

Engaging in High Leverage Learning

The intention of this document is to support teachers in adapting high leverage practices while adhering to protocols outlined in [Nova Scotia's Back to School Plan](#), 2020 and in keeping with principles of inclusive education as outlined in [Nova Scotia's Inclusive Education Policy](#), 2019.

The Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Regional Centres for Education, CSAP, and partners are focused on the safety and well-being of learners and educators. While this focus is a priority for learning, thoughtful and intentional instruction is needed to ensure the future success of all learners. Knowing your learners and building strong relationships are the cornerstones of the classroom community ([Supporting Learning 2020](#)).

As we return to school, teachers will continue to engage learners in culturally and linguistically responsive, and equitable learning experiences, while maintaining ongoing communication with families to address challenges and barriers facing students.

In order to engage in equitable learning experiences, instruction should be:

- grounded in curriculum outcomes
- prioritized based on short term and long-term goals and benchmarks
- purposeful and planned/ explicit and systematic
- responsive to all learners' needs
- informed by assessment
- targeted to address student where they are at in their learning
- scaffolded until the learner is working independently
- intertwined with timely descriptive feedback.

Key Messages

“All partners are committed and empowered to work collectively to identify and eliminate barriers that interfere with students’ well-being and achievement.” ([Nova Scotia Inclusive Education Policy](#), 2019).

Workshop Model

Schools and teachers continue to problem-solve how to implement the best practices within the conditions of the public health protocols. The workshop model can continue as a structure in which these practices take place. It is an instructional framework through which teaching is organized into components that can meet the needs of learners in a systematic and strategic way towards creating more equitable outcomes for all learners.

In the Workshop Model, the teacher becomes a mentor, facilitator, and coach. Within these roles, the teacher organizes learning opportunities, creates a classroom climate of trust, and scaffolds learning until the learner becomes independent.

The following table offers a **suggested framework with guiding questions** to consider when planning lessons. The framework identifies the actions of both learners and teachers within the lesson that help to support learners’ growth while following the health protocols.

Suggested Framework for Engaging Learning, P-12		
	Description	Guiding Questions
Time To Teach	<p>The lesson opening engages the learner by connecting background knowledge and personal experiences to the learning target(s) for the lesson. Learning targets describe, in learner friendly language, what learners are expected to know, understand, and do.</p> <p>Time to teach highlights a particular learning skill or strategy. Teachers typically choose from the following options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focus Lesson/Mini Lesson ● Explorations/Discovery ● Modeling/Demonstrating ● Shared/Interactive Experiences 	<p>When planning consider the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What is my purpose based on the needs of my learners? ● How will I engage my learners? ● What new vocabulary will I introduce? ● How will I set the learners up for guided practice? ● How will I organize my resources, materials, and space in a way to mitigate risk? ● What vocabulary will I need to explicitly teach learners, so they understand the text? ● Will this skill or strategy engage learners in an equitable learning experience? ● What does success look like? ● How will I integrate technology effectively to initiate blended learning in my classroom and to prepare for the possibility of moving to learning from home?

<p style="text-align: center;">Time To Practise</p>	<p>The teacher revisits the I Can ... statement (learning target) from the explicit teaching and asks the learners to practise what they have learned that day as they talk, read and write.</p> <p>The teacher monitors the learners' understanding and uses a mid-workshop check-in to reinforce the learning target, refocus learners or address any misunderstandings or challenges.</p> <p>Learners may work independently and with others.</p> <p>Learners benefit from choices in their opportunities to demonstrate evidence of learning. Begin to consider how to use choice boards within this instructional model.</p>	<p>While learners are working, consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How will I use this time to listen for student understanding and provide feedback? ● Are the learners able to utilize the skill independently? ● Is the learner dependent on the other learners in the group or the teacher to apply the skill? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What other tools and supports do ● I have access to support the learner (i.e., Teaching Support Team, Student Support Workers, Intervention teachers, etc.)? ● What probing questions could support learners in their learning? ● Who will I work with in small group instruction, guided reading/writing groups or confer with during this time? ● Which students will work best together in collaborative online groupings? ● How can I do my guided lessons safely? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ groups (size) ○ table/seat placement ○ movement of teacher/students ○ use of technology
<p style="text-align: center;">Time to Share and Reflect</p>	<p>Learners should drive this part of the lesson with some prompting and support from the teacher to make connections to the learning target.</p> <p>Collaboratively, the teacher and learners reflect on and analyse the success of the learning. Through reflection, learners have opportunities to talk about how or what they are learning and engage in metacognitive thinking.</p>	<p>When learners are reflecting and sharing think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● How will I provide opportunities to review the learning target and have learners share their learning and problem- solving? ● What understanding do I want learners to reflect upon? ● Do I need to provide the lesson in a different way or can I move on? ● Who may need further instruction in small guided groups or through an individual conference? ● How do I organize my students in a way that allows them to safely collaborate and reflect on each others' understanding? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ groups (size) ○ table/seat placement ○ movement of teacher/students ○ use of technology

Q & A on Learning Practices in Full Learning In-School

The Q & A below is in response to questions most frequently asked by teachers. Reach out to your Region/CSAP, if you have further questions.

Q: Can I maintain and have learners use a classroom [library](#)?

A: Yes, books and other resources are an important part of the classroom! Here are some suggestions:

Adapting classroom libraries:

- Learners engage in proper hand hygiene before and after [book browsing](#).
- If you are required to limit the number of books in your classroom, make sure to focus on culturally and linguistically responsive practices to ensure that the reading resources in the classroom reflect students' needs, interests and lived experiences. i.e. [Inclusive Education: The call to Value Black Students' Lives, So They Can Fulfill Their Promise and Potential](#)
- The process of selecting learning resources that inspire and enhance learning should be mindful of additional language learners (including offering dual language books to EAL/FAL learners) and the backgrounds of all students.
- Schedule a day for selecting books —divide your learners up to avoid overcrowding. Students should keep the books that they select for a period of time.
- Use electronic texts. You will find many text options on EBSCO. These texts are leveled and searchable by grade and subject. EBSCO resources can be found on the GNSPES/SEPNE landing page. Learners should have personal earbuds/earphones if they are using the audio books.
- Integrate online reading sites, available in Regions/CSAP. [Approved Online Tools & Resources](#)
- Encourage learners to bring books from home to read at school but remind students that these books are not to be shared.
- Create a mobile book cart filled with books by level/genre if you are a teacher who moves to learners.

Q: Can I have learners engaged in literacy/ learning experience centres?

A: Yes! Consider how to minimize physical contact and sharing. Reduce the number of students that would be at a literacy centre. Consider having consistent small groupings to reduce contact.

Adapting literacy / learning centres:

- Ensure proper hand hygiene before and after learning centre time.
- Break down the larger centres into individual centres (bins, baggies) so learners have access to the content, but are not sharing the loose parts, objects.
- Select loose parts and hard surfaced objects that can be disinfected easily.
- Designate a space where learners can “drop off” objects that need to be disinfected.
- Follow disinfecting protocols provided by your Region/CSAP.

Q: Can I plan for and have learners engaged in exploration and intentional play-based learning?

A: Yes! Consider how to minimize physical contact and reduce/eliminate sharing. Reduce the number of students. Consider having consistent small groupings to reduce contact.

Adapting environment and routines:

- Ensure proper hand hygiene before and after play/exploration.
- Go outside as much as possible ([Physically Active Time P-8 within the school day and outdoors](#)).
- Limit the number of learners at each station.
- Select materials that can be easily disinfected.
- Where possible, have learners use their own materials and not share.
- Have enough materials to encourage individual play/exploration where possible.
- Have an area where learners can place things that need to be disinfected.
- Follow disinfecting protocols provided by your Region/CSAP.

Q: Can I confer with learners?

A: Yes! The practice has not changed significantly, other than to consider proximity of the teacher to the learners, and the use of masks in grades 4-12 when physically distancing is not possible.

Q: Can I read aloud?

A: Yes! The practice has not changed. Keep in mind social distancing and public health protocols as noted in the appendix of the Back to School Plan.

Q: Can I send books home?

A: Yes! Please see the [Paper and Paper Products](#) document.

Q: Can I engage in small group instruction?

A: Yes! It may look different (location, group size, and learning experiences).

Adapting small group instruction:

- Ensure hands are clean before and after reading and writing.
- Have learners maintain space or sit in separate desks facing the teacher
- Masks should be worn as per public health guidance
- Allow groups to meet and share ideas using various platforms and programs such as Google Meet and Google Docs.
- Have material needed for guided lessons in individual bags with the learner's name so that sharing does not take place.
- Use the outdoor space when possible.

Q: Can learners work in partners or small groups for discussions and collaboration?

A: Yes! It may look different (location, group size, and protocols).

Adapting partner and small group learning experiences:

- Ensure hands are clean before and after working together.
- Within cohorts, students can move throughout the classroom and interact but should be supported to minimize direct physical contact.
- have students talk and turn to students in close proximity to them
- Remind learners of hands-off policy.
- Allow groups to meet and share ideas using various platforms and programs such as Google Meet, Google Docs, Jamboard.
- Use outdoor spaces when possible.

Q: My teaching time/period has been significantly increased, allowing for longer blocks of time. What do you recommend?

A: Adapting for length of time:

- Integrate work from a variety of subject areas.
- Build in collaborative work time using technology.
- Allow for choice; introduce a choice board concept.
- Engage in authentic reading and writing experiences.
- Incorporate inquiry-based learning.
- Change the type of activity frequently.
- Build in movement / brain breaks.
- Use the outdoor area for part of the lesson time ([Physically Active Time P-8 within the school day and outdoors](#)). Additional guidance for 9-12 [will be posted](#).

Q: I am moving between classrooms while the students remain in one setting. How do I bring all resources/materials to the learners?

A: Here are some suggestions:

- Use a mobile cart with the required resources and materials.
- Reduce the materials that need to be brought and consider what is already available in the classroom.
- Rotate materials- bring some one week and change materials for the following week.
- Integrate technology as much as possible.

Q: Can I have my students engage in [inquiry-based learning](#)?

A: Yes! The practice has not changed. Keep in mind social distancing and health protocols. Inquiry based learning is ideal for a variety of environments and can easily be incorporated with small group work through the use of approved technologies. It is great to start this and have students gain comfort with this in a fully in-school environment.

Q: Should I be thinking and planning ahead in case the learning scenario shifts to blended/partial in-school or fully at-home learning?

A: Yes! Consider doing the following to be prepared for any learning scenario.

- Review the [September Technology Considerations](#) document.
- Set up a virtual classroom platform (e.g., Google).
- Be sure your learners know their passwords and can log in independently.
- Familiarize yourself and learners with useful digital tools and resources.
- Incorporate digital tools and resources in your teaching.
- Create toolkits for learners to bring home in case of at-home learning (e.g., books, paper, alphabet letters, writing journals, writing utensils, technology).
- Embrace bring your own device for students who have their own technology for use for learning
- Allow additional language learners to write in their own language, e.g., making entries in a journal of ideas or reflections, mind-mapping, researching from the internet, summarizing what they have learned
- Use the technology passport (in development) with your students

Q: How can I continue to have learners talk with each other to promote their oral language development/speaking and listening?

A: The instructional practices to promote oral language development have not changed. Here are some suggestions to promote talk in the classroom while taking the health protocols into consideration:

- Talk with learners and encourage talk between learners as much as possible.
- Allow additional language students to confer and collaborate with peers who speak the same language.
- Build in collaborative work time.
- Use the outdoor area for small groups, as much as possible.
- Integrate play-based learning.
- Confer with learners.
- Circle time, book talks, literature circles, dyads, etc
- Use recordable technology (audio and video) to communicate.

Q: How do I get learners to speak French when they've been out of school for a prolonged period?

A: Learners need to hear French to develop their French speaking skills. Oral language is the basis of literacy development. Taking time to develop French oral language benefits learning in all areas.

Here are some suggestions for developing French oral language:

- Communicate solely in French in all French Second Language classrooms.
- Explicitly model the French language through talk, conversation, and read-alouds.
- Use talk and conversation to model vocabulary, sentence structures, and pronunciation.
- Learn new words and structures orally first to support reading and writing.
- Listen to books read by the teacher or online (i.e. Ensemble chez nous).
- Use a variety of technology to record and hear the French language.

Q: How can I ensure that learners can hear and understand me when wearing a mask while teaching; especially when they are learning an additional language?

A: Here are some suggestions:

- Circulate in the classroom while wearing a mask so all learners can hear.
- Consider an approved mask that allows learners to see your mouth while speaking. Non medical masks can be made of plastic, if there are at least 2 layers of tightly woven material fabric (like cotton or linen) surrounding the plastic, without gaping.
- If you have access to an FM system use that to support learners in hearing you
- See [Covid-19 Guidance-EAL/FAL Teachers](#) for additional information.

The above Q &A provides clarity regarding learning practices in 2020. Going forward, there will inevitably be new information and possible changes in learning contexts. In all scenarios, ensure that instruction is focused, highly engaging, anti-racist and culturally responsive. As we work through new realities in the classroom, teachers and learners should continue to use technology to enhance instruction, learning, and assessment, and must be prepared for a possible scenario change.

Do you have suggestions to support instruction? Email us at: curriculum@novascotia.ca