



Managing Uncertainty

Serving All Learners as the 2020-21
School Year Approaches

Introduction

Next school year will look different. COVID-19 and the subsequent school closures have upended established educational settings and plans. Many observers predict that the uncertainty of the pandemic will continue to impact access to education into the fall, if not through the entire 2020-21 academic year. Preparing for this inevitable uncertainty is top-of-mind for school and district leaders.

Against that backdrop, flexible course materials—which incorporate sources ranging from traditional publisher texts to open educational resources—are critical, and even more so when learning may be happening outside the classroom.

This briefing is designed to provide administrators—at both the district and state level—with guidance and examples for supporting students using a materials distribution plan that ensures equity and access.

Recommendation 1

Plan on Print

As state governors began announcing school closures, there was an urgent need to implement online approaches for remote learning. Almost immediately after those efforts began, there was significant pushback from those who could not access these digital resources and learning experiences.

Students in school districts from Baltimore to Seattle lack the devices and reliable broadband internet access at home to take part in online learning. A number of experts have warned that this will exacerbate the educational equity divide in the U.S., with one professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education noting some students “won’t have access to anything of quality, and as a result will be at an enormous disadvantage.”

Print solutions are often overlooked as they lack a “wow” factor. However, they are a surefire approach to ensuring equity and access to course materials when broadband internet is not universally available. And current print solutions go beyond the traditional one-size-fits all textbooks.

Recommendation 2

Look Beyond Local

Keeping business as local as possible in the face of the pandemic is a powerful way to aid the local community—and it is often the best approach. There are reasons, however, to consider looking beyond local print providers.

- **Speed & Capacity:** In the face of abrupt and unexpected closures, local printing capacity can be limited, resulting in delays and bottlenecks in the delivery of critical learning resources.
- **Cost:** Printing is about the right equipment being matched with the right job. Not all printers have the optimal equipment to run efficiently, leading to unnecessarily high costs.
- **Distribution Experience:** There are multiple ways to get materials into students' hands. Working with experts who understand all the available options will help determine the best method for a school, district or state's unique situation.

Recommendation 3

Identify Content Expertise

Many curriculum teams are already creating content that can be used in a remote learning environment this fall and beyond. Whether educators are able to identify content and distribution methods in advance or need quick solutions at the time of closure, it is important to understand what content is available and licensed in such a way that allows it to be distributed quickly and affordably.

During the pandemic many publishers opened up their licensing and allowed educators to use their materials under non-traditional licensing models. For example, the Copyright Clearance Center created an [Education Continuity License](#) in coordination with more than 40 rights holders to enable creative approaches to remote teaching and distance learning that incorporate copyrighted materials.

Partnering with providers who have a deep understanding of content licensing—and access to content that can accelerate educators' ability to be responsive—will streamline the process.

Recommendation 4

Allow for Adjustments

The disruption to student learning progress likely means students' needs in the 2020-21 school year will vary far more than in previous academic years. The next year will look different, classroom to classroom and student to student. Instructional materials may need to reflect many missed weeks of standard instruction or specialized interventions due to uneven learning situations and settings.

Working with a provider that can allow for customized variations in materials can help with any reteaching required to get students back on track and ready to successfully move forward.

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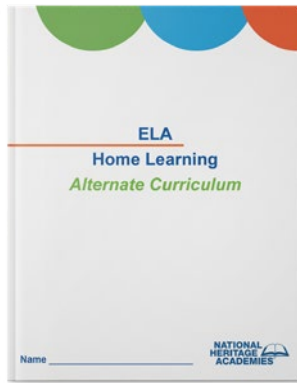
Success Story



National Heritage Academies

Implementer Profile:

- 80 Schools
- 59K Students
- 2,900 Teachers



National Heritage Academies (NHA) is a network of more than 80 public charter schools serving more than 59,000 students in nine states. NHA offers early childhood, elementary and middle school programs designed to put children on a solid path to success in high school, college and beyond.

As the pandemic began to spread in the U.S., NHA's curriculum team recognized the likelihood of school closures and began creating an alternative curriculum and student workbooks that would support students and parents in a remote learning environment.

When schools closed, NHA was ready to move and started exploring its traditional printing and distribution options, taking into account the need to deliver materials to tens of thousands of students in multiple states.

NHA first reviewed their existing, local printing partnerships and quickly determined that this project's scale required a different kind of partner, one that had large print capacity combined with educational publishing experience and distribution and mailing expertise. Overall, the partner would need to produce more than 400,000 student workbooks and move over 120,000 individual shipments by mail within two two-week windows to allow students to continue their studies with minimal interruption.

NHA selected XanEdu due to its ability to produce a range of quantities—from small to extremely large—of high quality workbooks quickly for students.

"Thank you, @XanEdu for working with our curriculum team to create over 400,000 learning support materials for NHA students during COVID-19. We appreciate the high-quality materials and record turnaround. We are grateful for your team's hard work and dedication!"

@NHASchools

Success Story



Texas Education Agency

Implementer Profile:

- ~9,000 Schools
- 5M+ Students
- 320K+ Teachers



The Texas Education Agency (TEA) created their Instructional Continuity Plan to help districts launch "at-home schools" to maximize instructional time and support student mastery of grade level standards while schools were closed due to COVID-19. An important part of the plan was providing Texas districts with a straightforward method for acquiring and distributing printed resources without having to reinvent the wheel in each location.

While TEA knew that some of its districts would have the resources to create localized, district-specific curricular resources, it also recognized that many districts would benefit from a streamlined solution. That way, those districts could focus their limited resources, time and attention on other essential pandemic-response activities.

Because the demand for the materials was unknown, a print-to-order solution was critical. TEA also knew speed was of the essence so they established the requirement that any order received would need to ship within 3-4 days of receipt. A state-level solution to serve potentially one-million-plus students would require extremely high capacity and speed.

Continued...

Success Story



Detroit Public Schools Community District

Implementer Profile:

- 106 Schools
- 50K Students
- 2,900 Teachers

Within two weeks, XanEdu was able to set up a complete end-to-end solution that supported order receipt through returns and reshipments. Key elements included everything from a customer service team providing Texas districts with phone, email and chat support, to residential shipping and a non-deliverable shipment rerouting process to ensure all materials were received by a school.

In the early stages of COVID-19, many governors closed schools for only a short period of time to see how long the pandemic would last. Detroit Public Schools Community District (DPSCD) schools were closed for several weeks at the onset of the pandemic.

As Beth Gonzalez, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction described it, "a top priority of the district is ensuring students' continuity of learning while they are at home. For students that can't access online resources at home, getting printed materials is critical to their learning until they can return to the classroom."

Her team faced a challenge similar to many others: they needed printed student materials in less time and in a volume greater than any local or regional provider could support.

XanEdu's national production footprint enabled it to provide a unique combination of speed, volume and quality.

"Through a partnership with custom publisher XanEdu, we were able to print (over 50,000) language arts and math academic packets and begin giving them to students in only a few days. We're grateful for XanEdu's hard work and its commitment to helping DPSCD students continue learning in the weeks to come."

Beth Gonzalez, Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction

Success Story



Baltimore City Public Schools

Implementer Profile:

- 161 Schools
- 80K Students
- 4,700 Teachers

Baltimore City Public Schools (BCPS) is responsible for the education of nearly 80,000 students from pre-K to grade 12 at 161 schools across Baltimore. As it became clear that schools would likely need to be closed due to COVID-19, BCPS leaders jumped into action to create plans to allow students to continue learning while at home.

With over half of these students coming from low-income families, BCPS leaders knew that it was crucial to provide students with learning resources that were not dependent on access to the internet or personal technology devices. To quickly create accessible learning materials, BCPS tapped XanEdu to print thousands of packets per week and deliver them across the city.

These print learning resources were then made available to students alongside other social support services such as meal pick-up and homeless support services to provide students and their families with holistic support.

"The quality of materials, timely delivery and expert customer support has made our transition into remote learning smoother for staff, students, and families. We are appreciative of their partnership now and as we forge ahead to a new school year."

John Davis, Chief of Schools, Baltimore City Public Schools

Takeaways

The long-term impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and student learning is still uncertain. But in times of uncertainty, flexibility is paramount. Education leaders looking ahead to the 2020-21 school year have several steps they can take now to ensure their needs for instructional materials are met, and the materials are appropriate:

- **Take stock of the current use of instructional materials.** If students are not still on track for the next academic year, near-term adjustments might be needed with supplemental or customized materials
- **Identify equity disparities.** School closures have highlighted gaps in digital access—from home internet to device availability—and print solutions can provide needed additional support.
- **Evaluate partnership options.** While local print providers are frequently a good source, make sure all aspects of getting materials into the hands of students are covered, from licensing through delivery.

Learn More

Find out how we can help you implement affordable, high-quality resources for your unique K-12 classrooms. Visit www.xanedu.com/k-12 to learn more.

About XanEdu

A new type of custom publishing partner has emerged to support educators in these efforts. XanEdu's K-12 CustomBook Solutions makes education personalized and affordable by giving districts and states control to create materials around their courses and students, rather than asking students to adapt to a standard, off-the-shelf resource. Working with more than 1,200 education institutions nationally, XanEdu helps learners at all levels of education access high-quality, student-centered, innovative learning resources.