

March 1, 2021

## **Local Law 11 of 2021 - Remote Learning Report**

### **Introduction**

Pursuant to requirements outlined in [Local Law 11 of 2021](#), the New York City Department of Education (DOE) is required to report to the City Council three times per year on certain aspects of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The reporting requirements include information and data regarding language development instruction provided to English Language Learner students, data on the chosen mode of learning for students, remote instruction for students in juvenile facilities, related service provision, summer school recommendations, and the provision of remote learning devices to students. This report covers the period of remote learning from September 1, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

### **Remote Learning Devices**

Since the start of the pandemic, bridging the digital divide has been a priority and we have delivered over 450,000 LTE-enabled iPads to students in need. We have another 50K iPads on hand to help meet any additional needs that may arise over the remainder of the school year, bringing the total central iPads ordered to 500,000.

We expect the need for devices to continue to arise in different places and be a fluid number— devices break, are outdated, and need to be replaced. We will continue to work with schools using a combination of central iPads, school devices, and hotspots to identify solutions to address individual needs that may arise. We provide devices for distribution based on the requests we receive from schools.

In addition to 500,000 iPads ordered by central DOE, this fiscal year schools have ordered more than 100,000 mobile devices (laptops and tablets) through their school-based budgets. Schools traditionally buy devices for their students every year, and the vast majority of student devices in our system are school purchases. We also are preparing 20,000 hotspots donated by Verizon for distribution on a rolling basis, which will be particularly helpful for students who have a device but do not have internet access at home.

Please see Attachment #1 for data on remote learning devices

### **Student Learning Preference**

We completely transformed our school system during a crisis and prioritized our most vulnerable populations every step of the way - no matter where they are learning. We have made investments to strengthen and improve remote learning while expanding in-person education particularly for students who need it most. As we continue to chart a path forward, we are working with public health and education experts to make sure our students learn best whether they are at home or remote.

During the reporting period, approximately 300,150 students were being served in person. This figure does not include students enrolled in DOE Early Childhood Centers.

Please see Attachment #2 for data on student learning preference during the reporting period.

### **Asynchronous Teaching and Learning**

Our educators and staff members are focused on delivering the highest-quality instruction possible, in a supportive learning environment, so that every student has what they need to thrive. Since our overnight transformation last spring, schools have been focused on improving teaching and learning, meeting students where they are, and providing continuity of instruction and support.

Asynchronous instruction occurs daily and serves as a complement to daily synchronous instruction. Asynchronous learning refers to instruction and learning opportunities that do not feature students and teachers interacting at the same time. Asynchronous learning activities enable students to work at their own pace so they can learn the same material at different times independently.

Daily asynchronous instruction may include, but is not limited to, the following approaches:

- Video lessons or recorded presentations
- Activities, assignments or tasks, guided by digital curricula
- Collaborative documents
- Discussion boards
- Email communication
- Feedback on student learning

Asynchronous instruction should consist of daily tasks or assignments aligned to synchronous instruction as determined by the teacher and informed by student data so that students can work at their own pace. Students with disabilities may have asynchronous instruction that is intended to reinforce, extend or apply their Individualized Education Program goals.

### **Instruction and Support for Multilingual and English Language Learner Students**

The DOE serves Multilingual Learners/English Language Learners (ML/ELLs) who represent over 150 languages from over 170 countries including those who are born in the United States. All DOE schools design language development programs in accordance with Part 154 of the State Education Department Commissioner's Regulations, which stipulate ELL policy in New York State. These include English as a New Language (ENL) for all ELLs, and bilingual education programs.

Annually each school develops a Language Allocation Policy (LAP) as part of their Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP). For school year 2020-21, LAPs included an increased attention to the provision of ELL policy mandates in the remote, in-person, and blended learning environments. LAPs describe the high-quality programs in place for ML/ELLs and how schools support the linguistic and academic needs of this group of students. Additionally, all schools with 30 or more ELLs received Title III funding which is a federal funding source specific to providing supplemental supports to ELLs. Schools that receive this allocation complete a Title

III plan which describes their supplemental plan for ELLs as part of their CEP. These plans include three supplemental components which focus on: 1) instruction, 2) parental engagement, and 3) professional learning focused on the ELLs.

We have been responsive to policy changes to ML/ELL education and made sure that we are adapting and implementing policies to best serve our ML/ELL students. The DOE has continued to ensure schools are provided with the resources and guidance to support students and provide mandated services in blended and remote contexts. This support includes a continued focus on college and career readiness, ongoing policy guidance and systems support, professional learning and instructional resources to support teaching and learning for multilingual learners, and culturally responsive family engagement. We describe the supports offered during the reporting timeframe (September 1- December 31, 2020) in greater depth below.

Additionally, in order to support the tech needs of ELLs, we prioritized the recruitment of multilingual volunteers for the DOE's Tech Ambassadors Program to conduct 1:1 support calls with families who recently received their requested devices from April until late September, of which approximately 7,000 were conducted in a language other than English. Across all surveys and online forms, families without reliable internet connection were referred to 311 where they could complete these items over phone.

College, career, and life readiness drives the work we do on behalf of ML/ELLs. Approximately 75% of ELLs in high school (grades 9-12) are immigrant youth who are navigating cultural nuances, learning the English language, and engaging with rigorous content in new ways. To support college and career readiness, the DOE has prioritized building the capacity of school-based staff (i.e. school counselors, social workers, teachers and parent coordinators) through professional learning communities focused on creating welcoming virtual environments that prioritize the safety of MLs/ELLs, immigrant youth and undocumented families. We have also offered financial aid workshops, CUNY application supports, Know Your Rights sessions, and career exploration activities to students and families in languages other than English. The DOE has created resources to facilitate college and career planning in the 10 DOE languages to support students and families in being protagonists in their journey; as well as, school-facing resources to assist school-based staff in engaging in practices and strategies that support college and career planning for MLs/ELLs. Finally, we provided 165 select high schools with funding to boost graduation rates and reduce dropout rates through college readiness programming and work-based learning opportunities.

Professional learning and instructional resources to support teaching and learning for ML/ELLs is central to ensuring that all ML/ELLs are receiving a high-quality education that meets each of their individual needs. To that end, the DOE has developed asynchronous professional resources and synchronous professional opportunities for school leaders and teachers of ML/ELLs, as well as, developed lessons to support continuous learning for our ML/ELL student as it relates to their language development. Asynchronous professional resources (i.e. webinars, briefs, videos) for all teachers of ML/ELLs are aimed at building both the expertise with supporting ELLs and digital skills; examples include: Supporting Digital Literacy of Newcomers, Supporting ELLs Oral Language Development (Read-Write-Talk Cycle), Scaffolding Guide for Math Teachers, and Scaffolding Science Labs for ELLs, etc. We have also developed resources focused on

building school leaders' understanding of how to support ELLs in their school sites. Synchronous professional learning opportunities include but are not limited to the following: Grade Level Curriculum and ELL Supports, Building Academic Language in Math and Science for ENL and Content Area teachers, and Supporting CTE Teachers with Language Development Tools. The DOE has also designed lessons in the following areas that are accessible for all teachers and schools to use: 1) ELLs new to the English language: designed to support students in attaining grade level content while learning the new language; 2) All ELLs: exemplars of enhanced and scaffolded social studies lessons K-12, Science lessons K-12 and Math lessons K-12; 3) ML/ELLs in bilingual programs: exemplar lessons for grades K-5 designed based on the NYCDOE digital curriculum procured to offer continuity of home language arts instruction.

In November we launched Parent University, a new online platform that offers pre-recorded courses, live events, and activities to help families connect and support students at every grade band, in multiple languages. There are currently more than 100 courses offered through the program that cover a wide range of topics, from reading strategies for students with disabilities and help multiplying fractions to learning how to use Google Classroom and accessing web-based translation tools.

In addition to the resources available in the remote learning portal and through Parent University, we have a wealth of tools and free platforms listed on our website to support remote learning for ELLs including:

- Where to access e-books and other free reading materials in multiple languages (SimplyE, International Children's Digital Library Foundation)
- Recommended pages for activities, articles and games across multiple subject areas and grade levels (Reading Rockets, ¡Colorín Colorado!, BrainPop)
- Multi-media tools to foster language development and support comprehension (YouTube's Learn at Home, Audible)

Furthermore, the DOE continues to direct its efforts to the specific needs of our multilingual and immigrant communities. We have hosted virtual workshops provided via interpretation services or in languages other than English focused on: digital readiness and literacy, social emotional learning, and educational rights of families of ML/ELLs. The DOE has used a combination of communication methods to reach every family throughout remote learning (i.e. postcards, parent-facing letters, and ethnic media outlets). We have also provided synchronous and asynchronous professional learning and resources to schools. These include sessions and series on Culturally Responsive Sustaining Family Engagement practices and the design and distribution of school-facing guidance made up of resources and strategies that educators can use to build relationships with families of ML/ELLs during COVID-19. All communications and resources are made available in the 10 DOE languages.

### **Support and Instruction for Students in Passages Academy, East River Academy and ReStart Academy**

Passages Academy provides education in both secure detention and in non-secure detention and placement. All of the students are in the custody of the Administration for Children's Services (ACS). In secure detention, ACS is responsible for care and supervision of students. In non-secure detention and placement, community-based organizations provide the care and

supervision of students. Passages Academy offers middle school, high school and high school equivalency courses based on age and needs of students.

DOE has worked closely with ACS to ensure all students at Passages have access to rich instructional experiences during this health crises. Before the pandemic there was very limited use of internet at all throughout Passages due to security concerns. Both agencies had to adapt quickly in balancing security and safety concerns with a high-quality remote instructional program.

All students received Chromebooks from Passages Academy starting on March 23, 2020. Students continue to use Chromebook for remote instruction. DOE provided hotspots to support students housed in some community-based organizations that had issues with internet connectivity.

Remote learning improved greatly over time. From March - June students completed work created on secure websites by Passages teachers in all subject areas. Telephone hotlines were established to provide support for students who needed live support as well as counseling. This practice continued throughout summer school.

Starting in September the DOE and ACS worked together to develop secure systems to allow teachers to present to students and communicate with students via electronic chat. From October 1 - November 19, 2020, Passages Academy students engaged in blended learning, with both in-person and remote instruction. On November 19, all students returned to full remote learning as did all other middle and high school students in the DOE.

In December, DOE and ACS tested and piloted a secure system for teachers and students to communicate verbally in addition to electronic chat to provide additional synchronous support. The pilot concluded in January with no security issues. In January, this was expanded to all students.

Currently Passages has 94% engagement in remote learning.

#### East River Academy:

East River Academy (ERA) provides educational services for students age 18 and above who sign up for school on Rikers Island. All of the students are in the custody of the Department of Correction (DOC). While ERA primarily provides high school equivalency preparation, a small number of students is pursuing a regular high school diploma pathway.

For the first few weeks of the pandemic (when a return in April was thought possible) students received paper packets to complete. Once it became apparent that school would be remote for the rest of the school year, we collaborated with the DOC to do several things:

- East River Academy began to provide educational content through tablets provided to the inmates through the DOC (DOE technology and instructional platforms are not permitted in any DOC facility on the island).

- For students in facilities without access to the tablets, we continued to provide paper packets
- Working with the DOC, ERA established hotlines for students to have the ability to call teachers and counselors for academic and social/emotional support

East River Academy planned a blended learning option with the DOC. There were delays to the start of in person learning due to the necessity of environmental walkthroughs (conducted by the DOC, DOE facilities and the United Federation of Teachers) to ensure school areas were safe for staff and students to return. Before any environmental issues could be fully resolved, the entire DOE went to fully remote instruction due to increased positivity rates. Currently students are still accessing remote learning from teachers through DOC-issued tablets, paper packets for students in facilities without access to the tablets, and the phone hotline for teachers and counselors. We are also exploring videoconferencing as a means of providing synchronous learning for students at the RNDC Rikers main building.

### ReStart Academy

ReStart Academy serves students in a wide range of unique settings, from an alternative 8th grade program for students who had been previously retained to residential programs in drug treatment centers. ReStart has a variety of sites, residential and nonresidential, voluntary and court mandated. Some sites operate in DOE buildings, with most operating within the confines of substance abuse, mental health or community-based agency facilities. ReStart offers middle school, high school and high school equivalency classes depending on age and needs of students

From the start of the pandemic, ReStart students had access to devices either provided directly by ReStart Academy or iPads requested through DOE for students. ReStart Academy teachers utilized a wide variety of both synchronous and asynchronous instruction throughout the pandemic.

Restart has maintained over 75 remote learning engagement.

### Special Education Related Services

As part of our ongoing commitment to our students with disabilities, we continue to make key improvements in how we deliver special education programs in a blended learning environment and provide related services during the pandemic. We have made every effort to provide continuity of services remotely, and then in person as soon as we could do so safely. Over the summer, DOE was the first major school district in the nation to offer in-person special education services, and our students with disabilities have been prioritized for in-person learning since September.

We have continued to provide all forms of related services, through a combination of remote and in-person service provision, consistent with family preference and health and safety considerations.

### Summer School

No students were recommended for summer school during the reporting period of September to December 2020.

During summer 2020, DOE ran a fully coordinated, online summer school program for a record number of students who were provided an enriching and productive experience to help better prepare them for return to school in the fall. Our schools and educators did tremendous work to help ensure students were engaging, participating and receiving the right amount of support under these unique and challenging circumstances.

Students in grades 3–8 who are not promoted in June were required to attend summer school. Some students in grades 3–8 were also recommended by their teacher for additional academic support over the summer.

At the high school level, students in grades 9–12 who had a course in progress, or who needed to retake a course they failed in a prior term, were invited to participate in remote instruction for the course(s) they need.

As of June 30, 2020, there were 114,554 students registered for summer school. Of those, 31,514 students were in grades 3-8 and 83,032 students were in grades 9-12.

The DOE does not offer traditional summer school for grades K-2, in accordance with our promotion policies.

Please see Attachment #3 for data on summer school participation.