for Families of Students with IEPs:** Instructional staff will provide tailored supports to families of students with IEPs, including by making explicit in students' weekly plans the instruction strategies used to help students meet learning goals, by sharing and modeling strategies families can use at home to reinforce student learning and growth, and by providing additional supports and instruction during flex time.

# Systems for Improvement

Administrators and staff will engage in ongoing improvement and learning to ensure that the quality of pedagogy, service provision, and family support and collaboration is strong and improving; to eliminate disparities in access and outcomes by race, income status, IEP status, and language status; and to facilitate progress toward the district’s vision. Information will be collected to assess the quality of service to date, and steps will be taken to make meaning of the information together with the Board of Education, staff, families, students, and key community partners.

At the individual, grade, and content team level, administrators and staff will collect data to assess how well individuals and teams are serving students and families and whether doing so leads to intended social-emotional health and wellbeing and academic learning gains.

At the school and district level, administrators and staff will collect data to evaluate how well the district is implementing its theory of action and whether doing so leads to intended student outcomes.

To learn whether...	We will measure...	Using data from...
Our operations support students, families, and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student and family satisfaction with school communications, engagement, support</li> <li>● Staff satisfaction with communications, engagement, and support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monthly student and family surveys</li> <li>● Monthly staff surveys</li> </ul>
Our curriculum and pedagogy support effective and coherent, student-centered instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student engagement and ownership</li> <li>● Quality of curriculum, instructional units, lesson plans, and LMS class pages</li> <li>● Quality of student-centered pedagogy</li> <li>● Quality of culturally responsive-sustaining pedagogy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Administrative records (e.g. attendance and engagement data from learning platforms and from synchronous sessions)</li> <li>● Ongoing student work</li> <li>● Ongoing virtual walk-throughs and instruction/coaching rounds</li> </ul>
Students are learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student learning outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Formative and summative mastery-based assessments</li> </ul>

To learn whether...	We will measure...	Using data from...
We are developing a learning community that promotes social-emotional wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Student comfort and satisfaction with distance learning</li> <li>● Level and quality of student interactions and collaboration</li> <li>● Family comfort and satisfaction with distance learning</li> <li>● Level and quality of school-family interactions and collaboration</li> <li>● Staff comfort and satisfaction with distance learning</li> <li>● Level and quality of staff interactions and collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monthly student survey</li> <li>● Ongoing teacher observations of student collaboration</li> <li>● Monthly family survey</li> <li>● Ongoing administrator virtual walk-throughs and instructional/coaching rounds</li> <li>● Monthly staff survey</li> <li>● Ongoing administrator observations of staff collaboration</li> </ul>
Our continuous improvement systems are working	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Efficacy of collaborative problem-solving sessions</li> <li>● Improvement on student, family, and staff experience metrics</li> <li>● Acceleration in student learning outcomes and closure of opportunity and outcome gaps (e.g. by race, income status, IEP status, and language status)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Monthly student, family, and staff surveys</li> <li>● Ongoing mastery-based assessments</li> </ul>

Within a reasonable timeframe after collecting data, districts, schools, teams, and individuals will (1) make meaning of the information by organizing and analyzing it to determine (a) whether there are disparities by race or ethnicity or by income, IEP, or language status; and (c) how actual results compare to expectations. They then will (2) work collectively and individually (a) to eliminate identified disparities and deviations between actual results and expectations; and (b) to spread practices and tools that work as or better than intended or otherwise show promise. Accomplishing these goals will require three important activities:

### **Inquiry-based Problem-Solving and Improvement**

Instructional teams, non-instructional teams, administrative teams, and individuals will identify and prioritize problems revealed by collected data, explore underlying causes, and hypothesize and try out responsive solutions. In acting on what initial testing of potential solutions shows about how the solutions work in different situations, teams and individuals may re-analyze problems and hypothesize and try out additional solutions. Teams and individuals will share effective practices and solutions with others at the district and school levels.

The success of this inquiry-based approach depends on participation by people with multiple informed perspectives on the problem identified. For example, families and students will need to participate in solving problems related to their distance learning experience. As appropriate, therefore, teams and individuals will engage additional stakeholders in the cycles of inquiry.

Importantly, instructional coaches will also use an inquiry-based approach when working with instructional staff members (including through virtual observations and feedback sessions) to identify growth areas and build capacity to implement promising practices and use effective tools.

### **Trainings on Functionality and Effective Practices**

In response to collected data and in anticipation of staff and family member needs, the district will also provide training to staff and family on the functionality (features and use) of the LMS and other key platforms, websites, and e-based tools that will support students' social-emotional and academic learning and enhance family-staff communication. These trainings will be conducted by administrators, staff members, or families when capacity allows, and by external technical assistance providers in other cases as resources allow. During the first year of distance learning, all staff members will be expected to attend these trainings.

Before the start of the year and at regular intervals, the district and schools will also provide trainings to staff and family on effective student-centered and culturally responsive-sustaining distance-learning pedagogy. Administrators and instructional coaches will conduct these trainings when capacity and resources allow; external technical assistance providers will do so in other cases as resources permit.

Finally, every other week, families at each school will be invited to learn alongside instructional staff in virtual professional development sessions. These sessions will be conducted by administrators, instructional coaches, and effective instructional and non-instructional staff members and will focus on effective teacher-family collaboration to support student learning. Families will be invited to share their experiences.

### **Communicating Progress and Outcome Information with Stakeholders**

The district will communicate information about its progress, improvements, and accomplishments with all key stakeholders, including students and families, staff, the Board of Education, and key community partners. Information will be shared on a regular basis on the website and through email updates, in coffee hours, and in weekly family check-ins. Families engaged in cycles of inquiry will be encouraged to share their experience and insights with other families in PTA and other meetings. District and school administrators will report on key performance indicators at regularly scheduled Board of Education meetings.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the Connecticut State Department of Education's (CSDE) Learner Framework Model, see the [Plan for Reimagining CT Classrooms for Continuous Learning](#).

<sup>2</sup> The Flex-Time structure is adapted from the [ERS COVID Comeback School Models](#).

<sup>3</sup> This approach to assessment and grading is inspired by and adapts [this guidance](#) from the CSDE about designing a grading system for mastery-based learning. Additional CSDE guidance for planning a mastery-based program can be found on this [resource page](#).

<sup>4</sup> More information about these and similar strategies can be found in the [ERS COVID Comeback School Models](#). Additional guidance can be found in [this guide](#) from CASEL.org.