

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

T. WILLARD FAIR, *Chairman*

Members

PETER BOULWARE

DR. AKSHAY DESAI

ROBERTO MARTÍNEZ

JOHN R. PADGET

KATHLEEN SHANAHAN

LINDA K. TAYLOR

Dr. Eric J. Smith
Commissioner of Education



MEMORANDUM

TO: School District Superintendents

FROM: Dr. Frances Haithcock

DATE: November 6, 2009

SUBJECT: USING ONLINE AND DISTANCE EDUCATION FOR CONTINUITY OF LEARNING

Contact Information:

Sally Roberts

(850) 245-0509

sally.roberts@fldoe.org

DPS: 2009-207

In the event of a pandemic or natural disaster, lessons learned from virtual schooling and distance education can assist school districts in providing continuity of learning for their students. However, to move effectively between face-to-face, virtual and blended (both) learning environments, it takes planning, preparation and management in three main areas:

- people
- technology
- curriculum materials

What Districts Need to Know

For short-term planning and preparation, districts need to know:

- What resources are *currently* available within the school district (e.g., technology and access, digital content, distance education opportunities, expertise of district franchise teachers and other district teachers with online teaching experience, Web site and Web conferencing capabilities, etc.)
- What technology resources and access teachers and students have at home
- What resources could be available in the short-term from Florida Virtual School, regional education consortia, community colleges, contracted virtual instruction providers, textbook and curriculum providers, business partners and other district partners

DR. FRANCES HAITHCOCK
CHANCELLOR OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS

What Planning is Needed to Prepare for and Implement Virtual Solutions

A short-term plan to prepare people prior to an event and to implement currently available virtual solutions if an event (pandemic) occurs should include:

1. Which online and distance education solutions will be used and when
2. How the district will inform teachers, administrators, students, parents, and the media about the selected solutions
3. How training will be provided to access and use these online and distance education solutions (who, when, what)
4. How to provide opportunities for people to practice prior to an event (blended and remote models)
5. How to provide resources and materials to families without computers and Internet access at home
6. How these solutions will be managed during the event (e.g., communicating with stakeholders; monitoring system performance; tracking student attendance, participation and performance; providing technical assistance and support, etc.)
7. When and how to transition back and to ensure all necessary information returns with teachers and students

The International Association for K12 Online Learning (iNACOL) and the U.S. Department of Education have already provided some useful guidance, publications, and resources to assist districts with their planning. For more specific information on this topic, please visit the following Web sites:

- <http://www.inacol.org/col/index.php> -- this iNACOL Web site includes guidance for short-term solutions and a long-term framework for continuity of learning, a Readiness Assessment for districts and other valuable resources
- <http://www.ed.gov/admins/lead/safety/emergencyplan/pandemic/index.html> -- this U.S. Department of Education site includes recommendations, questions and answers and links to other resources for continuity of learning during school dismissals

If any of you have ideas, plans or solutions you think might be beneficial to other Florida school districts, please forward this information to: Sally Roberts at sally.roberts@fldoe.org.

Thank you.