

Key Tips for Sexuality Education and Erin's Law Instruction During Distance Learning



During this unprecedented time of physical distancing and school closures due to Coronavirus (COVID-19), sexuality and health education are increasingly important. Sexuality Education may be a challenging topic in the distance learning landscape. These recommendations are suggested practices to facilitate instruction in a distance Learning context, ensuring care, connection, and continuity of learning for students. As Division 22 guidance changes to accommodate the 2020 school closures, the tips below will help districts who are able to continue sexuality education.

- 1. Connect and check-in regularly with students.** Building and maintaining trust and connection with students relies on the ability for them to be seen/heard/understood and feel belonging. Checking in on mental, emotional, and physical safety and wellbeing should be the number one priority for sexuality educators, while students and families are experiencing increased stress and isolation during this time. Use a verbal go-around or the chat feature in video-based lessons. Make 1:1 phone calls, video check-ins, or send a handwritten note to support students who participate in asynchronous online or offline lesson formats. Offer [resources for LGBTQ+ students](#) to maintain connection and wellbeing, especially if they are in unsafe or unsupportive home environments.
- 2. Less is more. Make it relevant.** During this difficult time, school districts and teachers should prioritize what is most essential. Every family will have different capacity for caregiver involvement, access to technology, and student ability to direct learning. Based on community capacity, school districts and teachers should choose a limited number of projects, topics, or activities to share with students, that are especially related to their lives at this moment. For example, LGBTQ+ students or families can organize a virtual GSA group; students with different abilities can practice online communication skills with friends, family members, or romantic partners; groups of students can create advocacy campaigns on social media promoting consent, anti-bullying, or cultural inclusiveness in the time of COVID; etc.
- 3. Maintain brave spaces with group agreements.** Setting expectations about how students should interact is important in order to establish respect and trust with one another, in a completely new environment for everyone. For synchronous online courses, this can be done by posting/sharing the group agreements in the chat window or a Google doc, at the start of every class. Ask students what they need to feel brave in an online format and add these suggestions to existing group agreements. Teachers must be prepared to address oppression and bias when it happens, each time it happens.
- 4. Create a distance-based anonymous question box.** Physical isolation requires a bit of creativity for collecting questions for an anonymous question box. Using a Google form, hand-written questions mailed-in, or using the individual chat feature during a video call are some ways to proceed. This tool is vital for normalizing the wide range of experiences students have growing up. It is also an opportunity to connect students with health and safety resources they may need.

For more information on sexuality education or Erin's Law, please reach out to:

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- 5. Prioritize engaging, age-appropriate activities.** Adapt instructional materials to prioritize activities that keep students engaged, especially [online](#). Elementary students will need more parental support, so resources that are directed toward parents will be more helpful. Middle and high school students may have more capacity for self-directed learning, but may also be more likely to search the internet for sex ed topics on their own from sources that are not medically accurate or age-appropriate. Every resource and lesson that is shared should be carefully considered and reviewed by educators and school districts before sharing with families and students.