

Readiness Checklist for Emergency Academic Continuity of Operations (Are you ready for an unexpected school closure/evacuation?)

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NOTE: This general methodology has been successfully used in several school evacuations/closures over the last six years by the NESAs Virtual School Project.

1. A **Comprehensive Planning Process and Policy Development** - formulated with effective representation from critical stakeholder constituencies (e.g. an Emergency Response Team representing Board, Administrators, Teachers, Health Staff, Parents, etc.). An emergency plan may impact policies regarding school closure and teacher work expectations.
2. A **Flexible Academic Plan** - allowing for multiple scenarios, such as fully online, hybridized instruction or online of only critical courses, and placement elsewhere with an ongoing community connection (quite possibly recommended for lower elementary).
3. A **Effective Communication Plan** - gathering accurate local and overseas contact information, establishing protocol for communication, and assigning personnel to communication tasks (perhaps Counselors and/or Admin Support - this proves invaluable for ongoing tracking of success of each family during the emergency).
4. **Prepared Emergency Packets** - providing paper-based short-term academic continuity while online communication is being established (often for up to 10 days, comprised of course-related materials and activities that can be done at any time of the year)
5. A **Reliable Email System** - ideally offsite or somehow redundant and remotely manageable, for providing a backbone communication system for communicating to remote stakeholders, and for coordinating efforts by support teams. The learning management system (see next item) usually has email integrated into its communication systems.
6. An **Offsite Learning Management System** - providing site-independent, reliable, and highly manageable capacity to structure and provide online course content and course-based interactions (student to teacher and student to student), as well as online assessment and course-based communication tools. Further detail can be found below.*
7. **Ongoing Baseline Expectations of LMS Usage** - without regular and relevant usage, an LMS cannot be expected to be useful during an emergency. Only through regular usage can the necessary familiarity and relevance to the program be established and then relied upon. (e.g. Very simple initial expectations might include a course description/syllabus, regularly posted homework, and updated links to course related resources.)
8. A **Community Web Portal** - to sustain the sense of school community by providing a "place" to be informed and to keep abreast of the goings on of the school. This may be part of the LMS system or integrated with it.
9. **Preparation and Training** - A sequential roll-out of the plan, involving all of the school community, and culminating in "fire drill" type exercises (perhaps first one day in which students stay at home but teachers stay at school to "prove" the system with support from tech staff, and then a day in which all teachers and students conduct school from home).

* **Further Detail on Critical LMS Functions** - A learning management system (LMS) is a critical component in delivering instruction, in gathering and assessing assignments, and in delivering constructive feedback. The ability to easily organize all resources and activities by course/class makes for a smoother transition from a physical world to a virtual world for both teachers and students (and for system administrators). Ideally the LMS should have a range of delivery and interactive functions including resource presentation (e.g. docs, links), integrated email notification, blogs, wikis, forums, quizzes/tests, surveys, homework collection, and a grade book.