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**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**  
**Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services**  
**IMPLEMENTATION BEST PRACTICES & CONSIDERATIONS**  
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## **TIPs to Support Behavior and Social Emotional Transition**

### ***Strategies for Teachers and School Staff as They Support Caregivers and Students with Ongoing Transitions Between Learning Environments***

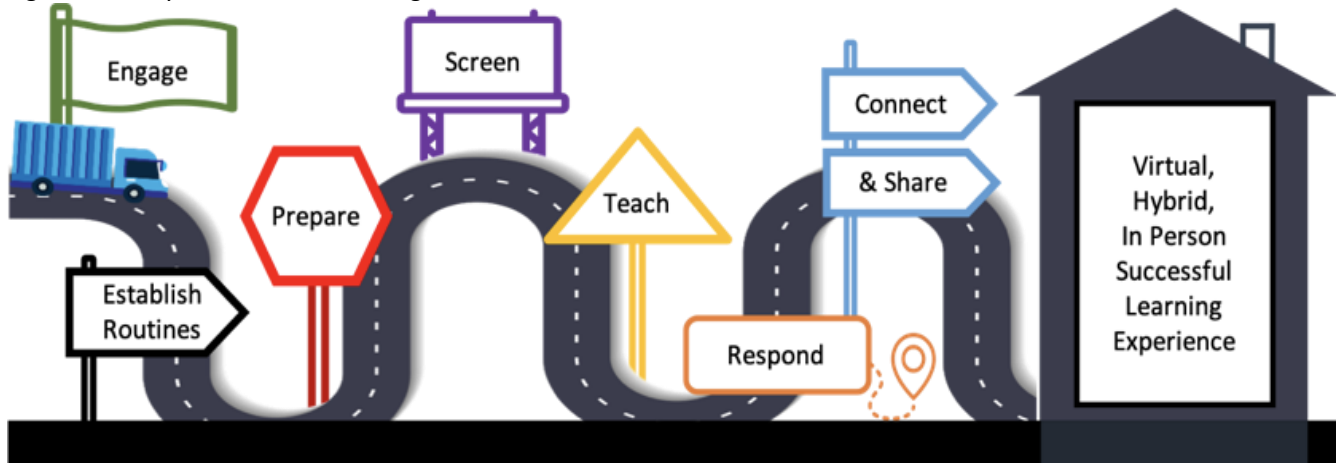
With a goal of supporting students, families, teachers, and school-based staff, this document serves to provide transition tips as schools either continue virtual learning and/or implement plans to transition back to in-person learning. Equity and access are critical to successful transitions for everyone, but especially for those students and families who require targeted supports for success.

It is important to reconsider our expectations and rethink the manner in which we help students to access resources within an Integrated Tiered System of Supports (ITSS). Of particular attention are those students who are at risk for academic, social, emotional, and /or behavioral difficulties, as well as students with disabilities or with other identified needs. Within the ITSS framework, we must identify needs as quickly as possible and individualize supports to ensure success through an equitable and fair framework.

This document provides strategies for teachers and school staff as they support caregivers and students with ongoing transitions between learning environments and as we work to navigate the needs of students while keeping families and staff healthy. Strategies for teacher and staff well-being and support are also included, as it is critical to address the needs of our educators and school-based staff. These practice strategies can be implemented in all settings, including virtual, hybrid, and in person learning models, however some may look different based on the environment.

Figure 1 (below) provides a visual representation of these strategies.

Figure 1. A Way to Successful Learning



STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS AND PARENTS	
TIPS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS	TIPS TO SUPPORT PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
<b>Engage</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge each student; offer daily positive greetings; use kind language; smile with your eyes</li> <li>• Show interest in building strong, caring <a href="#">relationships</a> and be intentional about it; build <a href="#">belonging</a>; show that students matter to you</li> <li>• Build norms that are consistently implemented</li> <li>• Acknowledge efforts, not only success</li> <li>• <a href="#">Check-in</a> each day and throughout the day with prompts focused on the positive</li> <li>• Integrate <a href="#">brain breaks</a> and movement into schedules</li> <li>• Reinforce skills throughout each day; build upon likes and strengths</li> <li>• Offer <a href="#">voice and choice</a> in the classroom, whenever possible; share power: treat students with respect and give them a say</li> <li>• Engage students in <a href="#">social stories</a> to self-identify needs and seek support</li> <li>• Structure/promote engagement of students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus engagement or re-engagement through social workers, counselors, pupil personnel workers, etc.</li> <li>• Use SECAC, PTA, parent resource centers, etc., to connect with parents and guide engagement</li> <li>• Explain to parents how students are learning, how they can support them, how to use the virtual platform, how to support student engagement</li> <li>• Offer services, meetings, and information in multiple languages</li> <li>• Offer educational, self-help, and support opportunities for families</li> <li>• Provide training related to behavior challenges at home and navigating virtual learning through developing schedules/everyday routines</li> <li>• Educate and encourage parents on how to <a href="#">reinforce positive behaviors at home</a></li> <li>• Designate staff to reach out and offer behavior coaching to parents</li> <li>• Offer ongoing emails, calls, text messages (parent choice) and ongoing updates on behavior and academic achievement (report</li> </ul>

<p>with peers; remind them to use kind language and smile</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind students to be patient and kind with themselves; promote <a href="#">self-calming strategies</a> (<a href="#">Virtual calm down activities</a>)</li> <li>• Enlist paraprofessionals to support students virtually (provide technology to support staff)</li> <li>• Provide videos and lessons on basic <a href="#">social skills</a></li> <li>• Support students to feel positive about the future and the return to school</li> <li>• Talk to students about behavior and academic achievement (focus on positive efforts, small changes, and successes)</li> <li>• Acknowledge students when they show thoughtfulness and respect for peers, adults, and the school</li> <li>• Make phone calls; paraprofessionals can check in with students (see how they are doing, if they need anything, or just to talk)</li> <li>• Ensure ongoing contact with students and their families; consider home visits (drive-way, drive-by)</li> </ul>	<p>on the positive attempts, small changes, as well as any successes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share information on community and school-based resources</li> <li>• Enlist paraprofessionals to facilitate tactile communication with families (e.g. putting together holiday cards to send out, adding a positive and personal note for each family)</li> <li>• Encourage children living together to learn together; older siblings may be able to explain difficult subjects to younger children</li> <li>• Keep families informed (assignments, discussion, materials) so they can support the student</li> <li>• Make phone calls; paraprofessionals can check in with families (how they are doing, if they need anything, or just to talk)</li> <li>• Consider home visits (drive-way, drive-by)</li> </ul>
<b>TIPS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS</b>	<b>TIPS TO SUPPORT PARENTS/CAREGIVERS</b>
<b>Establish Routines</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintain <a href="#">routines</a> and plans, but be flexible when needed</li> <li>• Start each day with a review of the daily schedule</li> <li>• Review assignments and expectations each day</li> <li>• Set classroom <a href="#">norms</a> and <a href="#">anti-bias practices</a></li> <li>• Discuss classroom safety</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide guidance to support parents as they establish <a href="#">routines</a> at home (e.g. setting up a space where students can focus and be comfortable while attending virtual school or doing homework)</li> <li>• Support or give examples to parents on creating schedules that offer <a href="#">structure</a> and allow for chores and play</li> <li>• Understand, from parent perspective, if there is too much screen time or work assigned</li> </ul>

TIPS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS	TIPS TO SUPPORT PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
<b>Screen</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor progress; screen for skill loss and for emerging needs (academic and behavioral) through <a href="#">assessments</a></li> <li>• Consult with academic or behavior specialists, as needed</li> <li>• Modify behavioral coaching by setting</li> <li>• <a href="#">Examine data</a> to guide academic or behavioral programming; paraprofessionals can assist interpreting results from surveys</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate with parents regarding concerns - theirs and yours (academic and behavioral)</li> <li>• Ask parents for feedback on skill acquisition and deficits</li> <li>• Support parents to connect with their <a href="#">IEP</a> Team</li> <li>• Connect parents, as needed, with behavior specialists, counselors, etc.</li> <li>• Support parents to collect data (parent choice)</li> </ul>
TIPS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS	TIPS TO SUPPORT PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
<b>Teach</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize social-emotional skill building and safe coping strategies</li> <li>• Embed activities that require student behavioral and emotional skills and guide students to make those connections</li> <li>• Teach, remind, and prompt students on rules and expectations of learning</li> <li>• Model expectations in a calm, confident and deliberate manner</li> <li>• Consider how to actively <a href="#">engage</a> each student</li> <li>• Encourage children to practice skills and knowledge they already have</li> <li>• Engage in <a href="#">culturally responsive</a> teaching <a href="#">practices</a> and <a href="#">strategies</a></li> <li>• Help students build <a href="#">executive functioning skills</a></li> <li>• Streamline access to resources; make sure information provided to students is concise and essential; help students get organized during virtual learning</li> <li>• Use breakout rooms and assign students specific roles - allowing practice of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize social-emotional skill building; share how to support <a href="#">SEL</a></li> <li>• Ensure parents can help children cope using <a href="#">well-being tips</a></li> <li>• Talk to parents about how they can support learning; help them understand that asking a few questions to their child each day about what they are learning in school engages them in the learning process</li> <li>• Assist parents with talking to children about <a href="#">COVID-19</a>; provide resources</li> <li>• Provide parents with <a href="#">models and narratives</a> on how to solve problems</li> </ul>

<p>communication and collaboration skills (get support from paraprofessionals)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help students imagine and recognize the positive (in the world, successes, skills)</li> <li>• Use real world examples and connect them to SEL skills (Has anyone ever...)</li> <li>• Challenge growth, push student to get better (help them set goals and check in progress made)</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for students to think deeply, to connect with their peers, and to get excited about learning again</li> </ul>	
<p><b>TIPS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS</b></p>	<p><b>TIPS TO SUPPORT PARENTS/CAREGIVERS</b></p>
<p><b>Prepare</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure careful planning for <a href="#">transition</a> to a different setting of instruction</li> <li>• Differentiate supports based on need</li> <li>• Show pictures of the “new” classroom; review safety precautions and expectations, and practice needed skills</li> <li>• Develop and share <a href="#">social stories</a> to support students; engage in role playing of various scenarios</li> <li>• Use puppets to work through behavioral, emotional, and home stressors</li> <li>• Talk about the importance of wearing <a href="#">masks</a>; practice wearing them during virtual learning and/or through home visits on driveways or porches</li> <li>• Use <a href="#">relationship mapping</a> to track interactions with students identifying students who need additional support</li> <li>• Set norms, emphasizing the building of classroom norms together</li> <li>• Establish a <a href="#">collaborative culture</a> of inclusion and respect that welcomes all students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a <a href="#">culture of inclusion and respect</a> that welcomes all parents and students</li> <li>• Ask families what supports they need</li> <li>• Provide resources (agency-based and virtual)</li> <li>• Engage with parent groups to expand reach</li> <li>• Share plans for virtual, hybrid, and in person school through email, phone messages, texts, and mailings</li> <li>• Ask about and address fears and concerns</li> <li>• Help parents develop a <a href="#">daily schedule</a> that includes learning, play, movement, chores, and fun</li> <li>• Encourage students and families to explore new activities during free time</li> <li>• Help parents find ways for children to remain connected with family and friends safely</li> <li>• Make sure families have the supplies and <a href="#">tools</a> needed for learning</li> <li>• Work with parents to determine what strategies, implemented prior to COVID-19, can be implemented with their support</li> <li>• Send notes to parents suggesting ways they can help students stay connected to the</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine which strategies or best practices, implemented prior to COVID-19, can be implemented, even if differently</li> <li>• Ensure systems are in place for early identification of students missing too much school, detecting root causes, and implementing and monitoring effective tiered interventions for reversing patterns</li> <li>• Revisit school discipline policies focused on re-engaging rather than removing</li> </ul>	<p>work/class</p>
<p><b>TIPS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS</b></p>	<p><b>TIPS TO SUPPORT PARENTS/CAREGIVERS</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Respond</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer students, including students who have experienced known <a href="#">trauma</a>, to school-based counselors and outside support services before disciplinary referrals</li> <li>• Create a classroom <a href="#">calming corner</a> (virtual or in-person) for breaks</li> <li>• Respond consistently</li> <li>• Reinforce positive behavior, whenever possible</li> <li>• Reduce student escalation through effective <a href="#">behavior management</a></li> <li>• Share SE information and support available for students (virtual opportunities)</li> <li>• Connect students to family counseling, as appropriate</li> <li>• Ensure schools counselors and social workers meet with students regularly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guide parents to establish a calming space at home with soothing items (e.g. squishy balls, books, bean bags, fidgets, play doh, stuffed toys)</li> <li>• Offer support and <a href="#">resources</a> for parents to address challenging behaviors</li> <li>• Remind parents to take a break and to step away for a few moments when needed</li> <li>• Support parents to be kind and patient with themselves</li> <li>• Remind parents that mistakes happen and that there will be opportunities to try again</li> <li>• Talk to parents about helping students remain physically active at home; physical wellness positively impacts mental wellness</li> <li>• Offer resources to families: school social workers, psychologist, counselors, behavior team</li> </ul>

TIPS TO SUPPORT STUDENTS	TIPS TO SUPPORT PARENTS/CAREGIVERS
<b>Connect/Support</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide virtual staff-run group sessions where students can opt in for conversations</li> <li>• Provide social skills groups and/or behavior development programs for students</li> <li>• Provide mindful, self-help guidance and wellness opportunities for students</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for students to work together through collaboration, discussion, and group projects (e.g. pair students to answer word problems or essays, have a group of students choose a medium like art, writing, or graphics to present a history)</li> <li>• Ensure students have a safe space or time to discuss problems/issues (e.g. pandemic, racism, bullying, stress/trauma, etc.)</li> <li>• Expand possibilities: connect students with people and places that can broaden their world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide <a href="#">mindful</a>, self-help guidance and wellness opportunities for parents</li> <li>• Provide linkages to <a href="#">agencies</a> for <a href="#">MH</a> and behavior support</li> <li>• Reach out to outside/partner agencies for additional family support, in-home support, and groups for students and parents</li> <li>• Provide a "warm" line for parents where staff (social workers, psychologists, etc.) can provide support</li> <li>• Provide opportunities for parents to connect with each other, participate in different virtual activities, come together to discuss different topics, SE activities, workshops and webinars</li> <li>• Facilitate a parent advisory council</li> <li>• Provide parents with "virtual rooms" that offer links for videos, social stories, etc.</li> </ul>

STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT TEACHER/STAFF WELLNESS
TIPS FOR TEACHERS/STAFF
<b>Engage</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share the “plan” with all staff; provide ongoing updates</li> <li>• Facilitate opportunities for school connections (morning meetings, school announcements, etc.)</li> <li>• Connect and check on staff and co-workers regularly; show appreciation and concern for each other’s well-being; pay attention to all - not only those who seem to be struggling</li> <li>• Provide virtual opportunities to connect and have fun (e.g. virtual groups, painting classes, book clubs, baking)</li> <li>• Provide opportunities to share and laugh (staff Facebook page, fun or funny question to answer each day)</li> <li>• Celebrate teachers, schools, and successes with and without students</li> <li>• Acknowledge the emotional impact of providing services</li> </ul>

### **Prepare**

- Plan for the unknown
- Prioritize equity and access for all
- Leverage technology resources; provide devices and training to paraprofessionals, as available, to support student learning
- Enlist paraprofessionals to support making videos (e.g. reading books, making crafts, doing yoga, tec.) to use in your virtual classrooms, to help with lesson planning (aid the teacher by preparing learning games and kits, researching learning topics, and locating resources for future lessons), and to assemble and distribute learning packets for students not attending virtual classes
- Secure protective equipment and plans to ensure health and safety
- Provide clear guidance; communicate updates on program and process changes; share news
- Remember that staff and students may need time adjusting to learning environments and different expectations
- Connect behavior support team and teacher specialists so they can offer support to students, relieving the classroom teacher
- Team up with paraprofessionals to attend the behavior management of students; work on strategies to help students learn expected behaviors within the different educational environments. Paraprofessionals can support developing good relationships, modeling respectful behavior, staying calm and positive, setting the scene for positive behavior, teaching each student what to do, responding to challenging behaviors, creating a win-win situation, interrupting and redirecting, catching students being good, and/or providing structure, routine, and organization.
- Enhance/strengthen/differentiate staff training and coaching

### **Support**

- Offer teachers and other school staff resources to community mental health support
- Provide opportunities to engage in peer support
- Offer teachers and other staff access to necessary supports to enhance teaching and learning (behavior support staff, technology, aides, etc.)
- Offer opportunities for educators to share practices that are working
- Provide mindfulness, self-help, and wellness opportunities for staff (e.g. yoga or meditation)
- Offer coaching and professional development opportunities in classroom management strategies and de-escalation techniques
- Offer teachers and staff training in youth mental health first aid, trauma informed practices, or like trainings



## CONSIDERATIONS for VIRTUAL, HYBRID, or FACE TO FACE LEARNING

- We are often unaware of circumstances impacting our students, particularly now, as they are facing returning to school after a long period of disruption (pandemic); experiences, including trauma, prior to and during quarantine can affect behavior and learning.
- Social isolation and trauma have a varying impact on teachers, staff, students, and families.
- Family relationships and access to emotional, academic, technology support needs differ.
- Home/other learning environments impact progress, ability to participate, focus, etc.
- Access to technology and knowing how to use it is critical.
- Loss of acquired skills need to be considered; previously mastered skills may need to be re-taught.
- Calming moments or time out are important in any learning environment; incorporate safe spaces where students can use pre-taught coping and self-management strategies.
- The “new normal” will impact academics, social, and emotional well-being of students and their readiness to learn.
- A well-designed classroom environment promotes the building and restoring of relationships.
- Routines prevent disruption often associated with inconsistency.
- Ensure developmentally appropriate, culturally and trauma responsive, bias free and student-centered discipline.
- Prioritize building relationships to seek intrinsic motivation with students.
- Consider which rules are necessary in varying environments.
- Active movement & scanning allows us to catch early stage, minor behavior that may escalate.
- Linking praise to classroom expectations is aligned with building and restoring relationships.
- Recognizing when students demonstrate appropriate social skills builds positive and cooperative relationships with their peers.
- Last, but certainly not least, make time for your own self-care!

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