

Appendix F. Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations Planning



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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TO: Chief School Administrators
Charter School Lead Persons

FROM: Isaac R. Bryant, Deputy Commissioner

SUBJECT: Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations Planning

A number of national and local schools and districts have experienced disruptions in their operations in the past three years. The causes of these disruptions have been major incidents such as floods and school violence. In addition, many schools and districts have experienced minor interruptions because of electrical outages, water damage, and hazardous material incidents. Because of these disruptions, some schools have not been able to operate effectively for hours, days, or even weeks.

In order to provide continued operating capability in case of a disruption, each Chief School Administrator/Charter School Lead Person should ensure that any school under their jurisdiction has developed and tested a continuity of student learning and core operations plan (continuity plan). The purpose of the continuity plan is to ensure that a district/school can resume partially or completely interrupted in critical functions within a pre-determined time period after a disaster or disruption (e.g. human error, technology failure).

There are several stages included in continuity planning. First, schools must identify and document their essential functions and services. By analyzing areas such as staff capacity, communication systems, records, payroll, transportation, and special needs population, schools can ascertain what is required to deliver those services. Criticality is determined by assessing the impact of the loss of the functions or service and the associated legal requirements. Second, schools must consider a variety of scenarios and detail specific recovery steps to resume the critical functions. Schools should plan for the worst potential outcome from any disaster or disruption. Finally, once the continuity plan is developed it needs to be tested to determine the

need for modifications. This post-planning phase also should include awareness training to gain acceptance for and understanding of the plan and practice so that the plan can be implemented without delay or confusion when needed. This plan needs to be reviewed annually and modified as needed.

With this memo, the department is disseminating a planning guide recommended for developing a continuity plan. Chief School Administrators/Charter School Lead Persons may organize the development of their continuity plans in the manner most effective for their district/school.

Continuity plans are especially important now given the hurricane predictions for our region, the potential for a pandemic, and the ever-present threat of school violence and terrorism. Hurricane Katrina and recent planned school attacks have taught us that we need to be prepared.

Shortly, the department will be distributing more specific guidance on the Avian Flu and pandemic preparedness that may inform the development of your continuity plans. However, your continuity plans should assess and address an array of crisis and should not be limited to pandemic planning only.

Schools play an integral role in protecting the health and safety of their students, staff, and families. Your dedication to this ongoing effort is truly appreciated. Should you have questions, please contact Anthony Bland, coordinator for school security at (609) 633-2544.

IRB/BG/SBM
Attachment

c: Acting Commissioner Lucille E. Davy
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**New Jersey Department of Education
Local Education Agency (LEA)**

**Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations
Planning Guide**

School Name		School Code	
District Name		County	
Chief School Administrator		Chief School Administrator Designee	
# of Students		# of Personnel	
# of Schools		Off Site Location	
County Superintendent		Contact Number (s) & Email (s)	
Law Enforcement		Contact Number (s) & Email (s)	
Office of Emergency Management		Contact Number (s) & Email (s)	
Public Health Office		Contact Number (s) & Email (s)	

1. Critical Functions

- a. Identify in priority order the critical organizational functions that your district/school must maintain if schools are closed or are operating with a decreased staff. For each, list any issues/concerns/restraints that would impact your long-term ability to continue to carry out those functions. *Note: Your plan will key on these critical functions. Keep in mind that critical functions might be different depending on the time of year.*
- b. List each function and indicate how long your district/school would be able to operate off-site (one day, five days, more than 5 days, 30 days, etc.).

2. Staffing

- a. Identify who and where off-site a list of all your staff with home phone numbers (and home e-mail) is maintained. (If your district/school does not have such a list, it should be prepared immediately.)
- b. Does your district/school maintain an employee notification tree? Is it off-site? Where is it?

- c. If space were limited, who are the essential/critical staff for whom space would be needed immediately?
- d. Which employees could be assigned to work off-site with minimal supervision or alone?
- e. List remaining employees and note whether their presence is necessary to maintain a critical function.
- f. Does your district/school have any staff members with special training or credentials which make them critical to specific functions?
- g. If your operation had to be divided or separated into different locations, how would you want it done (by specific function, bureau, etc.)?

Staff Site Separation Plan

List units/functions & numbers of people

- h. Short Term (1-5 days) Long Term (5-30 days)

- i. Does your district/school have any special equipment needs? (i.e., other than normal office/computer equipment).

3. Mail

- a. Should mail delivery be delayed/stopped, identify which critical functions your district/school will not be able to carry out.

Short Term (1-5 days)
(List critical functions)

Long Term (5-30 days)
(List critical functions)

- b. Does your district/school have any special/atypical mail needs?

4. Document Handling

- a. By critical function, list the necessary forms and documents which your district/school uses (electronic or paper) which you would need to continue.
- b. Does your district/school have a central file or location where a copy of every necessary form/document is readily available for an emergency crew? If your district/school does not currently have such a file, when will it be completed and where will it be kept? Where off-site are a set of these forms maintained?

- c. If your forms and documents were unavailable for an extended period of time (over 5 days), how would your district/school continue to carry-out its critical functions?
- d. By critical function, list all data files/systems necessary to maintain operations. Also, list any other special needs such as hardware, software, or e-mail connection by critical function.

5. Access to Information

- a. Does your district/school have a list of all laptop computers available within your district?
- b. By critical function, identify any and all paper records/files necessary to carry out that function.
- c. Which paper files and records are immediately important (1-5 day period) and which become critical in the long term.*
- d. Which of these file sets are already electronically stored?*

**Note: Code your responses, i.e., “E=Electronic or Not E=Not Electronic, L=Long or S = Short” to avoid repetition.*

6. Essential Work Communications

- a. Identify your basic phone /fax/data connectivity needs for your critical staff in the case of a short-term relocation.

7. Staff Unavailable

- b. If large numbers of staff are unavailable (more than half/less than half) what essential functions would not be carried out?
- c. What is the minimum staffing level necessary to carry out each critical function?
- d. Prioritize your LEA’s critical functions if faced with large scale absences.

- e. Have back-up personnel identified in-case of key staff being unavailable (i.e. district/school.)

8. Delegation

- a. Identify any authority or function that could be delegated elsewhere, both within your district or outside, to carry out a critical function.

9. Emergency Training

- a. To what extent could other personnel be trained to carry out a critical function?
- b. What resources (qualified personnel, materials, time) would be necessary?
- c. Which of your personnel could be field trained to complete critical functions in an emergency?

10. One-Day Function Interruption

If circumstances caused a resource interruption of only ONE day, comment upon each of these areas:

- a. Critical Functions – What function(s) could not cease even for only one day?
- b. What resources (people, space, files/information, forms, documents, etc.) will you need to carry out that critical function – **BE SPECIFIC AND DETAILED**. Are there others who could carry out this function(s)? Could it be carried out without mail support, computer equipment/software (what are your needs)? What minimal number of staff would you need to carry those critical functions out? (Please identify who those individuals are.)

Guiding Questions for Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations Planning

As you begin or conclude planning, you may want to consider some of these questions below to help you focus your planning efforts. The questions should serve merely as a guide to your emergency and crisis management planning.

1. If classes shut down for weeks, how will a district keep students from falling behind?
2. Has your LEA developed alternative procedures to assure continuity of instruction? (e.g., podcasting, automated phone banks, web-based distance instruction, telephone trees, mailed lessons and assignments, instruction via local radio or television stations.)
3. Who will keep the payroll running, or ease the fear of parents?
4. Has your LEA ensured language, culture and reading level appropriateness in communications?
5. Has your LEA shared what they have learned from developing your local preparedness and response plan with other LEAs as well as private schools within the community to improve community response efforts?
6. Has your LEA taken into account if any of the district's buildings will be used to handle emergency needs: (i.e., medical surge capacity, temporary housing, storage, etc.?)
7. Has your LEA notified staff of the Continuity of Student Learning and Core Operations Plan?
8. Has your LEA notified those staff designated as "essential" of their roles and responsibilities in the plan? Has there been an exercise to test the plan?
9. Has your LEA taken into account food services?
10. Is your planning team familiar with the Incident Command System (ICS)?

As a general rule, the more effort you put into emergency planning the easier your Local Education Agency will be able to cope should the worst case scenario arise.