

## Considerations for Selecting Online Instructional Options for Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities are particularly vulnerable during this time of extended school closure. In order to determine the most appropriate learning platform, consider if your district already has an online learning platform or programs that was used at school for instruction and is accessible to all students. If they do, maximize learning through the programs' students are already familiar with to avoid the lost time it would take for them to learn a new platform.

However, this may not be the case for your district, or the current online platforms may not cover all areas of instruction needed now that all instruction is remote. In this case, here are steps to considering which online programs could provide the most value add for your district.

It is important to note that to engage students who are not in the room during a lesson, teachers should do their best to incorporate a mix of instructional strategies and not rely on one online platform. Consider robust discussions and collaborative work via chats and virtual meetings, video and audio clips, and hands-on exercises completed either together or individually.

### Is the online program design backed by research?

- When determining research-based, consider the following factors from the [Texas Resource Review \(TRR\)](#).
  - Does the description of the program include cited research that supports the design of teacher and student resources (e.g., instructional guidance, decodable text)?
  - Does the information about the program provide research-based guidance for instruction that enriches educator understanding of foundational concepts in the content area and the validity of the recommended approach?
  - Does the information about the program cite research that is current, academic, relevant to foundational content-area skills development?
  - Does the program include Texas-specific content, contexts, and demographics?
- For example, if providing reading intervention, is the program structured, sequential, and multisensory, including instruction in decoding, comprehension and fluency (as outlined in Texas Dyslexia Handbook)?
- Since it may be difficult for an online program to address all necessary components for a particular skill, consider using several online programs that incorporate research-based design.
- Does the online program have any certifications, or has it been endorsed by any other accredited organizations?
  - National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
  - International Literacy Association (ILA)
  - National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
  - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

- National Science Teaching Association (NSTA)
- National Council for the Social Studies
- Visit the [Iris Center's Evidence-Based Practice Summaries](#) which covers instructional strategies and interventions and offers information that includes level of effectiveness as well as the age groups for which a given strategy or intervention is designed. Links to the original reports are also provided for those who might wish to explore further.

## If this program will be new for your students and they will have to log in remotely, does it have a simple interface that can be easily navigated?

- Are you able to log in and try out the interface with a test student account? Remember, you will have to provide technical assistance in the form of a tutorial, office hours, etc. to ensure students know how to navigate the program.
- Does the program work on all devices (e.g., desktop, laptop, tablet, phone, Mac, PC)? If not, what devices does it work on? Are there any students who do not have access to the device(s) that the program works on? If so, what alternate activity will be provided?
- Can students work independently with interface, or do they need support?
- If applicable, is the program compatible with students' assistive technology (e.g., automatic captioning; works with screen readers; provides spelling assistance, text-to-speech, and/or speech-to-text)?
- Does the program offer support directly to families, students, and teachers in a variety of formats, including webinars, chat/email, by phone, etc. Will each of the stakeholders using this program have multiples ways to learn how to use it and get support when they struggle?

## Does the program utilize tenets of direct instruction that are needed for students with disabilities?

- Does the program allow for direct teaching of new concepts and multiple opportunities to practice new skills?
- Does the program provide immediate error correction when wrong and an opportunity to practice correctly? Consider HOW the program provides feedback and whether this is appropriate for the student and the teacher. A higher quality program meets the needs of both the student and the teacher.
  - Some programs simply indicate the answer is wrong (i.e., X), and the student can try again without any support or reteach.
  - Some programs present the student with easier problems and scaffold up based on the questions he or she answers correctly.
  - Some programs will play a video that explains the concept behind the misunderstanding prior to presenting the student with a new question.

- Does the program include a diagnostic assessment to place students with the appropriate content/skill level, or does it provide guidance to teachers on determining the most appropriate starting point for each student?
- Does the program utilize adaptive software so that students are engaging with material at their independent learning level? Does the program allow the teacher to assign activities based on the student's skill level?
- Is the program design age-appropriate and engaging for students, especially those who may be working independently at home during this time?
- What accessibility features does the program have, and do they meet the needs of students who will be using the program?

### Can the teacher (and the student) easily track student progress?

- Can the teacher track the amount of time the student worked and the skills mastered? Does the program differentiate between time the student was actively participating versus when the program was simply on without student interaction?
- Can the teacher view the actual questions and responses that students gave so he or she can provide reteach on skills the student may be struggling with?
- What type of information is provided to the student about his or her progress and mastery? Are students able to track their own progress?
- Is it easy to communicate or share this information with the parents?

**This form can be used to track quality indicators for programs you may be considering using to support remote instruction. The more boxes checked, the higher quality of the program.**

Considerations		Questions to ask
<b>Researched-Based</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the description of the program include cited research that supports the design of teacher and student resources?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the information about the program provide research-based guidance for instruction that enriches educator understanding of foundational concepts in the content area and the validity of the recommended approach?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the information about the program cite research that is current, academic, relevant to foundational content-area skills development?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the program include Texas-specific content, contexts, and demographics?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the online program have any certifications, or has it been endorsed by any other accredited organizations?
<b>Interface/Usability</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the program allow for direct teaching of new concepts and multiple opportunities to practice new skills?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the program provide immediate error correction when wrong, reteach of skill, and an opportunity to practice correctly?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the program include a diagnostic assessment to place students with the appropriate content/skill level, or does it provide guidance to teachers on determining the most appropriate starting point for each student?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the program design age-appropriate and engaging for students?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do the accessibility features meet the needs of students who will be using the program?
<b>Direct Instruction</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are you able to log in and try out the interface with a test student account?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the program work on all devices students may be using?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can students work independently with interface?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	If applicable, is the program compatible with students' assistive?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the program offer tech support directly to families, students, and teachers in a variety of ways?
<b>Progress Monitoring</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can the teacher track the amount of time the student worked and the skills mastered?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Can the teacher view the actual questions and responses that students gave so he or she can provide reteach on skills the student may be struggling with?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are students able to track their own progress?
	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it easy to communicate or share this information with the parents?