

Leveraging Educational Support Teams to Support Continuity of Learning

Purpose

In accordance with Governor Scott's Directive Number 5 of March 26, 2020, Vermont schools have closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic year. During this period of closure, Governor Scott has asked that supervisory districts and supervisory unions (SUs/SDs) develop Continuity of Learning plans (CLPs) that ensure Vermont students continue to engage in meaningful learning and make academic progress.

Despite the significant challenges that school closure has posed for our public school system, SUs/SDs have performed admirably as we transition to an inclusive remote learning environment. As SUs/SDs develop their CLPs, we invite them to consider their multi-tiered system of supports framework (VTmtss) and how the SU/SD leadership can support schools to leverage their Educational Support Team (EST) structure to support Vermont learners and their families during the closure.

VTmtss and EST: Strategies to address the four pillars of Continuity of Learning

The VTmtss Framework provides a structure through which educators can ensure timely, appropriate, and equitable access to educational opportunities for all students. By relying on the wide-ranging expertise of a team, ESTs provide a mechanism for supporting the unique needs of individual or groups of students. In addition, ESTs provide the structure for maintaining fidelity to decision-making informed by data so SU/SDs and schools can be flexible and responsive to an evolving reality, be prepared to communicate with families and communities in real-time, and to organize resources where they are most needed.

Communication

Engaging Families

- Families need to be informed when a student is discussed at the EST. Make sure they know what the concern is and what the meeting objectives are.
- Try to get family input prior to a meeting. They may have critical information.
- Invite families to participate in the meeting using an online platform when possible. However, be prepared to offer multiple methods for family engagement in the meeting – including through telephone and other analog means.
- Be sensitive to the anxiety students and families may be experiencing.
- Ensure the student and family understand the goals and timeline associated with any plan that is developed during the meeting.

Contact Information:

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EST Staffing and Meetings

- During the closure period, consider maintaining or implementing EST meetings to examine data, monitor implementation of the CLP, discuss family and community needs, and create action steps for supporting students and families.

Structures for Student Success

EST staffing and meetings

- ESTs should include an administrator, teachers and staff with expertise in student supports, e.g., psychologist, special educator, interventionist.
- Establish norms for meetings to ensure continued adherence to FERPA, including in online environments. This includes use of cameras, recording of meetings, muting, and how documents may be shared.
- Student confidentiality should be paramount -- team members can refer to students by initial to ensure privacy.
- Always designate a note taker to record decisions, even if meetings are recorded.

Instruction and Feedback

EST plans

- Consider and document what data will be used to measure progress.
- Establish and communicate timelines to review students' progress.

Ensuring Accessibility

EST plans

- The team should review all existing plans to determine which can continue, which need modification, and which need a complete revision. Plans created prior to the COVID-19 crisis may not be adequate to meet the needs of students in a remote learning environment.
- Plans may need to include on-line resources – begin building a library.
- Consult with interventionists and special educators who can provide insight on how to adapt instruction and assessment in a remote learning environment.

Additional Resources

- [Maintenance of Learning: Guidance for Families and Guardians](#)
- [VTmtss Field Guide](#)
- [ACT 173 Educational Support Team Sub-Framing Document](#)
- [Harvard's Virtual Relationship Mapping](#)