

New support roles for educator teams in online & hybrid settings



Teaching in online and hybrid settings presents both new challenges and new opportunities for distributing expertise across educator teams. Community educators, teacher candidates, paraprofessionals, and existing non-instructional staff may be untapped assets for teams seeking to better support students' social-emotional health, deepen and personalize student learning, and increase the number of caring adults present in students' lives.

We'll start by further defining the groups of adults who might be leveraged to support students, and then we'll propose the specific roles those adults might play in the learning space.

Who might we recruit or redeploy to better support students?

Community educators: We define community educators as talented adults from the broader community who bring additional capacity, insight and expertise to classrooms. They include parents, working professionals, retirees, veterans, former educators, family members and others with valuable skills who can support the efforts of educators. They may be part-time or full-time, paid or unpaid.

Existing non-instructional staff: In the pivot to remote instruction, the need for some non-instructional roles — bus drivers, food service workers, custodial staff, office staff — may have temporarily decreased. But we shouldn't discount the valuable relationships these individuals may have already formed with students and the specific skill sets they may have (e.g., office staff may be adept with spreadsheets and forms) and the potential they have to shine in different, remote-specific non-instructional roles in the meantime.

Teacher candidates: Pre-service teachers gain valuable skills and experience under the supervision of certified teachers and also hold tremendous promise for filling instructional roles (e.g., literacy accelerator, small-group facilitator) in particular.

Paraprofessionals: Given their existing relationships with teachers and students, paraprofessionals can be redeployed in both instructional and non-instructional roles. Perhaps these educators might be shared differently across classes, serve as a bridge between online and in-person learning, or be encouraged to specialize in particular areas (e.g., organizing the learning management system, encouraging student participation online).

What roles might these adults play in the classroom?

The roles below might be appropriate for community educators, existing non-instructional staff, teacher candidates and paraprofessionals working on Next Education Workforce teams in either elementary or secondary settings.

We have divided roles into two categories — instructional and non-instructional — and for each role, we have shared a general recommendation for the level of preparation needed. Note that preparation might encompass pedagogical

knowledge, content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, specific real-world knowledge and experience, and more. Who plans and implements preparation — the district, the school, the team, a partner organization or an institution of higher education — would differ depending on an individual school’s context, needs and partnerships.

Instructional roles

Role and description	Level of preparation
Asynchronous content creator: Co-plan with the educator team and then record and/or build asynchronous lesson content independently on the learning management system	High
Book ambassador: Help students navigate library services (either virtually, through e-books or in-person) and identify just-right books that match their interests	Moderate
Chat monitor: Support the team during online lessons by monitoring online chat: responding to students’ questions, elevating questions appropriate for the whole group, synthesizing responses to polls, etc.	Moderate
Extension specialist: Create and post or share extension activities appropriate for students who wish to deepen their learning about a given topic	Moderate
Math or literacy accelerator: Leverage student learning data and activities and interventions proposed by the core team of educators to provide targeted support to students one-on-one	Moderate
Online accessibility expert: Develop expertise in accessibility for online teaching and learning and conduct review of/share feedback on lessons developed by team members	Moderate
Project mentor: Use skills like positive questioning and problem-solving in order to mentor and coach students in their work on independent or small-group projects	Moderate
Small-group facilitator: Implement small-group lesson plans independently with small groups of students	High
Storyteller: Support students as they engage in creative writing or digital storytelling	Moderate

Non-instructional roles

Role and description	Level of preparation
Brain break facilitator: Plan and/or facilitate “brain breaks” that provide movement and screen breaks for students	Moderate
Break-out group monitor: Support the team during lessons by populating break-out groups, starting/stopping break-out group time, and pushing out updates and reminders while students are in groups	Low
Breakfast or lunch club captain: Facilitate a supervised non-academic activity (e.g., community-builder) with a small group of students during breakfast or lunch time	Low
Career exploration guide: Conduct career interest surveys and share career experience with students	Moderate
Field experience coordinator: Identify and conduct virtual field experiences with students in order to help them connect the curriculum to the real world	Moderate
Social Emotional Coach: Follow up on social-emotional lessons that have been taught in class and help students to role play or think through situations	Moderate
Student success coach: With a small group of students, do daily schedule check-ins, goals check-ins and social-emotional wellness checks	Low
Technology trouble-shooter: Provide one-on-one technology support for students struggling to navigate the learning management system or other learning apps and platforms	Moderate
Wellness coach: Lead student mindfulness sessions (e.g., meditation, yoga)	Low