



Effective Practices in Planning for Distance Literacy Learning

During your time with your CLI coach, you deepened your knowledge and implementation of effective practices associated with Classroom Culture and Literacy Environment, and instructional practices like Read Alouds, Guided Reading, Reading or Writing Workshop, etc. The DELTA was your guide to these effective practices. You used the DELTA as a way to plan for quality instruction, and to set goals for your professional learning and growth.

As your coach now supports you in distance learning with your children, many of the effective practices on the DELTA still apply in this new environment. While many of those descriptors are based in what we know is best for children and as such are easily transferable, we also need to think about how we can utilize and adjust effective practices for planning and teaching for distance learning.

Classroom Culture

We know that culture and community are critical to the success of learning in a distance environment, especially when engaging in synchronous distance learning. If you are doing any kind of video interaction (live or recorded) greet your children by name if you have the opportunity. Build in some time for sharing and announcements, possibly a check-in with children if you are live, using emoji's to get a quick assessment of the emotional state of your children. You could even re-visit the class norms you developed with your children through the Power of 3, discussing how they can still apply to this space, and how some new responsibilities will emerge as we recognize and learn ways to "be" online with each other. Any routine that was established in your classroom and can be adjusted for the distance learning space, such as class meetings, will provide a degree of normalcy for children and ease their own anxieties and fears. If you are doing live lessons, you can still end with some kind of share or closing circle. In addition, think about how to build in some time for children to be silly, or just connect with their friends. Chances are, this is the only opportunity they are getting to see their friends each day.

The following DELTA descriptors related to classroom culture are still a useful guide to us as we navigate this new learning. The column on the right has tips and strategies for adjusting the descriptor (when needed) for a distance learning environment.

Takes time to learn about and understand children's families, home cultures, and communities. Uses this knowledge to adapt curriculum, instruction, materials, and language

In synchronous learning, this can be as straightforward as taking time to ask children how they and their families are doing. In asynchronous learning, this can take the form of a submitted survey or a quick interaction before a lesson, such as a one-word survey.

Uses language that recognizes effort, celebrates progress, and encourages cooperation



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Communicates in a way that makes children feel a sense of belonging, community, and ownership for the classroom

When you meet live with children, make sure you discuss with them how your power of 3 culture translates to the new online environment. What are some digital ways that we can take care of ourselves, take care of each other, and take care of our learning space? In pre-recorded lessons, this could look like suggestions you make to the viewer before they access the content, e.g., "Do you have everything you need for this lesson?" "Are you in a comfortable place to listen to this read aloud?"

Shows respect, warmth, appreciation, and consideration for all children

For all types of distance learning, consider ADA access for children who might have varying access to different tech tools such as headphones, speakers, large screen tablets, etc. Think about adding transcription to lessons so children can read along, or taking pictures of book features you want to point out so that children can see them as large as possible.

Teaches children to feel responsible for their own learning and behavior in and out of the classroom

Regularly reflects on the procedures of the classroom and makes adjustments to meet children's needs

Consider sending short, easily accessed surveys to children. This could be as simple as engaging in verbal reflection during live lessons, or asking children to click on a thumbs up or thumbs down after watching a video.

Promotes and supports healthy relationships among children

For synchronous learning, consider giving children time to talk with one another during the lesson or (if possible) to go into breakout rooms for turn and talk. Within asynchronous learning, this might take the form of having children schedule time to do lessons together or collaborate on an assignment on their own time.

Teaches children how to start conversations, discuss ideas, ask for help, disagree politely, and encourage each other

Most applicable to synchronous distance learning, this can also apply to asynchronous methods, such as discussion boards, by teaching children norms around how they share and interact within those virtual environments.



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The Literacy Environment

The physical environment that we created in our classrooms went a long way in helping our children feel comfortable and supported. Now your children and their families will need support in creating environments in their own homes to support their children's learning. Help families to carve out a place in their homes for children's learning to happen. The following DELTA descriptors are things you can cover with families to help them create something as close to their child's familiar learning environment as possible. The column on the right has tips and strategies for adjusting the descriptor (when needed) for a distance learning environment.

Space is child-centered, tidy, and appealing

Whether you are teaching live or pre-recording a lesson, make sure that the space you are in is tidy, appealing, and not distracting to the learner.

Materials to support instruction are organized, labeled, grouped by content area, and accessible to children

Always test your technology before a lesson. If you are going to be sharing your screen or reading a book aloud, make sure you have all of your materials on hand or pre-loaded and that you have practiced transitioning between them.

Children participate in the organization, management, and upkeep of the literacy environment

Encourage children to support their family in creating a home learning environment, and in adjusting the environment as they learn what works. Children should have a say in where they will best learn in the home, and can be responsible for keeping these spaces clean and organized.

Establishes a daily or weekly schedule that incorporates key components of literacy learning

Provides ample time and varied opportunities to read and write

Whole Group Reading and Writing Instruction

The following descriptors from the Read Aloud, Reading Workshop, and Writing Workshop DELTAs apply nicely to literacy instruction in the distance learning environment. Consider how your plans incorporate these effective practices. One general distance learning tip for reading and writing instruction is to consider the use of visuals to keep children engaged. A main rule of thumb is to take pictures of any charts, book pages, etc. that you want to show children and then share these pictures on your screen so children can see them clearly. The column on the right has tips and strategies for adjusting the descriptor (when needed) for a distance learning environment.

Identifies a primary literacy objective based on children's needs, standards, and curriculum scope and sequence

Builds and/or activates background knowledge

States a teaching point and explains how it will help the children as readers and writers

Sets a purpose for listening and responding

Calls attention to the parts of the book if appropriate

Thinks aloud to demonstrate the primary literacy objective and other reading strategies

Models reading with expression and fluency

Reviews primary literacy objective

Maintains a lively flow and pace

Builds and checks understanding through book discussions with children

When pre-recording lessons, consider leaving your objective up on screen for children to reference or having it easily accessible for them to review.

Plan to create visuals that highlight the parts of the book that you want your children to focus on.

For prerecorded lessons, make sure you give children time to view the illustrations and absorb each page. Consider silently counting to three before turning the page or before moving on to the next slide.



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Provides language scaffolds so all children can participate in the lesson (visuals, gestures, realia, sentence frames, providing context/background knowledge, pre-teaching key vocabulary)

Creates or adds to charts and graphic organizers when appropriate

Creates a joyful climate around learning to read/write

States the lesson in child-friendly language and explains how it will help them as readers/writers

Shows children the skill, strategy, or behavior by modeling or demonstrating

Engages children in practicing and/or applying the teaching point

Offers children a clear explanation about when and how they might apply the teaching point

Conducts a mini-lesson in less than 15 minutes

Under 10 minutes for distance learning!

Creates opportunities for children to respond to their texts through conversation and writing (*Reading Workshop specific*)

Celebrates the work children are doing as readers and writers

Creates structures for children to work collaboratively with peers to give and get feedback on their work (*Writing Workshop specific*)

Consider establishing a remote buddy system so that children can set up times to present their writing to each other and get feedback

Facilitates share sessions that solidify children's learning



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Independent Work Time

Independent work is practice, not new learning. After we “teach” children through videos or live lessons, we are likely providing them with independent practice. We are setting children up for success by giving them tasks to apply what they have just been taught. As much as possible, the directions for these tasks need to be simple. Make sure that children have access to these directions so they can reference them on their own after the lesson is done. If you can, provide children with choice -- both in the activities themselves, and in the sequence and pace in which children do them. We know that when children have the opportunity to set their own pace for learning and choose what they are interested in, they will likely do better. The following DELTA descriptors for IWT still apply to the planning of independent work that children will do at home.

Creates tasks that give children opportunities to practice and reinforce what has already been taught

Plans language supports so all children can understand lesson expectations and participate (visuals, gestures, realia, sentence frames, providing context/background knowledge, pre-teaching key vocabulary)

Differentiates tasks based on children’s reading and writing levels, language skills, and interests

Promotes choice, independence, and self-management in learning

Establishes a system for tracking, collecting, and assessing independent work as necessary

Takes time to review children’s work to assess children’s successes and needs and makes adjustments as necessary

Varies tasks over time to meet children’s needs and maintain their interest