Teaching and learning remotely COVID-19

# Transcript

Over the past few weeks, staff students and parents have had some experiences with preparing delivering and managing remote learning and now that it is clear remote learning will need to be sustained over an extended period of time, this is a good time to reassess initial teaching and learning, delivery and processes and to strengthen and adjust these as needed. It's also a good time to review systems, practices and staff professional learning needs. The following information is designed to support this review and reassessment.

## Maintaining smooth operations

Maintaining smooth operations under flexible working conditions is vital during any time that schools are delivering remotely. The success of this will be underpinned by the effectiveness of planning and the communication systems and protocols developed. Equity is an important consideration as the needs of every child must be considered. Schools are best placed to know their communities and how best to provide support for students and parents. There are many things to consider such as the age of students, the length of the interruption, the technology and other tools that are available for teachers, students and parents.

The preparedness of the school and its staff is a key component for consideration. We acknowledge that some staff students, families and communities cannot access technology - either the individual cannot, or in some remote areas of the state, the technology is either unreliable or not available. Principals will need to ascertain the digital readiness of all stakeholders to allow decisions to be made about the mode of lesson delivery, communication platforms to be used and the sharing of resources including digital devices. Schools will continue to sensitively and sensibly respond to the needs of the individual, families and the community to support the agreed delivery mode of learning with appropriate resourcing.

Learners become advantaged by online delivery when they have access to appropriate resources including the desired communication platform, for example Zoom, Google and Microsoft suites, Skype and other applications.

## Planning phase

In the planning phase, check and determine the type of digital equipment available for each student including mobile devices. Ensure internet access and adequate bandwidth is available for all students. Poor bandwidth can make many activities very difficult. Understand that effective feedback throughout each lesson is vital for learning. Quizzes and peer to peer linkup also give valuable feedback as well as regular teacher intervention.  Design learning activities and discussions that capture student experiences while they are away keeps them engaged and gives teachers valuable feedback.

In order to meet the needs of students and families in regard to the minimum curriculum requirements in the context of the new learning environment, schools should prepare learning activities in either digital format (which can be delivered either in synchronous or asynchronous modes or both), hard copy form (asynchronous), or a combination of the two along with explicit instructions regarding the school’s expectations of students. There should always be a balance of activities that can be done online and in other forms. As the length of time students are learning online increases, it will not be possible for all lessons to be synchronously delivered. All student work should be directed towards the achievement of the syllabus outcomes and relate to the current classroom program and timetable. It should be differentiated to meet the needs of individual students ensuring continuous improvement and progress.

## Minimum curriculum requirements

Principals and teachers should ensure that the work presented is consistent with the minimum requirements for curriculum implementation and the school’s educational programs or courses of study. The parameters for the curriculum minimum requirements have been relaxed until such time schools resume normal operations, however schools will need to think flexibly on how they are going to meet these minimum requirements in this new learning environment. The minimum requirements for curriculum implementation to consider include:

* timetables
* scope and sequence
* assessment plan or assessment policy and procedures
* overview of the process for reporting student learning progress
* teaching programs

Core subject areas must be covered for each cohort in primary and secondary schools. Timetables may need to be adjusted and are to reflect minimum subject hours and minutes. The scope and sequences must be an accurate account of what is being taught utilising the appropriate NESA outcomes for the learning or unit of work. It is important assessment plans are prepared and reflect the learning that has taken place. Assessments should be fair and equitable for all students and inform next teaching and learning experiences. Schools will need to review their processes and procedures for reporting student learning progress. Principals and teachers should regularly review new and updated NESA advice through their website. NESA information about Preliminary and HSC course requirements, and VET, is particularly important.

Scheduling needs to be flexible in its delivery but structured in approach. Setting an expectation that students follow a school timetable from 9 am – 3 pm may not take into account a variety of factors. Some of these factors include the actual face-to-face time spent in schools, which allows for movement between classes and organisational time, for example set up and pack up. It is important to be aware that some students may complete more work throughout the day or complete it faster. Other students may not be able to get through the set work due to parents juggling their work and other children's learning needs. Some parents will also need to schedule their child’s learning at times that will work with their own ‘work from home’ schedules. Multiple children in one home with different learning tasks may also impede access to technology for synchronous delivery. Considering some core tasks may also help parents prioritise the learning they can manage at home. For these reasons, it is important to keep arrangements as flexible as possible. Students should be provided with an electronic or printed running sheet for each day or for the week. By working from the existing school timetable in preparing a running sheet, you will ensure that the school has delivered the expected hours and minutes for core subject areas. Post the running sheet on the school’s chosen communication platform making it available to students and parents. Ensure that both student and teacher breaks are clearly identified within the timetable along with teacher preparation time. During these breaks, it is important for students to play and be involved in physical activity. Teachers will need to consider the scheduling of ‘online times’ for live or synchronous lessons and the ability for students to be online at specific times. If you run live or synchronous lessons, consider recording them for students who won’t be able to join in. Consider providing check in sessions at different times during the day. There will also be a need to consider flexibility in the ways work is submitted and that there are no consequences for students who are submitting work outside normal school hours.

Protocols for communication between all community stakeholders for consideration include:

* whole staff, executive, faculty/ stage meetings, individual classes and parents.
* the desired communication platform for example, Zoom, Google and Microsoft Suites, Skype and other applications.
* monitoring student attendance, staff sign on/off, incident reporting protocols.

For remote access schools will need to:

* ascertain current teacher technological status and provision
* determine any required network software deployment
* consider the delivery of professional learning for example determined platforms and preparation of quick reference guides

For protocols for lesson delivery, schools will need to consider:

* the platform to be used for staff student communications
* the timetabling of lessons and teacher preparation
* the expectations of for all students including those students in SSP’s, support units students with special needs in a mainstream setting and students in OC classes

For staff support, schools will need to consider:

* pre-existing and current medical conditions including pregnancy, wellbeing and any other extenuating circumstances
* the department's range of services and programs available to support physical and psychological wellbeing
* protocols for reporting staff absences
* roles responsibilities and expectations for SAS staff including the role and availability of the school counsellor.
* supporting staff who cannot easily work from home including determining alternate work locations

## Implementing the plan

The development of a detailed plan outlining the schools approach to meeting student need is required to ensure the continuation of teaching and learning activities. It is essential to keep the plan as simple as possible but with the expectations for learners, teachers and parents and carers clearly outlined and explained. Once the plan is determined, it needs to be clearly communicated to all stakeholders. It should cover the teaching strategies, communication protocols, devices, solutions and processes supporting online, hard copy or blended learning in the school community.

All teachers should ensure that learning is continuous, effective and directed towards achieving the syllabus outcomes for all students. It is vital to ensure everyone knows how communication will be sent and what channels they should be checking - for example email, digital learning platforms, school website, social media, telephone, apps or web conferencing tools. Do not try to recreate face-to-face classrooms. Online and blended learning provides opportunities to work more independently using tools and strategies that otherwise might not have been implemented. Innovation, creativity and resilience will be required to make things work as schools will need to be adaptive and fast-thinking in order to ensure that learning continues.

## Tracking and record keeping

The principal must ensure that mechanisms are in place to keep accurate records throughout the time schools are delivering remotely. This will include staff sign in, student attendance, student completion of work, meeting minutes, communication to parents and students, staff feedback on the delivery of lessons, student learning, and the wellbeing of staff and students.

The principal must ensure that mechanisms are in place to keep accurate records throughout the time schools are delivering remotely. This will also include:

* system/protocol maintenance, including system failure and access issues
* internet outages and students inability to access
* health and safety issues for all staff and students including incident reporting
* curriculum delivery including programming, assessment and registration.

## Resources and support

For teachers who may need support in using technology and online learning delivery, the department has developed resources including the digital learning selector that provides information and support. In addition, the department's curriculum learning from home website to support remote learning provides a range of information and FAQs which are regularly updated. This information provides advice about health and safety while working from home and addresses a range of other questions. Schools have available a range of models and approaches including differentiated learning experiences, that will be the needs of their students and their family within the context of their community. Schools will know what works best.