

# PREVENTING A LOST SCHOOL YEAR:

The Crucial Importance of Motivating Students & Engaging Families





## CRITERIA FOR THE ESSENTIALS

- Based on parents' and guardians' direct experience during the past two plus months
- Aligned with evidence
- Specific and concrete
- Impactful for students, particularly those with the greatest chance of being left behind
- Implementable everywhere at the beginning of the school year

## ASSUMPTIONS

- Schooling during the 2020-2021 school year will happen, to a significant extent from home.
- Ensuring learning from home requires even greater attention to motivating students and supporting students' well-being and social and emotional development.
- Many parents/guardians are experiencing tremendous stress and also lack familiarity and comfort with education jargon, academic content, and technology.

# 6 ESSENTIALS FOR MOTIVATING & SUPPORTING STUDENTS

- 1. Students must have internet access and a connected device for learning.** Every student in every grade needs a connected device and home internet connectivity that allows them to engage in online learning throughout the school year.
- 2. School needs to matter.** Grades, tracking attendance, grade-level content, and opportunities for acceleration are a must. Pass-fail or pass-incomplete, optional attendance, and a focus on remediation will lead to a lost year whose damage could extend into the future. Student Achievement Partners has created 2020-21 [Priority Instructional Content](#) that names the priorities in mathematics (K–8) and ELA/literacy (K–12) that should be the focus of instruction for educators in the 2020–21 academic year.
- 3. Fair grading practices are essential.** Middle and high school students must be universally provided multiple opportunities to make up missed assignments and re-take tests. A “no zeroes” policy to make grading fair and equitable is also essential. [Here is a straightforward guide.](#)
- 4. Every middle and high school student needs an advisor.** The advisor's job is to build a trusting relationship and check in regularly to ensure each student assigned to them stays on track, foster their [social and emotional development](#), celebrate their successes, and make necessary referrals to address students' academic, mental health, and material needs. English Language Learners should be assigned to staff who speak their native language to the greatest possible extent. Staff who are assigned students with IEPs should familiarize themselves with the student's IEP and be in regular communication with the student's IEP case manager. [Here is an Advisors for All guide.](#)
- 5. Secondary educators and staff team-up to support students grade by grade.** Grade-level teams of middle and high school teachers and staff should meet bi-weekly to identify students who are off track and develop individualized student support plans. Teams should also analyze grade-level and schoolwide trends in course failures and engagement to identify areas where students' needs are not being met. [Here is a 2-page grade level team meeting guide.](#)
- 6. Prioritize hands on learning.** If in-person high school classes are limited, maximize the availability of CTE classes, labs, clubs, and sports that motivate and engage students. At all levels, ensure a well-rounded, relevant curriculum that engages students.

1. **Overcommunicate.** Given the heightened importance of parents' role in students' success and how busy parents/guardians are, there cannot be too much communication or too much reinforcement of key information. It is also essential to communicate key information through multiple channels, including texting and recorded messages, vs. just emails.
2. **Start the year with a virtual home visit.** Intentional and pre-planned virtual home visits by teachers and staff with every family are crucial at this time of upheaval. They enable the teacher or staff member to establish trusting relationships with students and families, ensure families/guardians and students are clear on the fundamentals (i.e. school schedule, health and safety protocols for in-school attendance, grading system, how to turn in work, etc...,) and that students have what they need to learn. The

first visit should occur as early as possible during the first grading period with recommended follow-up at least once per semester (as dictated by the support and information needs of the student and family.) Visit [www.virtualhomevisit.org](http://www.virtualhomevisit.org) for a [how to guide and additional resources](#).

3. **Use a texting platform to provide learning tips to early preschool and elementary grade parents.** Family Engagement Lab's evidence-based learning tool, [FASTalk](#), is a great platform. It enables schools to send regular texts from the teacher to parents about home learning activities aligned to the school curriculum. To create the opportunity for as many districts as possible to utilize FastTalk next year Family Engagement Lab is willing to work with interested districts to secure grant funding. Click [here](#) to apply.

## HERE IS A LIST OF THE TOOLS LINKED THROUGHOUT THIS GUIDE

These resources have been developed to help school districts motivate students, engage families and providing the most impactful and successful education experience possible to all children even amidst this pandemic.

- [Virtual Home Visits Guide](#) | As we build new systems to safely educate students and support families, the foundation for success remains the same — relationships. Virtual Home Visit is a proactive, intentional re-engagement of families.
- [Grade Level Team Meeting Guide](#) | Student-focused grade or team meetings are an effective practice for identifying and intervening with students in need of additional academic or socio-emotional support.
- [Fair Grading Practices](#) | In a school year with significant remote learning and tremendous stresses on families and students, it is critical for school districts to put in place equitable grading policies.
- [Advisors for All](#) | Based on Phoenix Union High School District's "Every Student Every Day" approach, this protocol can ensure that every student is connected to at least one caring adult who can help guide them through the challenges this school year is sure to present.
- [Teach Kindness Lessons \(for grades 4-8\)](#) | Social emotional learning modules adapted for online learning. [Click here for additional materials](#).
- [FASTalk](#) | A tool to better connect teachers, parents and students around daily classroom learning.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### Fair Grading Practices:

- [Best Practices for Equity in Grading](#) | Hanover Research
- [How Teachers are Changing Grading Practices with an Eye on Equity](#) | KQED
- [A Repair Kit for Grading](#) | Ken O'Connor
- [A Case Against the Zero](#) | Douglas B. Reeves

### Fair Grading Practices (Videos):

- [Elements of Grading: Effective Grading Practices](#) | Douglas B. Reeves
- [Toxic Grading Practices](#) | Douglas B. Reeves
- [Standards Based Practices \(part 1\)](#) | Rick Wormeli
- [Standards Based Practices \(part 2\)](#) | Rick Wormeli
- [Standards Based Grading](#) | Rick Wormeli
- [Redos, Retakes, and Do-Overs](#) | Rick Wormeli
- [On Late Work](#) | Rick Wormeli
- [Gradebooks](#) | Rick Wormeli

We want to acknowledge and learn from you! Please [let us know](#) which recommendations you implement.