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COVID-19 Best Practices & Innovations Brief: How Mississippi Teachers Used Organizational Scaffolds and Learning Supports During an Emergency Learning Situation

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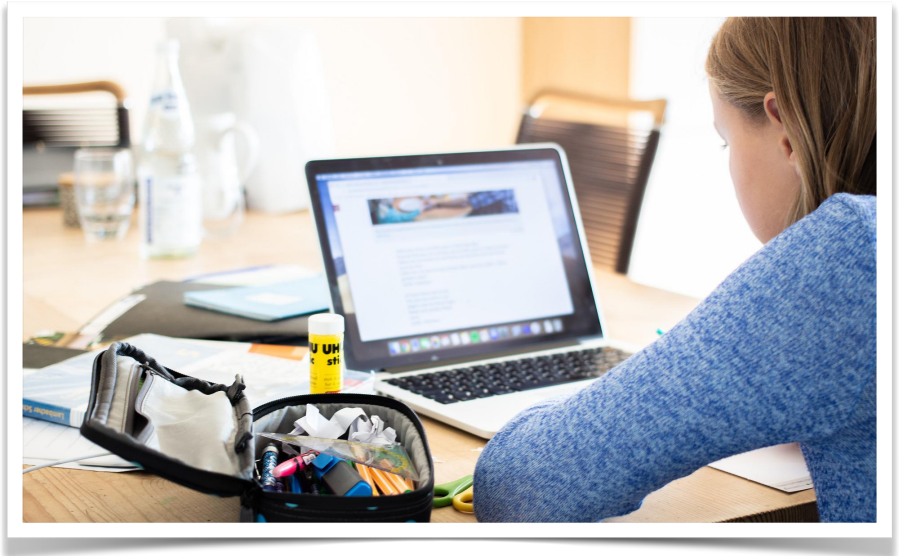
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COVID-19 Best Practices & Innovations Brief:

How Mississippi Teachers Used Organizational Scaffolds and Learning Supports During an Emergency Learning Situation

Teacher-Provided Organizational Scaffolds

A key component of the COVID-19 pandemic response for Mississippi's K-12 teachers was to develop organizational scaffolds and learning supports that could be used in the transition to online instruction. The emergency nature of the pandemic required teachers to redesign their instruction at a rapid pace and required students to adapt almost instantaneously to an unfamiliar learning environment, with family support and internet access not always possible. A recent statewide study funded by the Governor's Emergency Educational Response Grant asked Mississippi's K-12 teachers to share how they helped organize the online learning environment for their students to help them be successful.



To help students keep track of their online assignments and course materials, many K-12 general and special education teachers in the survey shared they used organizational scaffolds such as calendars, to-do lists, and current grade information that their students could access at any time within their online class. While the vast majority of K-12 teachers reported using at least one of the features described in this section, the survey indicated that 6% of the primary grades, middle grades, and special education teachers, and 4% of the high school teachers said none of these organizational scaffolds were built into the online learning they had provided. The specifics of what was provided for the students varied between primary, middle, and high school teachers as well as between general education and special education teachers, so the information is presented separately here.

Primary grades teachers

The most popular organizational feature among primary grades teachers was a daily to-do list for the student to complete (55%), as compared to a weekly to-do list (45%), or a calendar of all the assignment due dates for the entire nine weeks (27%). Most primary grades teachers also included the learning objectives for the current lessons (53%) and many also included the state standards for the current lessons (44%). A little less than half of the primary grades teachers consistently displayed the student's scores on all graded assignments (48%) but were less likely to include or display the student's current grade in their class (32%). As a group, the primary grades teachers reported more use of short-term scaffolds for their young students such as daily to-do lists and current learning objectives rather than long-term scaffolds such as semester calendars and final course grades.

Middle grades teachers

Among middle grades teachers, the most popular organizational features were student access to their scores on all graded assignments (66%) and a daily to-do list for the student to complete (64%). Roughly two-thirds of the teachers

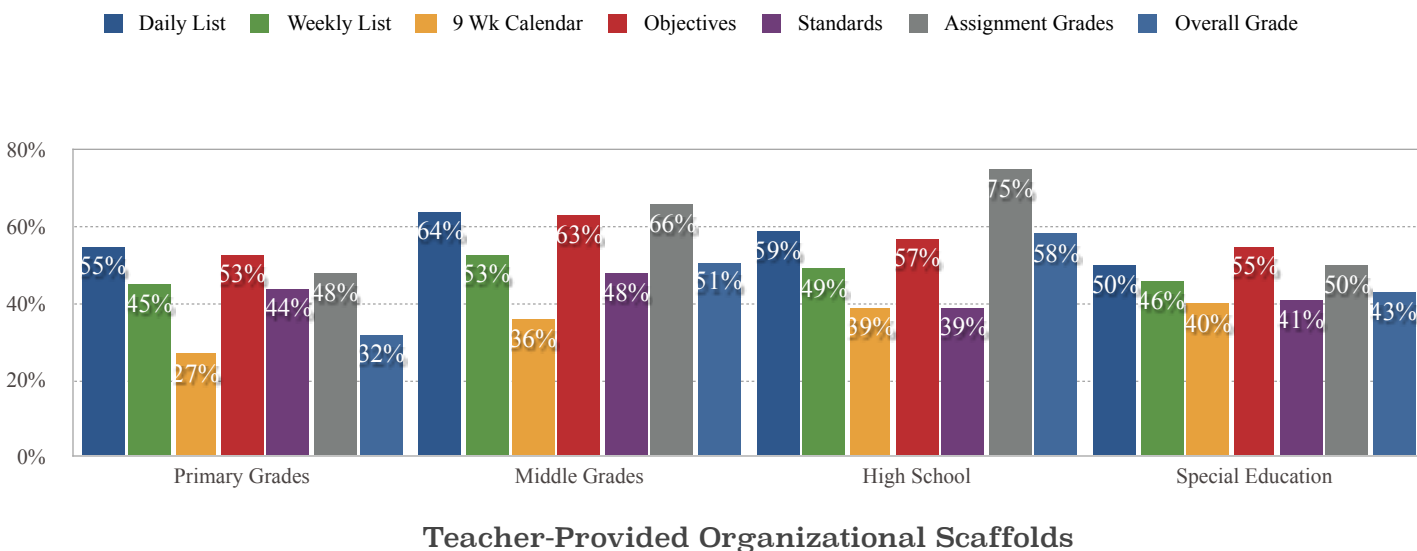
included the learning objectives for the current lessons (63%) and nearly half also included the state standards for the current lessons (48%). Many middle grades teachers provided a weekly to-do list for the student to complete (53%) and about one-third also provided a calendar of all the assignment due dates for the current nine weeks (36%). The student’s current course grade was made continually available by 51% of middle grades teachers. Overall, middle grades teachers reported higher percentages of use for every organizational scaffold than did primary grades teachers, with a greater emphasis on grades.

High school teachers

The emphasis on grade information surpassed all other organizational scaffolds at the high school level, with 75% of high school teachers reporting their online classes provided up-to-date access to student scores on all graded assignments and 58% included the student’s current grade for the course. High school teachers were the least likely group to include the state standards in their current lessons (39%) but were closer to their primary and middle school counterparts in providing students with the learning objectives for the current lessons (57%). Most high school teachers used a daily to-do list for the student to complete (59%), many also used a weekly to-do list for the students (49%), and they were the most likely group to give students a calendar of all the assignment due dates for the entire nine weeks (39%).

Special education teachers

Of all the organizational scaffolds, special education teachers were most likely to include the learning objectives for their current lessons (55%) and the student’s scores on all graded assignments (50%). This is not surprising given the emphasis on achieving IEP goals for students receiving special education services, which makes this information even more important for these students. Learning objectives were followed in popularity by to-do lists at the daily level (50%) and the weekly level (46%). Special education teachers were less likely to provide continual access to the student’s current course grade (43%), state standards for lessons taught (41%), or a full nine-weeks calendar (40%).



Teacher-Provided Learning Supports

In efforts to provide online learning in a format that could work for their students, Mississippi teachers incorporated a multitude of delivery, practice, and assessment approaches. The type and amount of supports provided varied between general education and special education teachers, so the results are presented separately.

General education teachers

While only 28% of general education teachers had a synchronous class just for them and their online students, 49% had their online students join their face-to-face classroom using video conferencing. In a typical week’s worth of lesson plans, 49% of respondents said they provided recordings of themselves modeling/delivering instruction and 46% said

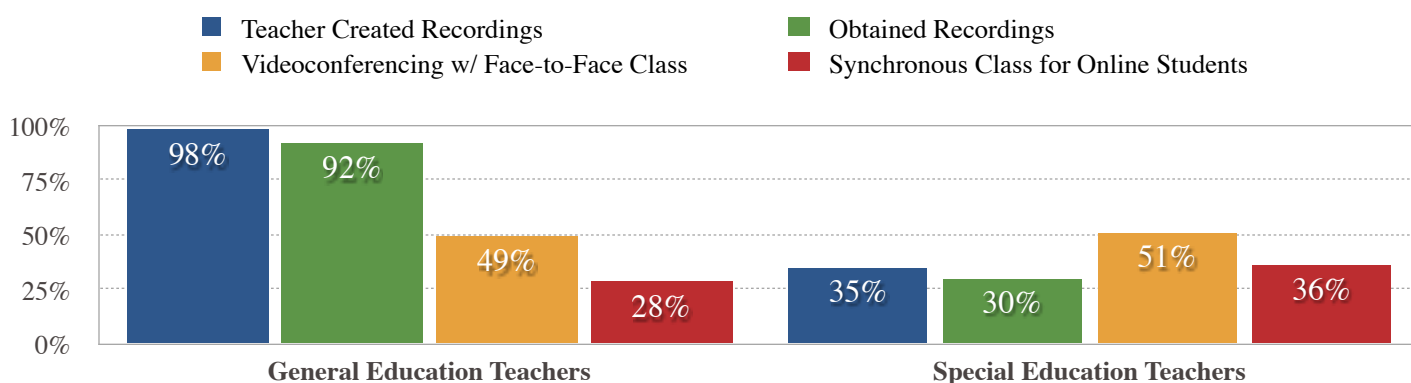
they provided recordings of someone else explaining/modeling the content. Required readings, either online or in school textbooks, were also assigned by 63% of teachers. To support acquisition of content, 68% of teachers provided skills practice using an approved website and 52% created paper and pencil tasks for their student to complete.

To encourage students to show what they had learned, 43% of the teachers assigned writing of essays, papers, and other written projects and 16% of teachers even had students video record themselves performing the task or skill. Even if their students were learning online, 34% of general education teachers reported that they still required those students to deliver work products to the school for teacher evaluation. On average, general education teachers reported consistently including at least five of the learning supports mentioned here for their online students.

Special Education Teachers

To support student learning, special education teachers were less likely to use recordings of themselves (35%) or others (30%) modeling/delivering instruction for the students than the general education teachers. Instead, special education teachers reported higher use of videoconferencing to have a student join them in their face-to-face classroom (51%) and a higher percentage also said they were able to hold synchronous classes for their online students collectively (36%).

To support student learning, online skills practice using an approved website was provided by a majority of the special education teachers (59%), who were also less likely to assign readings (46%) or paper/pencil tasks (33%) for the students to complete on their own. To allow opportunities for their students to show what they had learned and could do, 11% of special education teachers asked their students to video record themselves performing the task or skill while 25% assigned writing of essays, papers, and other written projects. In 29% of the cases, students were required to deliver their work products to the school for teacher evaluation. On average, special education teachers reported consistently providing at least four of the online components mentioned here for students.



Student difficulties

Despite all of their efforts to scaffold online learning in the ways they knew how, 47% of general education teachers and 53% of special education teachers reported that at least half of the students they served still struggled with the content specifically because it was offered online, rather than taught face-to-face. High school teachers were most likely to observe this, with 54% of high school teachers saying half or more of their class was struggling with online learning, while 43% of middle grades teachers and 42% of primary grades teachers said the same.

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FULL REPORT

- Javorsky, K., Alley, K.M., Miller, N.C., Fondren, K.B., Lemley, S.M., & Hopper, P.F. (2022, June). Mississippi’s K-12 public education response to the COVID-19 pandemic: From remote learning to recovery and beyond. Emergency online teaching - What works for Mississippi. <https://guides.library.msstate.edu/c.php?g=1156773&p=8479156>

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