# Supporting Student Engagement in Remote and Hybrid Learning Environments

Most schools moved to fully or partially remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic, and educators have had to consider how to **promote** and **maintain student engagement** in this new environment. In partnership with the New Jersey Department of Education, REL Mid-Atlantic identified **six factors** to support engagement in remote learning.[1] Some of these factors relate to others, and each plays a role in supporting how students engage in learning.

Six critical factors to support student engagement in remote settings
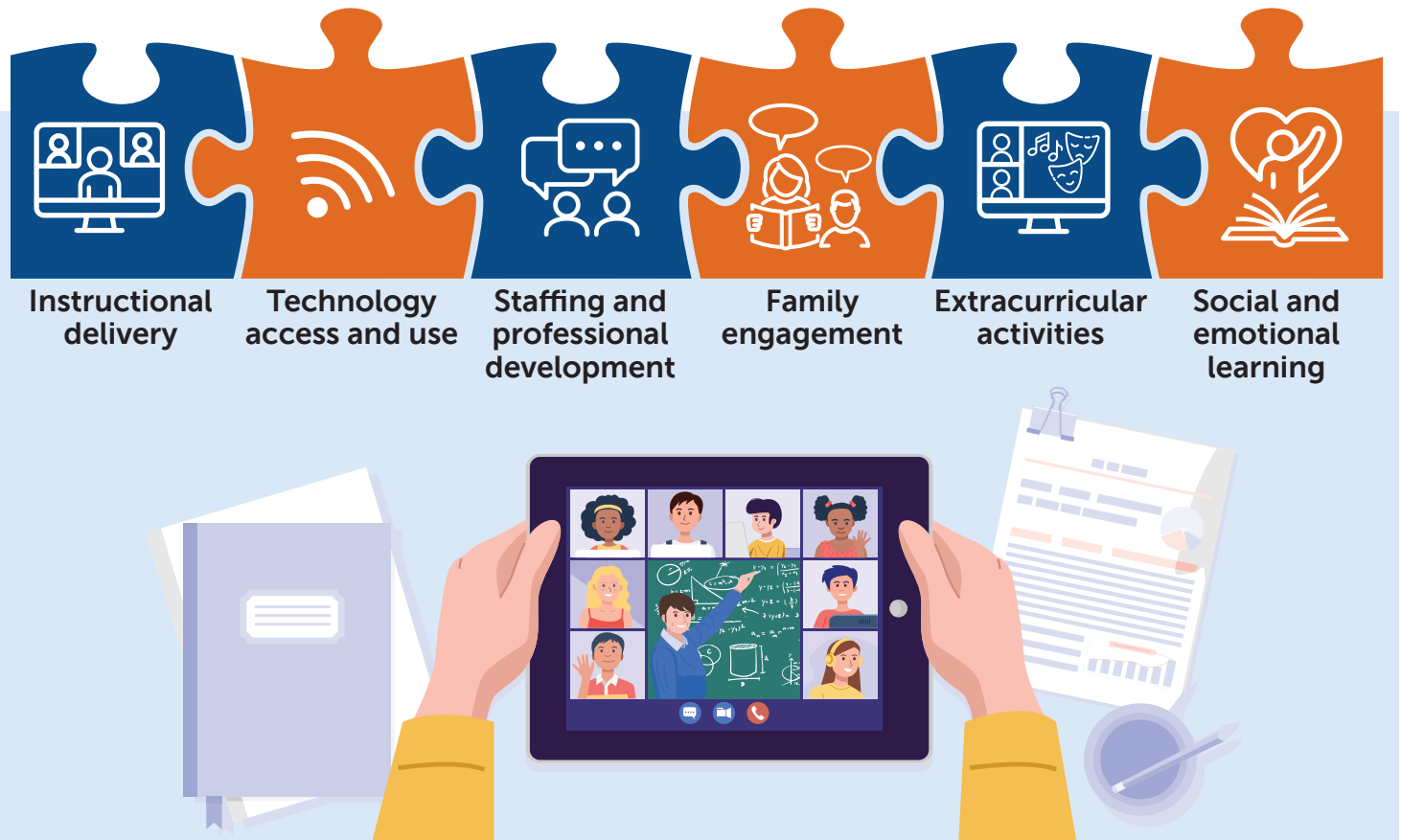
Instructional delivery	Technology access and use	Staffing and professional development	Family engagement	Extracurricular activities	Social and emotional learning

Educators should focus on each factor to heighten overall engagement.

We reviewed research, interviewed a small number of district and state leaders, and examined other education-focused publications to identify **promising strategies to support each factor**. There is little rigorous evidence on how to engage remote students, so the promising strategies are mostly practices that educators *perceived* to be effective. District and school staff can consider these strategies as they continue their efforts to help students engage.

What strategies hold promise for strengthening these factors?

Promising strategy	Activities to consider
Instructional delivery	
Focus on learning activities that require students' involvement.	Use breakout sessions during remote synchronous lessons; partner remote students with in-person students to support connection and collaboration.
Limit teacher-led virtual lessons to less than 10 minutes.	A 60-minute lesson could use 10 minutes of direct instruction, 10 minutes of class discussion, 30 minutes of breakout sessions, and 10 minutes of independent learning.
Develop clear interactions between synchronous and asynchronous activities.	Start each synchronous period by reviewing recent asynchronous activities, such as highlighting exceptional work or correcting common mistakes.
Technology access and use	
Make technology a particular employee's primary responsibility.	Create a position whose role is to ensure students and families can access and use online tools.
Support students, families, and teachers in using technology.	Record and share videos of tech features to address common issues; spend professional development time getting teachers comfortable with tech.
Staffing and professional development	
Identify professional development needs and offer opportunities to address them.	Learn teachers' needs through short surveys or focus groups and creatively meet those needs, such as virtual "PD in your PJs" or drive-in style sessions.
Support teachers by emphasizing their leadership and investing in their success.	Implement teacher-led committees by grade level or subject to give teachers leadership opportunities; invest in ideas that come out of these committees.
Family engagement	
Use multiple touchpoints consistently to inform and connect with students' families.	Email families weekly with announcements and tips to support their students; convene focus groups or town halls; assign staff to call families to ensure access to communications.
Support families by building connections with community resources.	Establish partnerships with organizations in the community to connect families to resources.
Extracurricular activities	
Use existing resources to support participation in non-classroom activities.	Use technology platforms to support extracurricular activities, such as offering virtual field trips.
Allow for student-led and staff-led innovation to foster extracurricular offerings.	Solicit ideas from students and staff and support them with resources to bring the ideas to fruition, such as having students plan virtual proms or plays.
Social and emotional learning	
Include supports for students' social and emotional needs.	Hold virtual meetings and prompt students to discuss their social and emotional needs or have students submit audio or video journal entries.
Create safe spaces for students to share their perspectives.	Assign staff a small number of students to check in on individually and meet with collectively.

[1] For more information: Hurwitz, F., Kelly, K., Pasculli, D., Breland, T., & Marinelli, T. (2021). Mathematica. Supporting student engagement in remote instruction: Lessons from New Jersey [Webinar]. https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/midatlantic/app/Events#EventId:3286,EventType:archived