California Department of Education, July 2020

Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan Template (2020–21)

The instructions for completing the Learning Continuity and Attendance Plan is available at
https://www.cde.ca.gov/re/lc/documents/lrngcntntyatndncpln-instructions.docx.

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Name	Contact Name and Title	Email and Phone
Empower Charter School	Executive Director Demi Brown	dbrown@empowercharter.org 858-292-1304

General Information

[A description of the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the LEA and its community.]

The school closures during Spring 2020 caused a sudden shift in the way Empower Charter School ("ECS" or "Empower") delivered instruction and interacted with our stakeholders. Empower's serves a diverse school population with diverse needs, with 68% of students qualifying for Free or Reduced lunch and 44% of students classified as English Learners. The COVID-19 pandemic found our families in a variety of circumstances – some continuing to work as essential workers and some with more time and capacity to facilitate their child's access to lessons. The Empower team was able to quickly pivot to meet these varying needs, while also ensuring equitable access to a high-quality learning experience. Empower was able to provide an internet hotspot and device to every student who needed one in the Spring. The school had strong existing relationships in place, and this proved to be invaluable in ensuring open communication at all levels within our school community.

The Learning Continuity Plan takes into account the ongoing and unique needs of our students and families. These include safety, access to technology, childcare, socio-emotional learning, meals, and other services. We also describe our rigorous academic program and supports. Empower will build upon last April's Distance Learning Plan through targeted professional development, a systemic approach to teaching and learning, and a focus on fostering relationships during live interactions.

Empower's Learning Continuity Plan is based on Empower's four guiding principles as follows:

1. Health and Safety of Staff and Students (grounded in data and science)
2. Equitable High-quality Instruction – our plan is equitable for diverse learners, diverse health needs, and diverse socioeconomic backgrounds

3. Holistic/Developmental Needs – our school focuses on developing the mind, body, and heart of each child. The whole child, including socioemotional needs, are a priority.
4. Parents as Partners – Parent/guardian input and voice is valued. Parents are provided with as much flexibility and support as possible.

Stakeholder Engagement

[A description of the efforts made to solicit stakeholder feedback.]

Empower maintained regular communication with our stakeholder groups.   Through the Spring, Empower sent weekly communications to parents with resources and offers of assistance to apply for programs targeted to support English learners, foster youth, and low-income students. Communications were sent via email and text in English and Spanish. The school office answered the phone between the hours of 9am-3pm, as this is a preferred communication method for families in need of assistance. Empower also held regular bilingual Zoom sessions with parents called *Coffee with the Director* to share pertinent information, updates, and resources. These sessions were recorded and sent to families who could not attend in the moment.

Before developing the Learning Continuity Plan, Empower invited all stakeholders to participate in its Fall Reconvening and Safety Workgroup. Three sub-groups were formed as part of this workgroup: the Safety & Operations workgroup, Instruction and Learning workgroup, and the Social Emotional Support workgroup. Empower also administered a parent/guardian survey during the month of May. The survey data and the workgroup's consensus-based recommendations formed the basis for the Empower's Learning Continuity Plan.

The school solicited recommendations on the draft of this plan via texts, email, video conferences, and through its website. Stakeholders without internet access were notified via our Remind system over text. Stakeholders could provide feedback via surveys and teleconferences, as well as direct messages or phone calls to administrators. Communications were translated for the benefit of those speaking languages other than English.

We convened English Learner Advisory Committee, School Site Council, and Board meetings at the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year to discuss the specific actions and expenditures proposed to be included in the Learning Continuity Plan. All stakeholders had the opportunity to review the Plan and submit written comments.

[A description of the options provided for remote participation in public meetings and public hearings.]

Stakeholders were provided an opportunity to join public meetings via teleconferencing. These meetings were also accessible telephonically to all members of the public. The agenda and link to access the online meetings was posted in writing on the school's website and the link was also distributed in school's electronic newsletter via email and text.

Parents and Pupils: Feedback indicated a desire for more hands-on learning experiences. In a distance learning environment, this will require advance planning and distribution of materials. Many parents also expressed a need for more social interaction during live online classes, such as daily launches and closures.

Educators and other school personnel: Teachers and instructional staff requested streamlined access to online programs to minimize the number of required sign-ins, and videos to support Spanish-speaking families with tech support. This group also voiced a need for more Spanish-language small group instruction, with accompanying strategies on how to extend language acquisition into the home environment. Many educators and other school personnel shared their preference to conduct distance learning from their classrooms.

Principals and administrators: The instructional leadership team closely monitored the pandemic, and recommended a phased approach to reopening that included hybrid models. This group facilitated workgroups that researched online pedagogical practices, facilities and safety issues, and social-emotional learning. This in turn informed expectations for online instruction, trainings, and the purchase and implementation of technology tools.

Specific stakeholder input informed the development of:

- Schedules for distance learning and onsite learning
- The purchase of technology tools
- The purchase of hands-on instructional materials
- A phased approach to re-opening
- Professional development needs
- Facilities and operational needs

- Safety procedures
- Socioemotional Supports for Students
- Enhancing school communication using multimedia

Continuity of Learning

In-Person Instructional Offerings

[A description of the actions the LEA will take to offer classroom-based instruction whenever possible, particularly for students who have experienced significant learning loss due to school closures in the 2019–2020 school year or are at a greater risk of experiencing learning loss due to future school closures.]

Empower has developed a phased approach to reopening for in-person learning. Following the guidance of health officials, students will gradually return to campus for in-person instruction. This hybrid schedule will promote the safety of students and staff. Fewer students and staff on campus at any given time will allow for sufficient social distance in instructional spaces, streamlined access to campus, more efficient screening procedures, and increased cleaning/disinfecting.

The school will reopen fully once the risks of COVID-19 have declined for an extended period. We will continue to offer a distance learning only option for families concerned about health and safety, but will offer classroom-based instruction whenever possible. At-risk students and pupils who have been significantly affected by school closures will be identified using our school's Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports (MTSS) framework.   Teachers will also review coursework and assessments submitted during online instruction. The school will use this data to develop an instructional intervention schedule to accelerate learning.

Actions Related to In-Person Instructional Offerings

Description	Total Funds	Contributing
Provide for enhanced facilities cleaning	$ 20,000	N
Purchase materials to support health/safety, e.g. protective barriers, sanitizing stations, PPE, signage	$ 25,000	N
Offer academic, arts, and athletics programming and childcare outside of regular school hours	$130,000	N

Schedule additional staff to support student learning and smaller class sizes	$60,825	Y
Purchase non-educational software to implement safety measures (electronic signature platforms, student and staff screening systems)	$8,200	N

Distance Learning Program

Continuity of Instruction

[A description of how the LEA will provide continuity of instruction during the school year to ensure pupils have access to a full curriculum of substantially similar quality regardless of the method of delivery, including the LEA's plan for curriculum and instructional resources that will ensure instructional continuity for pupils if a transition between in-person instruction and distance learning is necessary.]

Empower will offer a robust online learning program. It will include daily live interaction, small group support, formative/summative assessments, and social-emotional learning supports. Empower will continue to offer Integrated and Designated English Language Development, aligned to the English Language Development Standards. Supplemental online programs will also be offered to students to extend their language learning.

Our curriculum and instructional resources are suited to both in-person and online environments. Empower uses Ready Math and Wonders/Maravillas reading/language arts curricula, with Achieve 3000 and Smarty Ants, and Raz-Kids as supplemental materials. These programs have extensive online and interactive components. Teachers also receive training on a series of education technology tools and online pedagogy. This will ensure continuity for pupils if a transition between in-person instruction and distance learning is necessary.

Access to Devices and Connectivity

[A description of how the LEA will ensure access to devices and connectivity for all pupils to support distance learning.]

Empower will take steps to continue high-quality instruction via distance learning.   Empower will identify families needing internet connectivity via a series of parent outreach efforts, including surveys, phone calls and text messages. We will make repeated efforts to contact families with unique circumstances, or who were unable to access devices and connectivity following school closure in the 2019-20 school year.   Empower will also provide school supplies, materials for hands-on learning, and paper-and-pencil workbooks where needed.

We are providing Wifi hotspots in collaboration with companies such as T-Mobile and Sprint. The Empower Technology Support Coordinator is available to provide support to ensure access to devices and connectivity. Families can make appointments and/or communicate their needs via their classroom teacher.

Pupil Participation and Progress

[A description of how the LEA will assess pupil progress through live contacts and synchronous instructional minutes, and a description of how the LEA will measure participation and time value of pupil work.]

Every student will be expected to meet synchronously with certificated staff and peers each day. They will also have live instructional minutes in a differentiated or small group setting. Pupil progress will be measured via checks for understanding, participation in discussions, curriculum-based tests and quizzes, completion and quality of assigned work, and normed third-party assessments.

Synchronous participation will be measured by attendance and interaction in teleconferences or other communication technology. Asynchronous participation will be measured through the completion of assignments made by a certificated employee as well as log-ins to the Empower learning platform. The time value of pupil work, including both synchronous asynchronous assignments, will be calculated and certified by a certificated school employee.

Distance Learning Professional Development

[A description of the professional development and resources that will be provided to staff to support the distance learning program, including technological support.]

Our educators will continue to participate in regular professional development to support the distance learning program. Training will include 1) a foundation of online pedagogy and assessment; 2) specific education technology tools; 3) health and safety protocols; and 4) socio-emotional learning. These offerings were informed by staff feedback, including results of a survey administered during the Spring. Staff members will meet regularly to discuss technology needs and build capacity via a train-the-trainer model. The Empower Technology Support Coordinator is available to provide technological support for all staff members.

Staff Roles and Responsibilities

[A description of the new roles and responsibilities of affected staff as a result of COVID-19.]

The shift towards an online-only environment, even if temporary, impacts the responsibilities and routines of all staff. Teachers are expected to have an online resource hub, post regular assignments in the academic content areas, and hold daily live meetings with their students via teleconference. Other instructional staff support teachers with planning, contribute to online resources, provide technology support, and participate in class meetings. A counselor is available to meet regularly with students to discuss and mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on mental health. Custodial staff completes a regular checklist of tasks related to COVID safety. Front office staff monitors AB 77 record keeping and regularly communicates with parents. Administrators manage tech distribution, facilitate training on COVID procedures and screenings, and also conduct parent outreach.

Supports for Pupils with Unique Needs

[A description of the additional supports the LEA will provide during distance learning to assist pupils with unique needs, including English learners, pupils with exceptional needs served across the full continuum of placements, pupils in foster care, and pupils who are experiencing homelessness.]

Empower will provide the following supports to our students with unique needs:
* English language learners will continue to receive both integrated and designated English language Development (ELD) instruction.
* Special education students will receive required services, in addition to general education offerings, in accordance with each Individual Education Plan (IEP). The school will continue to hold IEP, Student Success Team. and 504 meetings in both distance and in-person learning environments.
* The school's Family Liaison will ensure that personalized support is available to any homeless students who qualify under the McKinney-Vento Act. Any families experiencing housing instability, homelessness, or other socioeconomic stresses will be provided with focused assistance if they experience difficulties with accessing online learning. Foster students will be able to access similar services.

Actions Related to the Distance Learning Program [additional rows and actions may be added as necessary]

Description	Total Funds	Contributing
Provide professional development focused on online and onsite instruction for most vulnerable learners, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and learners needing targeted support.	$ 3,000	Y
Purchase WIFI hotspots to students without internet connectivity	$10,000	N
Purchase technology devices	$3,000	N

Research and purchase educational technology tools and software	$19,000	N
Offer technology troubleshooting and assistance to both staff and parents	$4,000	N
Purchase and distribute hands-on instructional materials in both the hybrid and distance learning phases	$5,000	N
Implement social-emotional learning, social activities, and supports: schedule additional staff hours and/or establish partnerships when needed	$22,165	Y

Pupil Learning Loss

[A description of how the LEA will address pupil learning loss that results from COVID-19 during the 2019–2020 and 2020–21 school years, including how the LEA will assess pupils to measure learning status, particularly in the areas of English language arts, English language development, and mathematics.]

Students' learning status will be measured via a range of assessments. In addition to curriculum-based placement and diagnostic tests, the school will administer the NWEA MAPs in Reading and Mathematics to all students participating in onsite instruction. All English learners will be formatively assessed during designated ELD instructional time. Newly enrolled English learners will also take the Initial ELPAC, while students who may be eligible for reclassification will take the summative ELPAC.

All kindergarteners were assessed individually online prior to the school year starting to determine their individual strengths and needs.

Empower offered students identified as needing targeted support an online summer learning program for four weeks. Students met in small groups for live instruction in math and/or language arts (depending on their individualized needs).

Additionally, the Empower distance learning program prioritizes live small group instruction for all students, and the schedule provides for additional small group support for students with targeted academic needs.

Pupil Learning Loss Strategies

[A description of the actions and strategies the LEA will use to address learning loss and accelerate learning progress for pupils, as needed, including how these strategies differ for pupils who are English learners; low-income; foster youth; pupils with exceptional needs; and pupils experiencing homelessness.]

The school will take the following steps to address learning loss and accelerate learning progress for pupils:

* Identify and focus on essential standards

* Explicitly state the desired learning outcomes

* Provide academic support via small, differentiated groups based on teacher recommendation and language ability

* Monitor progress and embed formative assessments throughout each lesson

* Use data and information collected from assessments to inform instruction and academic interventions

* Hold "office hours" when students can ask questions

* Offer enrichment activities after hours

* Facilitate regular opportunities for discussion using academic language

The following subgroups may benefit from additional, targeted actions and strategies.

* English Learners: integrated and designated ELD, monitoring of language development

* Low-income pupils: The school offers socio-emotional learning and additional counseling opportunities to address any additional stressors caused by low socioeconomic status. These students also have priority for device distribution and internet hotspots.

* Pupils with exceptional needs: accommodations and supports specified by their IEP or 504 plans

* Foster youth and pupils who are experiencing homelessness: The school designates a staff person as the liaison for homeless students, who also assists foster youth. The liaison helps monitor progress and provides referrals to appropriate services. These students also have priority for device distribution and internet hotspots.

Effectiveness of Implemented Pupil Learning Loss Strategies

[A description of how the effectiveness of the services or supports provided to address learning loss will be measured.]

The effectiveness of services and supports will be measured on an ongoing basis via progress monitoring towards short- and long- term learning targets. This will be accomplished via curriculum-based assessments, quality of completed student work, progression through the curriculum map, and daily checks for understanding during live instruction. At least twice per year, the school will administer normed, formative assessments to measure each student's individual progress from their baseline.

Actions to Address Pupil Learning Loss [additional rows and actions may be added as necessary]

Description	Total Funds	Contributing
Implement assessment cycle	$5,500	N
Schedule and staff additional intervention programming	$89,712	Y

Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well-Being

[A description of how the LEA will monitor and support mental health and social and emotional well-being of pupils and staff during the school year, including the professional development and resources that will be provided to pupils and staff to address trauma and other impacts of COVID-19 on the school community.]

ECS recognizes that emotional well being is necessary for teaching and learning to occur. Instructional staff will be encouraged to build community in their classes during daily synchronous check ins via routines, emotional check-ins, and structured conversations.

The counselor will play an important role in supporting and monitoring the mental health of all pupils. Students who appear to be struggling emotionally as identified by staff or parents, or who request help directly, will be referred for more targeted mental health support. When necessary, the school may connect the student or family with other community resources. The school will work to reduce the stigma associated with accessing services.

Staff will receive both professional development and support in the areas of social and emotional well-being. They will be trained in social-emotional learning and the implementation classroom routines to build healthy communities. The school will provide regular opportunities for interaction with peers via teleconference. Full-time Empower employees have access to professional mental health services via our primary health care provider.

Pupil and Family Engagement and Outreach

[A description of pupil engagement and outreach, including the procedures for tiered reengagement strategies for pupils who are absent from distance learning and how the LEA will provide outreach to pupils and their parents or guardians, including in languages other than English, when pupils are not meeting compulsory education requirements, or if the LEA determines the pupil is not is not engaging in instruction and is at risk of learning loss.]

Assignment completion is tracked regularly in all subjects. If the school determines a student is not engaging in instruction and is at risk of learning loss, the student's family will be contacted in a language they understand. Additional or make-up work may be assigned at that time.

Any pupil who does not participate in Online Learning on a school day shall be documented as absent for that school day. If a student does not log in, the following steps will be taken:

1. After two consecutive absences, the school will contact parents or guardians via phone, email, or text message to notify them of the absences.
2. After three absences in a given week, school personnel will verify current contact information and provide daily notification of absences.
3. If a student is absent from Online Learning for a second series of 3 days in a week, the school will reach out to families to determine pupil needs, including connection with health and social services as necessary.
4. If a student is absent for a third series of three days in a given week, a virtual meeting will be scheduled with the school administrators. A Student Success Team will attempt to schedule a meeting in an effort to improve attendance. The school team will work with the parents/guardians to remove obstacles to learning, and offer additional support and interventions. When feasible, the plan may include transitioning the pupil to full-time in-person instruction.

These procedures will be translated and distributed to all parents.

School Nutrition

[A description of how the LEA will provide nutritionally adequate meals for all pupils, including those students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, when pupils are participating in both in-person instruction and distance learning, as applicable.]

Empower's food vendor is San Diego Unified School District. Through December 2020, students are eligible to receive free meals from the San Diego Unified School District. Families will be provided information about the District's Food and Nutrition Services locations and hours of operation. When Empower offers onsite instruction, the school will work with the District to provide grab-and-go options for students.

Additional Actions to Implement the Learning Continuity Plan [additional rows and actions may be added as necessary]

Section	Description	Total Funds	Contributing
School Nutrition	Provide meals for our students through the District	$ 46,379	N

Pupil Engagement and Outreach	Empower will engage in outreach to re-engage students and families not connecting with the school.	$4,000	N

Increased or Improved Services for Foster Youth, English Learners, and Low-Income Students

Percentage to Increase or Improve Services	Increased Apportionment Based on the Enrollment of Foster Youth, English Learners, and Low-Income students
17.35%	$185,702

Required Descriptions

[For the actions being provided to an entire school, or across the entire school district or county office of education (COE), an explanation of (1) how the needs of foster youth, English learners, and low-income students were considered first, and (2) how these actions are effective in meeting the needs of these students.]

The majority of Empower Charter School consists of unduplicated pupils (68% low income, 44% English Learners). Therefore, most actions provided for these pupils are comparable to those available to all students, in accordance with applicable law.

There is also a need to provide systemic, prioritized, and targeted supports and services for foster youth, English learners, and low-income students. Their needs were considered first in a number of ways. Foster youth and low-income students receive priority for technology device distribution and internet hot spots. Technology tools such as Achieve 3000 provide additional academic supports. The need to provide English Learners with Designated ELD instructional time and integrated pedagogy drive scheduling, training, and staffing decisions. We will also distribute instructional supplies and materials to low-income students and families, and provide counseling/SEL support to students disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Empower will:

- provide translation services and bilingual communications in English/Spanish;
- provide additional mental health services
- schedule and staff additional intervention programming

- provide additional staff for small class sizes
- provide professional development focused on online and onsite instruction for our most vulnerable learners, including English Learners, students with disabilities, and learners needing targeted support.

These actions are effective in meeting the needs of these students since they provide the specific materials, access, and academic/emotional supports to promote excellence and equity.

[A description of how services for foster youth, English learners, and low-income students are being increased or improved by the percentage required.]

Services for pupils with unique needs are being increased/improved by 17.35%. This represents a targeted investment in staffing, training, resources, and increased instructional time.