**Summary of notes for distance learning**:

First and foremost, you are all to be lauded for your herculean efforts to ensure that students who were dismissed from school on that Friday in March, started on a “distance learning” platform immediately on Monday. That is no small feat! On top of that, this was not planned as a distance learning program. Rather, when faced with a pandemic, an emergency situation arose that called for immediate action. In truth, this is more accurately labeled *Emergency Remote Learning*, a term coined by A.J. Juliani, a well-known author and leader in instructional technologies, Director of Learning and Innovation for Centennial School District. In various forms, you have all embarked on this journey. The goal remains the same: to ensure that students continue their education, instruction continues, and students stay connected as much as possible to the community of their class and of your school. However, the methodology changes.

You have all engaged in a distance learning format with little preparation that required immediate transition from tradition teaching and learning to remote teaching and learning. “In a matter of days, teachers and school leaders have had to take curriculum, resources, assessments, and lessons that were designed for an in-person (or at least blended) experience (and without any sustained training), turned it into a remote learning experience. This is hard work, but it is the only option (Juliani, 2020).

The curriculum you are teaching was designed to be taught in a classroom setting. Our standards-based curriculum was not written for a distance learning platform. That, however, doesn’t mean it can’t be effective; it means we have to adapt it and recognize that teaching these lessons will take longer and so adjustments will need to be made along the way.

“Yes, what we are doing right now has components of online learning. It definitely is from a distance.

It is drawing upon the use of virtual learning tools and resources. But, it is not the same as online learning as we know it” (Juliani, 2020). Lessons taught remotely take longer to plan and longer to deliver to students. In part, this is because it is much more difficult to check for understanding and make teaching adjustments in a synchronous or asynchronous learning environment. However, you and your school community have demonstrated that you are all up for this task and the results will yield not only great accomplishments and achievement for our students, but also an invaluable opportunity to stretch ourselves beyond our imaginings and grow professionally in ways that will even better serve our students and Catholic education in the future.

**The following tips may make this adjustment smoother for the teachers and for the students:**

* **Rule of thumb for instructional time**:
  + Pre-school 1.5 hours/day
  + K-4 3-3.5 hours/day
  + 5-12 4 hours/day
* **Establish routines:**
  + A sense of order to the students’ day.
* **Provide support:**
  + Be flexible, and allow for more leniency in terms of deadlines.
  + A minimum of 24 hours should be allotted for every assignment.
  + Do not assign something at the beginning of the day and expect it to be turned in for every subject at the end of the same day.
* **Stagger the schedule:**
  + Schedule up to 4 classes a day so students are not overwhelmed with too many subjects in one day.
  + Remember, when in a bell-to-bell-schedule or self-contained class, the teacher is structuring their day. They must do this on their own from home.
  + Students who struggle with executive functioning difficulties (*and most student do!)* will have an even more difficult time with organizing their day and their work.
  + They cannot be penalized for this.
* **Allow for fewer concepts or essential understandings, taught in greater depth**:
  + More is not better – it is just more!
* **Slow the pace:**
  + Remember that without help from teachers having the ability to questions students and offer immediate feedback, students are limited to learning information temporarily.
* **Summative assessments:**
  + Design assessments with fewer problems that can be completed during their session with you online.
  + Think about creating two forms of your assessment so some students get one and others get the second. This will eliminate ability for students to consult with one another during an assessment.
  + The more frequently students can apply a concept in more than one discipline, the more this information goes from short-term memory to long-term memory and results in retained knowledge.
* ***Grading:***
  + *During this time, grades should serve to build up a final grade, not penalize it.*
  + Students’ performance may be affected by limited access to technology, family life, and/or support from adults at home, etc.
  + Grades may never be a judgement of character or external variables.
  + P/F is not an option for core subjects
* **Vary assessments:**
  + Many students will have different access to teachers through technology so vary types of intensity and interactions with students.
  + As often as possible, give them projects to work on where they can read, write, and create!
* **Plan for collaborative projects:**
  + The best way to deter cheating when working from home is to promote collaboration.
  + Collaborative group work provides a richer assessment as well as an opportunity for students to continue to interact with one another and connect not only content but with one another, which is even more important at this time.
* **Do not plan for final exams:**
  + A final exam will not serve its intended purpose at this time. Rather, starting this final term, adopt ***cumulative summative assessments***.
  + With every assessment given, include skills from previous assessments. Not only will mastery of those skills increase, but, at the end of the term, you have a more accurate reflection of what a student knows, has mastered, and what they are able to do.
* **Do not change how you previously weighted grades**:
  + Changing the weights will skew the integrity of grades from previous terms.
  + However, teachers can re-categorize assignments.
  + For example:
    - A homework assignment can be entered as a participation grade.
    - A response to a question can be included as a homework grade. Etc.
* ***Unit Planning is more effective than daily lesson plans***:
  + Think in terms of Understanding By Design. Think in terms of essential understandings and broader objectives. Plan for a unit and assess those objectives.
  + Instruction may not be limited solely to reinforcement and review of the year thus far.
  + The curriculum must still be taught and students must acquire new skills to reach the standards.
* **Connecting:**
  + We are all hard-wired to connect!
  + Social distancing is going to put a strain on students and adults over the long term.
    - Put into practice opportunities for teachers to interact with students at least once a week, if not once a day, through live meets such as Google Chat, Zoom, Screencastify, etc.
    - It’s not a physical connection, but never underestimate the power of being seen and heard!
* **Attendance:**
  + Is documented according to participation on eligible instruction.
  + For attendance purposes, all \*K-8 students are considered present unless called in absent from apparent/guardian (they may not self-report! ☺).
  + If a student falls off the grid, a teacher must first try to make contact (Google Voice allow a teacher to do this without using their own phone.).
  + If the student is still not engaging in instruction, then administration should make a phone call home to ensure wellness, access to technology, and to impress upon them the importance of communicating each day for accountability purposes.
  + If there are too many missed assignments, an “I” (Incomplete) can be assigned at the end of the term until assignments are handed in or a student demonstrates knowledge of the missed objectives that were taught. This time calls for leniency and flexibility!
  + \*PreK – attendance is not mandatory by state law at this level. Principals should make local decisions based on a family’s individual circumstances
* **Catholic Social Teachings**:
  + This is an incredible opportunity to weave our faith and the principles of CST in our lessons.
  + The more students can focus on helping others and creatively problem solve, the less they see themselves as victims and the more they will think about how they can reach out to help others.