

DIGITAL LEARNING

— *Beyond the Pandemic* —

Recommendations for Mississippi Educators

From the onset of COVID-19 through the present day, Mississippi's educators have confronted evolving challenges to the public education system. The efforts of state leaders as well as local educators, administrators, students, and families to meet these challenges are not only inspirational, but they offer important lessons for the future of digital learning and academic acceleration post-pandemic. The University of Mississippi conducted a research project to explore these efforts and develop recommendations to inform future education delivery policies, programs, and supports for students, families, and educators.

The major **themes** from the research are shown below:



Imperative to **Focus on Students Most Impacted**



Critical Role of **High-Quality Curriculum and Training**



Need and Potential for **Cross-Sector Collaboration**



Identification of **Ongoing Funding to Support Education, Technology, Connectivity, and Innovations**



Importance of **Effective Communication and Dissemination**



Support for continued and coordinated **Data Collection and Research**

High-level recommendations for educators drawing from these themes are as follows:

Promote High-Quality Digital Learning

Support equitable digital learning programming and access, with consideration of conditions for success including:

- Dedicated staffing to support digital learning.
- A plan for students with special needs or accommodations in virtual environments.
- Clear expectations for attendance, the balance between synchronous and asynchronous instruction, grading, and student and teacher schedules (e.g., how much time a day are they online, how much time is dedicated to homework, extracurricular activities, professional development, teacher interventions).
- High-quality curriculum and training that includes a focus on social and emotional learning.
- Clarity on how often and the means by which teachers and families have regular check-ins and how parents can reach teachers individually, as well as any necessary training for families to support virtual instruction.

Drive Learning Acceleration

Focus on meeting students' individual academic needs by engaging in and sharing information about vetted state and local supports such as:

- Free online tutoring.
- Mississippi Department of Education coaching initiatives, such as Digital Learning Coaches, to provide additional supports to teachers, students, and families in the areas of greatest need for learning acceleration.

Request training in the digital learning best practices included in the MDE Digital Learning Instructional Guide.

Continue to Support Technology Infrastructure & Training

Expand upon successes and further the reach of effective education technology efforts through continued training on the use of technology accessibility tools, including professional learning opportunities, virtual home-school conferences, and other family supports to expand access.

Mississippi educators can continue to pave the way to a successful future for all students by building on COVID-era innovations in digital learning. For more details on these suggested actions and the research behind them, please visit **msdigitallearning.olemiss.edu** to view the full project report and recommendations.