

THE POWER OF BLENDED LEARNING

eWorkbook



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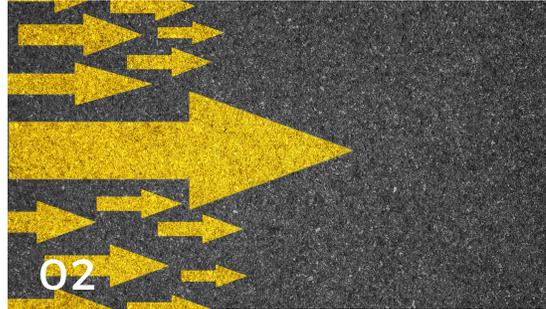
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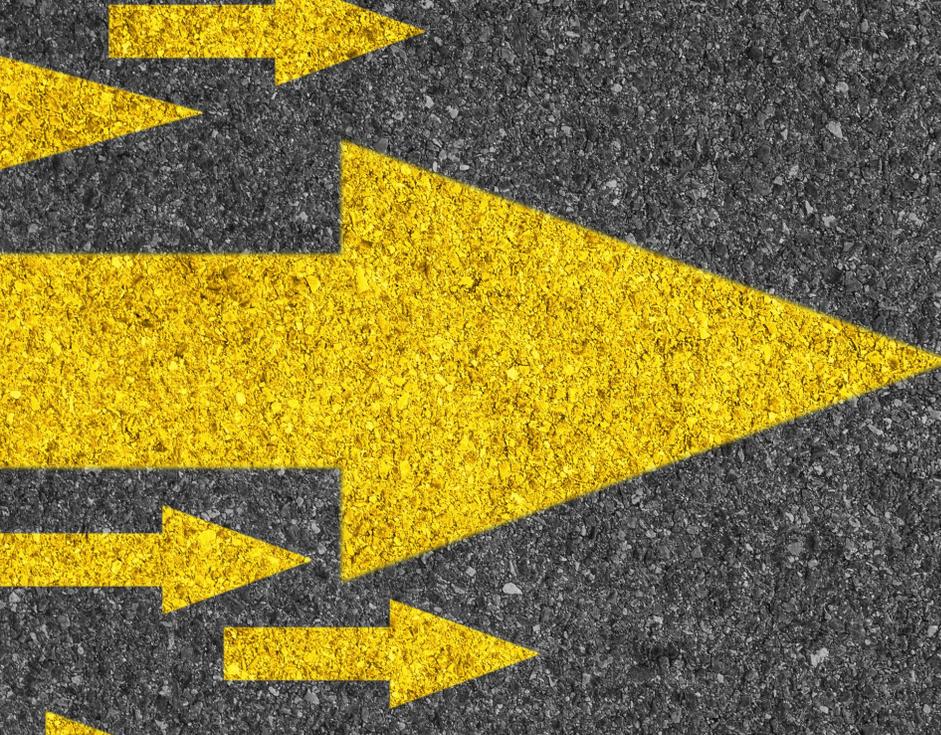
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How can we assure students receive a rigorous, relevant education that respects place and pace?

This eWorkbook highlights the considerations classroom teachers should address when preparing for a blended learning environment. When best practices are adhered to, blended learning provides students greater personalization in their learning.

Whether addressing learning during a health or weather emergency or looking for strategies that best serve student learning, this eWorkbook will guide you through the pedagogy and applications that engage your students in blended learning.

How to Use this eWorkbook

➤ **READ** the sections, scan the headings, and make this professional experience meaningful for you.

➤ **REFLECT** on the scenarios and consider the personal impact this content has on your students by recording your thoughts as you go.

➤ **REALIZE** your new vision by planning with engagement, empathy, and energy in mind.



STANDARDS ALIGNMENT



The National Standards for Quality Online Teaching provide a framework for schools, districts, state agencies, statewide online programs and other interested educational organizations to improve online teaching and learning. The instructional philosophies, approaches and models for online teaching are practically endless. The standards are intended to provide guidance while providing maximum flexibility for the users.

The National Standards for Quality Online Teaching are broken into the following eight standard categories:

Standard A: Professional Responsibilities

Standard B: Digital Pedagogy

Standard C: Community Building

Standard D: Learner Engagement

Standard E: Digital Citizenship

Standard F: Diverse Instruction

Standard G: Assessment and Measurement

Standard H: Instructional Design

<https://www.nsqol.org/the-standards/quality-online-teaching/>



MODULE 1

Getting Started with Blended Learning – Preparing for Success

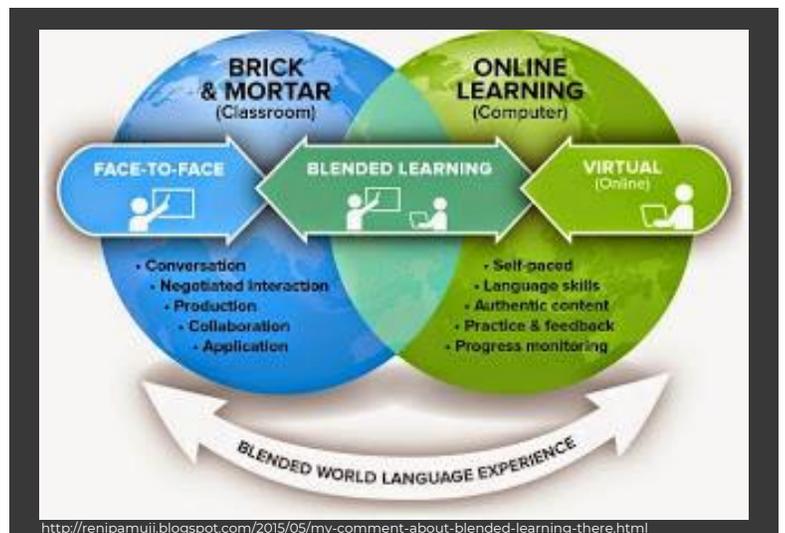
What can I do to prepare for success with my blended learning class?

What is Blended Learning?

Blended learning is a term used to describe a learning model where students spend some of their time learning outside a typical, traditional classroom. According to the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovations (formerly Innosight Institute) 2013 report, "Is K-12 Blended Learning Disruptive? An introduction of the theory of hybrids." the authors Christensen, Horn, and Staker defined blended learning as:

"...a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through online learning with some element of student control over time, place, path, and/or pace and at least in part at a supervised brick-and-mortar location away from home. The modalities along each student's learning path within a course or subject are connected to provide an integrated learning experience."

Here is another graphic that describes how a traditional Brick and Mortar classroom and fully online learning computer-based environment can be combined to be a "blended learning" approach.



Catlin Tucker is an expert who has successfully implemented Blended Learning in her classroom and has authored several books on the subject. In one of her books, Blended Learning in Action, Tucker states that

"When successfully implemented, blended learning enables these hallmarks:

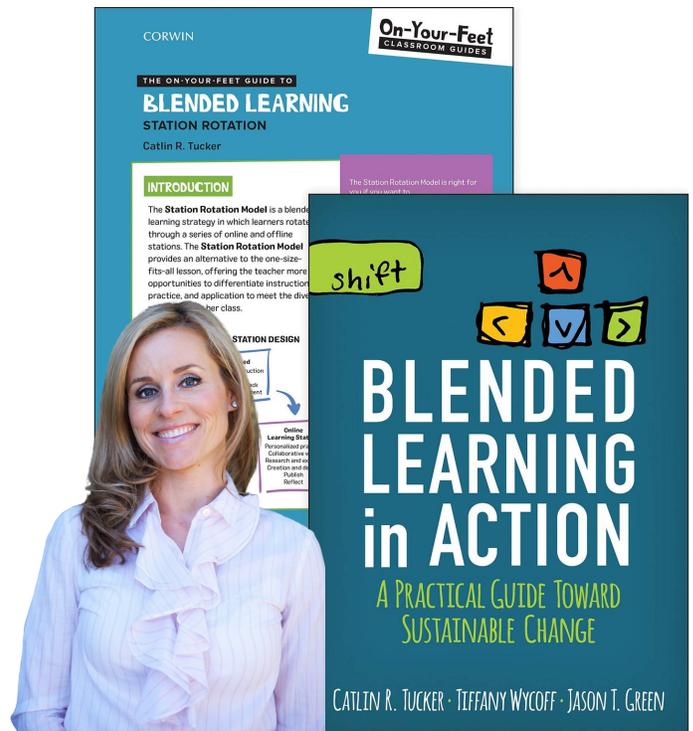
Personalization: providing unique learning pathways for individual students

Agency: giving learners opportunities to participate in key decisions in their learning experience

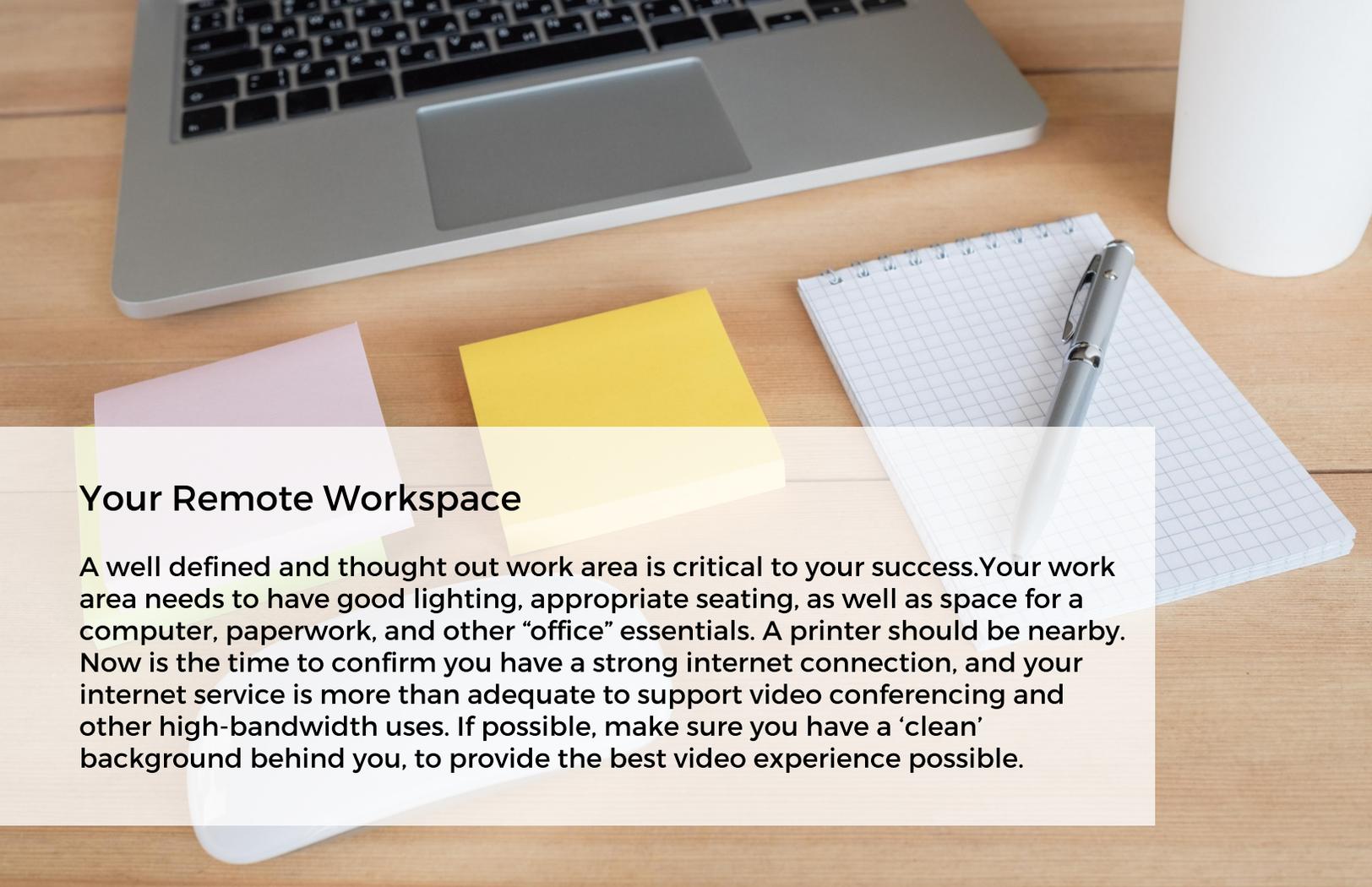
Authentic Audience: giving learners the opportunity to create for a real audience both locally and globally

Connectivity: giving learners opportunities to experience learning in collaboration with peers and experts locally and globally

Creativity: providing learners individual and collaborative opportunities to make things that matter while building skills for their future"



Begin to create your own initial definition of blended learning, as you see fit for your educational environment. What does it look like? Sound like? How do you talk about?

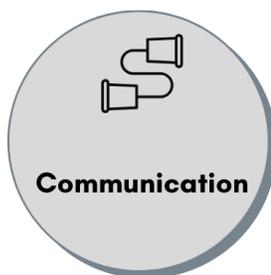


Your Remote Workspace

A well defined and thought out work area is critical to your success. Your work area needs to have good lighting, appropriate seating, as well as space for a computer, paperwork, and other “office” essentials. A printer should be nearby. Now is the time to confirm you have a strong internet connection, and your internet service is more than adequate to support video conferencing and other high-bandwidth uses. If possible, make sure you have a ‘clean’ background behind you, to provide the best video experience possible.

Critical Success Factor: Time Management

Set up a schedule to be followed each day. Of course, include the time you will be on-site at your school. Communicate your expectations to your family and friends about your work schedule and your needs during the time you are working from home. Be flexible, but adhere to a regular pattern if at all possible. Set up your schedule to accommodate these activities:



Spend some time on professional development. The Santa Clara County Office of Education has a large number of training courses you can take advantage of to further your learning and increase your confidence. For instance, there are courses on Digital Citizenship, Accessibility, and other relevant topics.

Some time for brain and body breaks needs to be built in as well. Periodically take some time to get up, stretch, look away from your computer. Follow the 20/20/20 rule:



...every 20 minutes spent looking at a screen, a person should look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds. Following the rule is a great way to remember to take frequent breaks.

20/20/20 Rule

The Logistics of Blended Teaching

You may be teaching both at home in some synchronous or asynchronous mode, and at your school (asynchronous means you and your students are not online together). Think about the materials you only need at home. List them. Where will they be in your home office? Beyond paper and pencil, be sure that textbooks, trade books, a computer, a webcam, and all the necessary cords and connectors are available where you need them. What else needs to be in your home office?

What items that are instrumental to your teaching can reside only in your school classroom?

Are there any items that need to be portable and be with you in both places? What else needs to be in your bag so you can access the item wherever you are?

How and When to Get Help

One other important area to consider when teaching online or in a blended environment is how to get help, particularly help with the technology (hardware and software) you're using. You should spend some time understanding your particular situation. For instance, if you are using G Suite for Education, a wealth of information is available from Google and others, that will greatly assist you in finding solutions. Your district may also have significant "how to" resources, or individuals who can provide technical help. For other tools, find the "Help" icon and understand the process for getting help.

You will need to do some troubleshooting for students (and parents) on occasion. It is worth the time spent **BEFOREHAND** to understand the best ways to get help, and to provide any FAQs or other tips to prevent at least some of the "How do I?" emails and phone calls you may receive.

The "How To" or "Help" sections of your website or learning management system (LMS), described more in the Digital Home Base in Module 2, should become the first place that students and parents go for assistance once your class gets rolling.



Develop Your Blended Teacher Plans

The blended teacher's role can be characterized in several ways. These parallel the traditional classroom teacher role. The blended teacher must also address these pedagogical practices to be effective:



Guiding and Individualizing Learning - There are many ways in which this can be accomplished, including online and face to face assessment of learning objectives, group discussions, projects, and responding to students' questions about challenging concepts.

Time must be spent often (daily, if possible) giving students meaningful feedback on their work. Your language and tone are very important, as it is likely that your interactions with students will be more limited than the usual face to face class time you're used to. Module 4 addresses some ideas about the power of student choice.



If a student is stopped in their tracks and needs feedback urgently, do your best to prioritize your response so the student can move forward.

Communication - Regular and frequent communication is critical in a blended learning environment. Regular office hours should strongly be considered. Clear communication with students and parents is a must.



Set aside some time at the start of the day to work on communication tasks; emails, phone calls, and so on will almost certainly be waiting for you! Get off to a great start by clearing out as many “low hanging” communication requests as possible - deal with the easy questions and get them out of your queue! This early review helps you set priorities for the day. Your response to emails and other communiques should not necessarily be first in, first out. Use your knowledge and experience to set some priorities as you work through the start of day requests.

Take a quick look at your LMS (Canvas or others) to see if there are quick questions to answer. Google Classroom also has the ability for you to respond to questions asked by students.

Designate office hours! Online when you are home and face to face when you're at school. Ask your parents and students to schedule this time with you if at all possible! You could set up a Google (or other) calendar with appointment slots if desired.



Assessing, Grading, and Promoting - Blended and face-to-face teachers are all responsible for tasks such as creating and grading assessments, labs, and other assignments, providing. Close attention needs to be paid to understand when the student is ready to move on to the next unit, course, or grade level.

If possible, treat your assessment time as a separate block from “Communication.” Yes, the two do blend into each other! Helping the student that is stuck needs to be a priority.

Developing Course Content and Structure - The task of developing course content will vary from program to program. In some cases, some material provided for your students may be created by others. The California Collaborative for Excellence in Education has outstanding resources (<https://ccee-ca.org/distance-learning.asp>). It is more likely that you will need to use your existing materials and repurpose them for online or blended use. Partner up with others (grade level or department colleagues) who can help you. Explicit instructions about what the student must do are critical for success!



Clearly, building in time to teach has to be at the top of your priority list! This includes the preparation time necessary to support your learning goals. Gauging what can actually be accomplished in an online learning environment will be a skill that will grow over time. Be sure to “chunk” the learning into small enough pieces to fit the time available. Early on, you will not accomplish as much as you think you might be able to when teaching online. Allow for this and don’t get discouraged about it.

Think about how you can transfer your top-notch classroom presentations to an online format. Your PowerPoints or Google Slides can be posted, and perhaps all you need to do is add some speaker notes for students to be able to understand the concept presented. Other times, that is not sufficient. PearDeck is a tool that can help bring your slides to life, where you can control the pace of the lesson, as well as add formative assessments. It works with both Google Slide and MS PowerPoint. A free version of PearDeck is available. This is one of many examples of technology that can be used to aid you as the teacher while effectively supporting the learner.

Take a discerning eye to your materials, and put yourself into the shoes of your students! Ask yourself, “what do I need to include here to ensure everyone can understand the concept and make progress toward the learning goal we’ve established?”

What other learning modalities can be used? Crafting an engaging online discussion that will provide results that add value and not be too time-consuming for you to assess is an important basic skill to develop over time. The use of engaging and relevant multimedia will enhance learning as well. Understanding options for students to show learning in “non-traditional” ways will be something to consider as well.

As described in the Edutopia article "[Getting Ready to Teach Next Year.](#)"

"Technology alone cannot make learning engaging, so in developing online systems, schools will need to map out their curricula, ensure articulation and complementarity between face-to-face and online learning, and intentionally design for both these environments, seeking a balance between:

LEARNING ACTIVITIES
THAT CAPITALIZE BEST
ON THE ONLINE MEDIUM
AND
THOSE DONE BEST IN A
CLASSROOM

STRUCTURE **AND**
FLEXIBILITY



SYNCHRONOUS
AND
ASYNCHRONOUS
LEARNING

ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE
DONE ALONE
AND
THOSE BEST DONE WITH
OTHERS

Just like your face to face class, you must gain an understanding of each student's skills and challenges early in the course. Meeting the needs of students with disabilities requires adaptation of course content and instruction. Teaching visually impaired, hearing impaired, or learning disabled students online can be quite different than in a traditional classroom. This is also a legal requirement.

More details about how to support students with special needs can be found in the [Quality Matters' "IEP & 504 Online Accommodations Guide."](#)

Again, meeting the needs of all students is no different than your face to face classroom. Included in this thinking are how you can best support English language learners as well. See Modules 3 and 4 to understand much more about developing your course content and structure to support your blended learning needs.



Professional Development

You still need to grow as an educator. Include professional development time in your weekly schedule! Investigate best practices for blended or online teaching as you grow into your new role. As noted, there is a plethora of Santa Clara County Office of Education tutorials, courses, and other learning materials at your disposal. Those resources can be found in the [SCCOE catalog](#).

Choose one blended learning teacher role that you would like to improve upon:

- 1. Guiding and Individualizing Learning*
- 2. Communication*
- 3. Assessing, Grading, and Promoting*
- 4. Developing Course Content and Structure*

Create a rough plan and/or set some goals for yourself here. Bullet points are a great place to start!

Develop a Plan for Parent Engagement

Understanding how best to engage parents is another critical task to support blended learning. Parents can be an asset in the student's learning process, and when included can provide significant support to the student's learning, and to you.

Here are some important elements of a parent engagement plan:

- Expectations for parent support & involvement (FAQs, video tutorials, tech help info)
- Keeping parents current. "The Digital Home Base" is described in Module 2.
- Help parents define success for their students.
- Consider a "parent help center" for them to reference? This could be in your Home Base.
- Consider easy ways you can connect parents to each other and yourself via a forum.

Consider these elements. What might your parent engagement plan look like for you?

Other Communication Tips

In the [Laurel Springs School Best Practices for Teaching Online](#), several important topics are detailed.

Topics include:

- **Setting up Professional Channels and Expectations** -- The importance of setting up a human connection, sending emails that are positive in nature, and the use of videos when appropriate.
- **The Personal Connection** -- Get to know students and parents early! It's even more critical that this happen given the limited face to face time you will likely have with the students. Try to understand the families' situations. Don't send exclusively negative information via electronic means. Send praise communications too!



- **Maintaining Regular Communication** -- Track when you last communicated with a student or family via a simple spreadsheet. Document as much as possible! And build time into your schedule to reach out to families.
- **Securing and Streamlining Systems** -- An online learning component requires more thought about what and when you communicate. Don't leave sensitive information via voicemail. Again, provide clear and complete instructions (or help links) about how to use various electronic tools. Don't assume people know how to use various technology tools!

Now that you have been exposed to important concepts to set yourself and your students up for success in blended learning, take a few minutes to jot down a few thoughts in a response to this assignment. Describe how you will move forward with the information you have learned about here. What are your next steps? Who can you turn to for help or guidance? What are the particular components that take priority before school starts?

MODULE 2



Setting Online Learning Expectations and Norms

What are the important online learning norms and expectations needed to support a successful blended learning class?

Prepare Students for Online Learning

A recent Edutopia article called [Getting Ready to Teach Next Year](#) addresses this topic. This excerpt describes important concepts about preparing students for the online learning experience.

"For the students I interviewed, this was their first experience as online learners. Many struggled—both with technology and with being an online learner, particularly in an asynchronous environment.

Thus, in the move to a digital instruction system, one of the most important things we can do is prepare our students to be successful online learners. This will involve helping students with:

- Technology training: keyboarding, logging in to a web conferencing system, using email, remembering passwords, file management, navigating a learning management system, etc. Districts with 1:1 programs that begin in middle school may need to look at some variations of technology training for younger grades
- Personal characteristics related to successful online learning: motivation, time management, digital citizenship, persistence, [self-regulation skills](#) (links to an external site), and help-seeking.
- Productivity skills related to online learning: strategies for reading and writing more effectively in an online medium, making and following a schedule, information management skills."

What follows in this module are concepts, best practices, and actions you can take to support these opportunities.

Create a Digital "Home Base"

A Digital Home Base is the **ONE** place students can go to find what they need to be successful in your blended learning course.



THE HOME BASE CONTAINS ALL OF THE BASIC INFORMATION STUDENTS NEED.

As a minimum, the Home Base should include:

- the up to date class calendar
- how to's on a wide variety of important topics- tech and other
- the resources students need to complete the course - logically sorted by unit, assignment, etc.
- the assignments students will do (which may be tied in to the calendar)
- a policies page or syllabus
- a "communications" page with info about best methods, when to expect a response, some best practices on 'how to communicate'

In other words, the Digital Home Base is truly the **one-stop-shop** where students - and parents - can go to engage and find the support they need for their learning.

It's vital to have this for your students. This can be a district-provided system like Canvas or Google Classroom, or it can be a self-created class website. Google Sites is a simple, easy-to-set-up platform if Canvas or Google Classroom are not available or do not fit your needs. Other easy to use website builders are also available. Be sure to check with your technology team before setting up your own classroom website.



What's critical is a single digital platform that your students can go to for up-to-date information. Simplicity and familiarity are invaluable. Students need to feel comfortable going to the same place to access the same tools.

Distance learning may magnify attendance issues. Since you are not always seeing your students face to face, you need an online place where students can go to find out where the class is and what they missed. Finding the resources that go along with the lesson is also a critical need. That's the Digital Home Base.

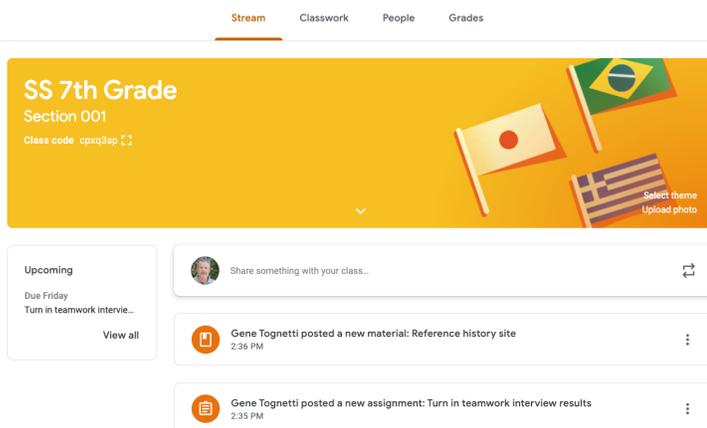
It will be helpful to provide students with an easy-to-use shortened URL (using [bit.ly](#) or [tiny url](#)) to rapidly get to your Digital Home Base. Make sure your IT organization has unblocked/whitelisted URL shorteners!

Examples

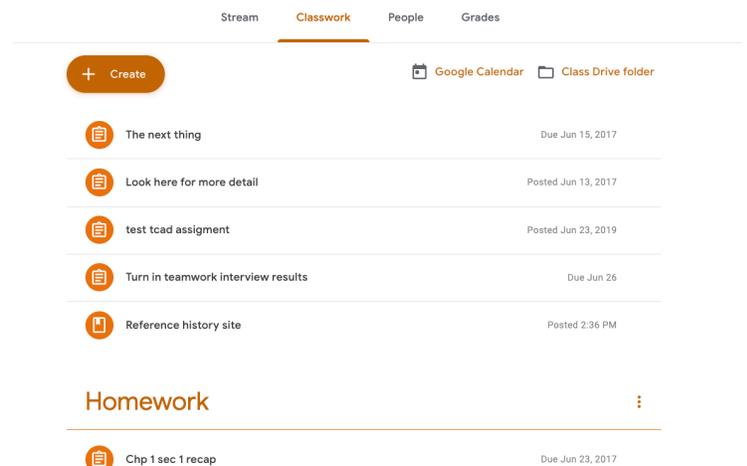
Google Classroom

Google Classroom can be used as a Home Base. Here are two examples of Classroom contents.

This is the "home" page for Classroom, where the student (or teacher) can navigate to more detail, as well as see current activities. Note that parents cannot access Classroom directly.



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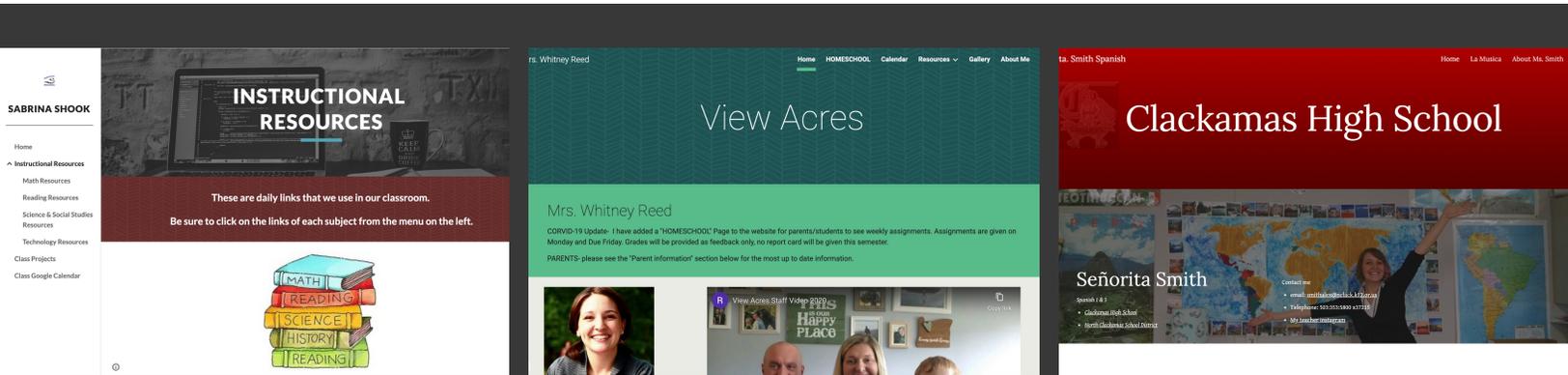


The Google Classroom "Classwork" page is shown above. This page can also include other class resources for one-click student access to other materials inside of Google Drive, or elsewhere on the web. Note the access to the Google Calendar as well as the Class Drive folder.

Google Sites

Google Sites can also be used as a Home Base. Here are three examples of Sites contents.

NOTE: To scroll through each entire site, visit our Resources section of this eWorkbook.



For Younger Students

For Middle School Students

For High School Students

Most website builders (such as Wix and Google Sites) provide easy ways to create a Digital Home Base that will provide the structure needed to provide clear information to your students. Google Classroom and other web-based tools can also be used for this purpose.

Check out the [Google for Education Teacher Center](#) with complete instructions on how to get started with a Google Site. An array of YouTube videos also exist for this purpose. Be sure to use resources that are made for the NEW Google Sites (which has been around since 2017 or earlier).

Create a plan for your digital home base! Think about starting with: the possible technology tool that will be used (Canvas, Google Classroom, Google Sites, etc.), a list of potential how-to directions or videos, a list of helpful student and/or parent resources, ideas for a syllabus, a list of items for a communication page

Setting Clear Expectations

A general note, don't skimp on providing critical information on which students need to be aware. The basics that follow are all very important 'backdrop' items to get in place BEFORE classes start. If anything changes during the course, students need to know that in a timely manner too!

Explain Online vs. Face to Face Course Components

Students may find some aspects of the online part of the course confusing. Students may have some questions or issues about transitioning from the face to face classroom to the online component. Provide explicit information about the structure of the online part of the course and how it relates to - and is INTEGRATED with - the face to face material. Do this in your lessons, or at the start of any new unit.

Calendar and Scheduling

One basic task for you early on is to describe the daily or weekly schedule for your students.

Parents will be very interested in this as well! Post it in your Digital Home Base. In the calendar (and your scheduling description that goes with it), answer questions like:



Explain how the remote class will be structured, and in your calendar, communicate clearly when students need to be online - together with you (synchronous) or on their own (asynchronous). Explain where they can find the assignment information and associated class resources online. Explain how they should submit assignments.



Are we online together? If so, when?

When will the students be working with teammates?

When are students doing work on their own?

What will we do when together in class face to face?

When will subject matter videos (by the teacher or other sources) be available?

Be precise about how the online learning students do will support their face to face time in class, and vice versa.



It's important - especially early - for your students (and their parents) to understand the connections between the online space and their normal face to face class time with you.

Communication Expectations and Answers

Be clear about when, and how, you will communicate. Spend time helping students understand what is appropriate from them. Check out this Common Sense Media "[Essential Digital Citizenship Lessons](#)" article and notice that it includes guidance to help students understand how they are expected to communicate. You need to set the tone very early on as to what is - and is not- acceptable from students as they communicate online with you AND with each other. What works in a social media context does NOT necessarily translate to a learning environment!

Let students know when they - and parents - will get answers to their questions.

It will be beneficial if you can bring the same rhythmic structure from your face to face class to the online student experience. If they can rely on you to get a response to (non-urgent) questions within 24 or 48 hours (on weekdays), that helps alleviate stress for them and develops confidence in the online structure you are bringing to them.

Assessments, Feedback, and Grades

Explain to your students where they can get assessment and feedback information, as well as see grades. If you are using an online system such as Canvas or Google Classroom, passing this information on to your students is relatively straightforward, as there are prescribed processes in both systems to give feedback, post grades, and so on.

Rubrics are discussed in more detail in Module 4.

The bottom line: students need easy access to understand how they are progressing toward completion of the assignment, the unit, and ultimately whether they are making progress towards their overall course learning objectives. Please make it easy for them to do so!

Tie in Online and Face to Face

As we've noted, it is important to tie what's happening online with what is happening in the face to face classroom. Make sure you explicitly communicate how each assignment - online or F2F - ties in to the course objectives! These can be brief but adding this information is important.



Just as you would in class, introduce an assignment using text, audio, or video.

Include:

- *A review of the instructions,*
- *Relevant examples when useful/possible*
- *Information about how the assignment is connected to learning objectives/outcomes.*
- *A clear description about how the assignment will be assessed, whether through an assignment prompt, rubric, or other means.*

Technology

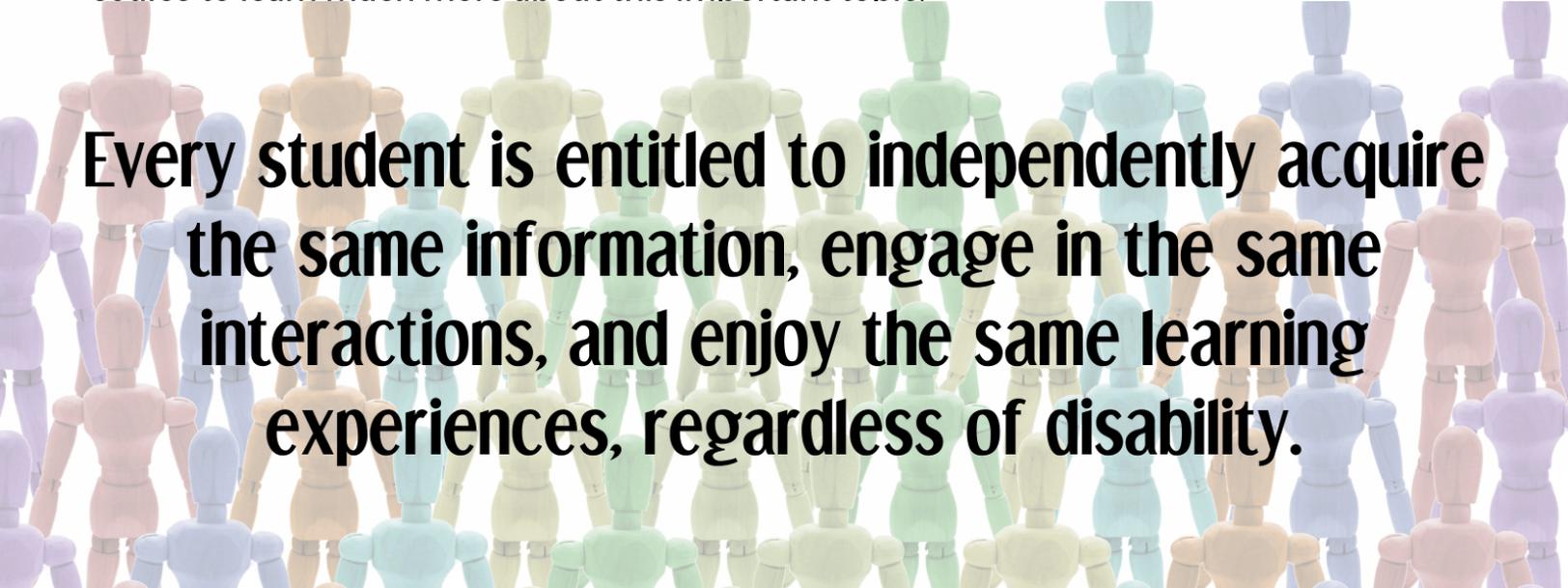
As we noted in Module 1, having clear instructions about tech support is an important component to your online presence. This is another item for your Digital Home Base! Components of this include links to relevant help pages, download info, and perhaps a district help desk phone number. Provide the students with an environment and resources to help them keep moving through your course!

Some students, if they get stuck, just shut down and aren't able to move forward. Provide ways for them to get assistance. You may be the first line of tech support for your students. For some, you need to make it clear that contacting you should not wait until the last minute. Be flexible in how you provide support.

Accessibility

Some web-based systems (Canvas, for instance) have built in accessibility checkers to ensure that all your students can access the content. Other times, you will need to make sure your material is accessible in a more manual fashion. This includes video closed captioning, alt text, and use of headers. Here is an article with [Tips to Teaching an Accessible Online Course](#).

Be sure to check out the Santa Clara County Office of Education Digital Accessibility course to learn much more about this important topic!



Every student is entitled to independently acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same learning experiences, regardless of disability.

Online Behavior and Engagement

One of the challenges to online learning is getting students fired up to engage with the material. Sometimes, if they're not engaged, issues crop up and students start virtually 'goofing off.' There are several techniques and approaches you can take to head off behavioral issues and engage students identified in the Edutopia article [Golden Rules for Engaging Students](#). Also read Catlin Tucker's blog post "[Strategies to Engage Students in Synchronous Online Discussions](#)."

Create a list of expectations for students for an online/blended learning environment.

Create a Sense of Community



One of the common concerns about online learning is developing a sense of community. You will have opportunities to do that when you do meet your students face to face at school. Since students will be in a blended learning environment, it is imperative that you develop community when you have them face to face! When the students are physically together, spend some time early to help them understand your norms and your expectations, for both online and face to face work. Have small groups develop suggestions about how they'll work together online. How can students not feel isolated? Discuss ways to stay connected when not physically with each other. Find ways for participants to learn about each other, about you, and to find commonalities among them. So, humanize the voice behind the writing. Do this early, and often!

So, there will be ways you can extend that community feeling that's a natural part of the face to face experience. View the infographic and short article, [How to Humanize Your Online Class](#), for more ideas.

Find or create an online community building activity that you can use with your class in an online or face to face learning environment. Explain the reasoning behind your activity choice.

The Importance of Teaching Digital Citizenship

All aspects of digital citizenship are important in an online or blended setting. To understand more about why attention must be paid to digital citizenship, review the [Common Sense Media Tweens and Teens Media Use](#) article. Common Sense Education is a leading resource that teaches educators about Digital Citizenship, and much more, and has lessons for students to practice important Digital Citizenship skills. [The Common Sense Education Digital Citizenship](#) website has everything you need to teach your students about digital citizenship. There are also training materials, tips, tools, and techniques for educators to learn more about digital citizenship. It is free and you do not have to sign up to use the materials.



Describe how you will move forward with the information you have learned about in this module. What are your next steps? Who can you turn to for help or guidance? What are the particular components that take priority before school starts?

Consuming the Tech versus Creating with the Tech

Once you take the time to establish your WHY for technology, you can start to see different platforms in a new light. For example, if you know that you want your students to manipulate objects to help with math computations, then you wouldn't give them a book that has pictures of manipulatives. Instead, you would provide them with the actual math manipulatives. That's logical!

So, if you want your students to interact with content personally and create new ideas, you can't only give them digitized worksheets and PDFs. While there may be a place for that on some level, that's actually just digitization using screens. Learn more about this in Module 4. Note that real technology integration takes that content and engages the learner to interact with it in new and unique ways.

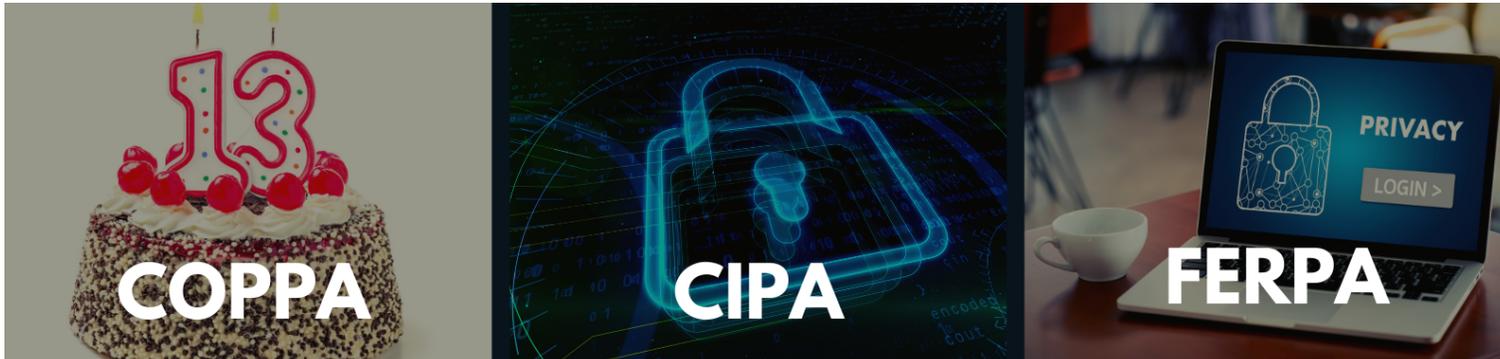
Common Sense Education has compiled a thorough list of [Best Tech-Creation Tools](#) with full reviews by educators and ideas to integrate the tools into your curriculum thoughtfully.



Starting with your WHY leads to your NEED and is hopefully in line with your WANT.

Choose a tech creation tool from the resources section of this eWorkbook. What do you hope this tech tool offers your students? How will learning and student engagement shift when students use this tool in the new distance learning environment?

Before engaging with a new tool or platform, you need to ensure that it is compliant with federal laws. So, make sure you are familiar with the three major educational technology legislation that impacts K-12 tech integration.



KNOW THE LAWS

COPPA: Children’s Online Privacy & Protection Act -- governs the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information collected from children under age 13

CIPA: Children’s Internet Protection Act -- governs the filtering of Internet access; acceptable use; and digital citizenship education

FERPA: Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act – protects the privacy of student education records

Learn more about this important legislation from the U.S. Office of Educational Technology and be prepared to read terms and policies for each potential technology tool you look to integrate into your classroom. You can also learn more about specific applications and services for children by searching Privacy Evaluations from the Common Sense Privacy Program.

When in doubt, lean on your school, district, or county technology department for support and information.

Password Do’s and Don’ts

Below are some password “do’s” and “don’ts” that can help you to maintain the security of your personal data.



- **Do** use longer passwords. Passwords become harder to crack with each character that you add, so longer passwords are better than shorter ones.
- **Do** use special characters, such as \$, #, and &. Most passwords are case sensitive, so use a mixture of upper case and lower case letters, as well as numbers.
- **Don't** "recycle" a password. Password-protected sites are often vulnerable because people often use the same passwords on numerous sites. If your password is breached, your other accounts could be put at risk if you use the same passwords.

- **Don't** use personal information (your name, birthday, Social Security number, pet's name, etc.), common sequences, such as numbers or letters in sequential order or repetitive numbers or letters, dictionary words, or "popular" passwords.
- **Don't** share your passwords with others.
- **Do** enable two-factor authentication (when available) for your online accounts. Typically, you will enter your password, and then a code will be sent to your phone. You will need to enter the code in addition to your password before you can access the account.
- **Don't** write down your passwords or save them in a computer file or email. Consider a password manager program if you can't remember your passwords.

In addition to choosing a password thoughtfully, you need to think about where you are storing your passwords. What systems are your students using? If you're not going to invest in an encrypted password app or subscription, make sure to keep your passwords securely stored and locked so that there isn't a chance that they will fall into the wrong hands.

When in doubt, lean on your school, district, or county technology department for support and information.

Understanding Settings within Tools

Most of the digital tools that you and your students will access include social share settings. It's important that you understand these settings and share this knowledge transparently with your students and their caregivers.

If your school or district has adopted a large scale solution like G Suite for Education or Microsoft Office 365, the settings are managed by a representative and therefore not something you can change. Instead, you will need to work in partnership with the account administrator to best understand what you and your students are capable of sharing and with whom. Understanding the limits and explaining these to your students and their caregivers is extremely empowering and definitely a best practice.

Reflect on the process that you go through in order to make sure that an app that you use with your students complies with federal laws. What does that look like?

Assessing the Quality of the Online Tool

When you are shopping for online resources, you want to make sure you are choosing tools and sites that are trusted and high-quality. How do you know when you've found those? Here are a few suggestions to help you navigate all the tools and resources out there for teachers and classroom adoption.

Professional Reviews

Common Sense Education (CSE) offers a vast database of educator-reviewed digital tools, apps, and games to help you determine if any given tool is appropriate and valuable for your learners. Check out [CSE Edtech Reviews](#) and sort by grade, subject, objective, price, and other criteria. The [EdSurge Product Index](#) is another community-driven database of edtech products that provides searchable options, case studies, and detailed descriptions of tools and apps to help you with your efforts.

Lean on Your Network

If you are looking to adopt a new program, start by asking your trusted network of educators and leaders who can provide some insight. If you don't have a network that is skilled in the area of edtech, you can always join a forum or social network to help you connect with other educators in this way.

Mass Adoption: You still need to be mindful

As a friendly reminder, just because your school or district has adopted a tool or platform doesn't mean that it will do everything you need it to do for you or your learners.

CONSIDER GETTING TO KNOW THE ADOPTED TOOLS REALLY WELL BY USING THEM YOURSELF.



Pilot the tools with your students and ask for their feedback.

By mindfully adopting the tool with your learners and their families, you just might discover new ways to use them that you hadn't considered before. Or, you might discover a need that you and your learners have, and you can go out and find the tool that meets your WHY!

Choose a digital tool to learn more about by reading the reviews or seeing what other educators are saying about it on social media. What's your overall opinion about this project as a teaching tool? What did you like? How could it serve kids and/or your teaching better?

Create a Home Technology Inventory

Walking into the school year with a clear picture of technology access and bandwidth for each student in their homes is going to be a game changer. In the Spring of 2020, teachers were working tirelessly to offer digital instruction, stay connected, and be healthy all at the same time. With the grace of time, you have the opportunity to process what worked and what changes you want to make.

Take advantage of a new set of students and parents and start this conversation early. Consider creating a home technology inventory survey that will give you this information directly. It's a great idea to run your survey by your administrator in case there is school- or district-wide communication going out that can give you this information. Working in partnership with your team will help you figure this all out together.



You might ask questions like:

- How many regular technology users live in your home?
- On a typical school day, how much time does your family spend streaming videos, participating on video calls, or streaming other media?
- Do you have regular internet service at home?
- How reliable is your home internet service?
- What kind of devices will your child have access to for digital, online learning?

Bandwidth



Internet bandwidth “describes the maximum data transfer rate of a network or Internet connection.” This definition is from [Techterms.com](https://www.techterms.com/definition/bandwidth). Bandwidth measures how much data can be sent over a specific connection in a given amount of time.” For example, when you stream a video, that large video file is made up of a lot of data, or computer code. In order to send that file so it appears smooth and uninterrupted, you need larger bandwidth, or the ability to quickly transport that big amount of data to your device.

Not all internet is built equally. To have a stronger bandwidth, you often have to pay more for a quicker network or service. Certain networks are quicker in some neighborhoods and slower in others. Others are quicker on newer devices and slower on older devices. Some internet service providers are more affordable but might not offer the bandwidth you need to consume and create for school assignments.

Make sure you understand that the more media-rich assignments you send home mean that your students need to have larger bandwidth and stronger internet service to complete them successfully. If a student tells you they “can’t get on” or “it wouldn’t load” for them, this could be an indicator that they are experiencing issues with bandwidth and service. Take this into consideration when you are problem-solving your distance learning curriculum.

Create a Home Technology Inventory

In addition to quality bandwidth, you have to think about the types of devices your students have access to (or do not have access to) regularly.



These questions need to be answered for your students:

- How many devices can get online?
- How many devices are available at home?
- How many users are sharing devices?
- How much dedicated time do your learners have with a reliable device?

Consider these points sooner rather than later so you can set your students and their caregivers up for success with empathy and understanding.



Video conferences on Google Meet and Zoom take up a LOT of data. So you should try to choose a regular time to hold your meetings that allows students and families to plan for the need for more bandwidth. Otherwise, no one will be able to participate since they will be battling for the internet signal.

Screen time: How much is too much?

Ahhhhh the tender topic of screen time is top of mind for so many teachers and administrators right now. No one wants to set their students up to sit and watch a screen for hours upon hours each day. Let's start by noting that there are different types of screentime.

The Common Sense Census: Media Use by Tweens and Teens identifies four main categories of screen time.

- **Passive Consumption:** watching TV, reading, and listening to music
- **Interactive Consumption:** playing games and browsing the
- **Internet Communication:** video-chatting and using social media
- **Content Creation:** using devices to make digital art or music



Make sure that you plan your lessons and projects considering these four categories. Are you differentiating your instruction? Are you keeping your students engaged by moving in and out of these categories in any given day?

To find out more about screen time norms, strategies, and tips, visit Common Sense Media's searchable Screen Time database and sort through their suggestions by age group and topic.

How you will move forward with the information you have learned about in Module 3. What are your next steps? Who can you turn to for help or guidance? What are the particular components that take priority before school starts?



MODULE

4



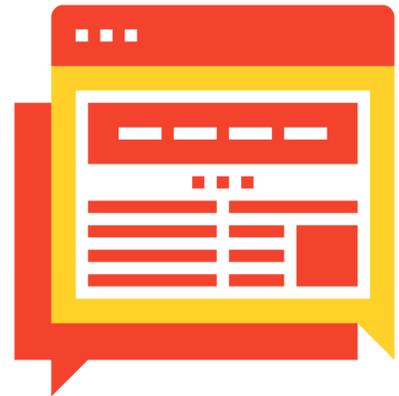
Creating a Balanced and Blended Learning Program: Guiding Students in their Learning

How can I guide my students to engage in a balanced, blended learning program?

What is an online forum and how does it work?

An online forum is a place where individuals can share ideas, ask questions, and respond to each other. Oftentimes it can make or break an online or blended learning experience because feeling connected to your peers is an aspect of learning that's non-negotiable. A huge responsibility of online and blended teachers is to create the most vibrant, interactive learning experiences for all unique learners. That starts with creating a safe place to share and wonder together.

Our friends at Common Sense Media have compiled [a short list](#) of high-quality online discussion forums that is worth checking out.



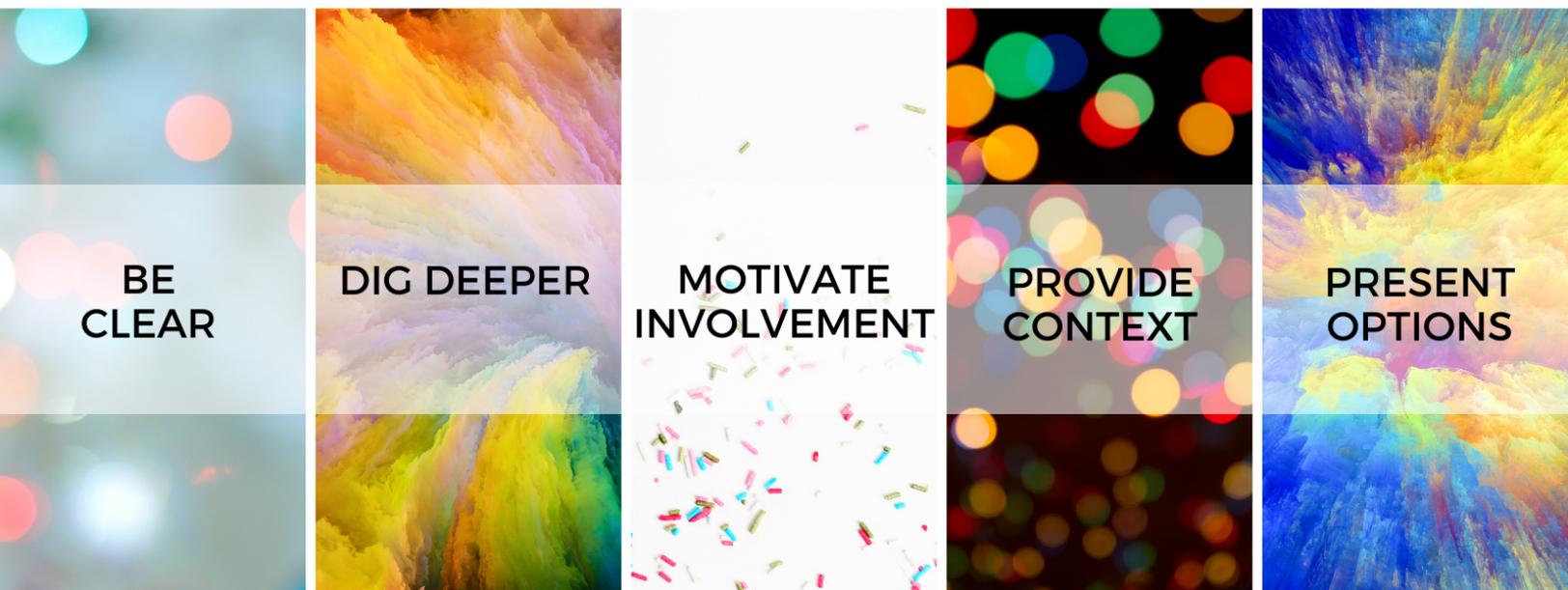
Barriers to Identify

It's not uncommon for students to feel nervous when asked to share in a digital format. Think back to when you were younger. Remember how it felt to raise your hand in a full classroom in 7th grade? Now multiply that by 25 and imagine that conversation being recorded so that anyone can reference it at any time in the future. That pressure of vulnerability is real. So how can you create a classroom culture that is ready for this type of digital communication? It starts with asking the right questions.

What questions should you ask?

While there really is no wrong question to ask in an online discussion forum, there are certainly questions that will engage students to open up in a more specific, personal way. [This infographic](#) highlighted by Northern Illinois University provides excellent strategies for you to consider when framing questions and online forums.

Below is an abbreviated list of suggestions taken directly from the infographic:



Wait Time: Q&A best practices

Any teacher that's asked a question and had to wait for students to respond in the classroom setting knows just how long those few seconds can feel to both the students and to themselves. Many have become skilled at giving their students time to process -- what is known as wait time.

Now that we're in a blended setting, wait time still needs to be given, but how are you to know when you've given enough time for students to process? A great place to start figuring this out is in conversations with your students. Try asking them:

- How much time do you think you need to answer a question?
- What about your classmates?
- What feels like the right amount of wait time for each of them?

You might also consider adding questions like this into a beginning-of-the-year survey so that each child can take their time to respond and not feel any pressure to respond in front of their peers when relationships might be new.



Teachers may be concerned with the possible influx of communication coming in - how can it be monitored and managed? This is a fair question and one that administrators and parents are asking as well. Here are some questions to consider when designing your online communication space.

- What type of engagement do I want to see?
- How can I maintain and monitor the discussions in a reasonable way?
- Do I want to save the conversation or is it ok if it disappears at the end?
- Do I want students to edit their entries after they are posted?
- Do I want to be able to edit student entries or delete them?
- Are students expected to put their names on their comments or are they anonymous?
- Do I want to be able to limit access and end a conversation at a certain time?

Discussing these important questions as staff, grade level, or department team can really help set the pace for students as they flow in and out of different classrooms and interact with different instructors. The more consistent policies are shared, discussion forums and online communication spaces can mimic each other, the easier it will be to monitor and manage the spaces. This prioritizes the student experience, the parent trust, and the overall time spent managing all these threads for both the teachers and administrators.

Intentionality and Authenticity

Just like in the traditional classroom, tone, word choice, and body language play a huge role in the communication between students and between students and teachers. As noted in Module 1, it's no different when in an online space. The most important thing you can do as the classroom teacher is to model appropriate expectations for your students. If you tend to have a sarcastic tone to some of your delivery, consider how that comes across online. Could it be offensive or taken the wrong way? Or is it familiar and something that endears your students to you? Knowing this early on helps you design spaces and norms that will last throughout the year. What happens if you haven't established that comfort level with your students because it's the beginning of the year? In truth, that is a real challenge and one that you will need to lean on your grade level or department team members to navigate.



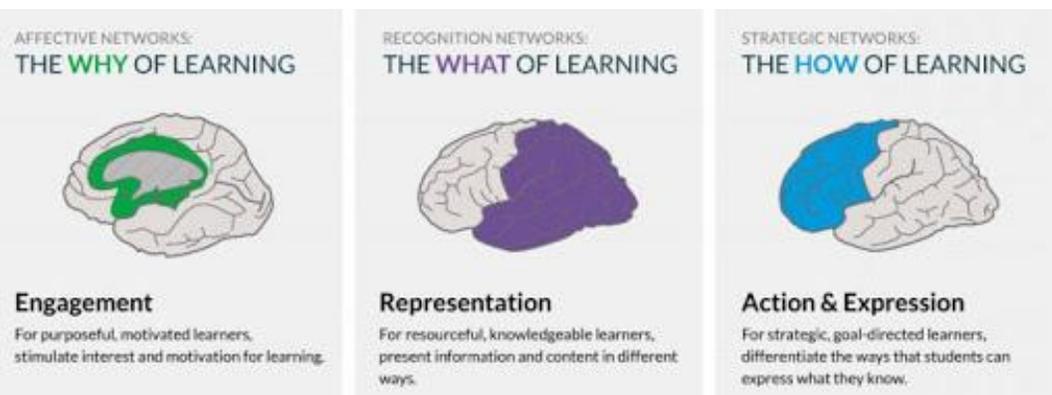
When you choose your online communication space, be aware of whether or not there is the capability to video and/or screen record. (Note: You should check your school/district policies about the use of video in student meetings.) This matters because video can add body language and facial expressions to any thread of communication. Again, this may be one of your

objectives. If not, be aware that it will impact the flow and pace of sharing, and consider the impact it will have over relationships and conversations.

What is your plan/strategy for managing online discussions with your students? What skills do your students need to have in order to engage in productive online conversations?

The Power of Choice

One of the most important instructional design elements that can be weaved into the new, blended structure is student choice. As suggested by CAST, “Universal design for learning (UDL) is a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn.” Presenting your instruction with embedded choice and options to showcase your learning in a way that feels best to you creates a responsive classroom environment.



When the learning goal is clear and accessible in multiple places in the learning environment, educators and learners can make purposeful choices about the options available and the use of those options.

Choice can take on various shapes. Sometimes it can look like optional projects. Other times it might look like one project with different options for a final product. It can also take the shape of a menu of tasks that a student can choose from to complete a lesson or unit. It can even look like a “divide-and-conquer” approach to inspire instructional experts within your classroom. Students get better and better at certain content areas because they are choosing to go deeper into specific areas of interest.

Empower students to know their learning language

As instructors, you dig into learning theories because it helps you understand your students more personally and uniquely. Sometimes, though, you may skip the step of actually helping your students understand their strengths as learners. If you don't explicitly teach what learning can look like, you run the risk of leaving the child out of the learning equation. Don't be afraid to have conversations with your students about different ways of learning.

Consider:

- Am I empowering my students to learn in a way that makes the most sense for them?
- Am I offering multiple entry points for my students to learn or process information?
- Do my students know what type of learning strategies they're entitled to?

Remember, if you have students that are entitled to special learning supports through 504 Plans or IEPs, make sure that you are aware of ways to fulfill those needs across distance and devices. Just because they're not in front of you doesn't mean they're not entitled to all of the same supports. The document from Quality Matters, [Accommodating Student Individualized Education Program\(IEP\) & 504 Plans* in K-12 Education](#), is a great starting place to begin this conversation with your Administration and support staff.



Remind yourself of Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. There are eight specific modalities that Gardner points out. What's a modality? In its simplest terms, it's the way we learn.

Meet them Where They're At

Social media is all the buzz. And yet, as a teacher, where are you supposed to go and where are you supposed to stay away from? While you want to engage your students where they are, there's potential liability and risk if you go places that can potentially link you to communication that might not be appropriate for school. Identifying your comfort and school policies is a key step.

The safest place to start is just by asking questions. If you are not sure whether or not it's appropriate to engage with students or parents online, talk to your Administration. So many norms are being reset now due to the new learning environment; not knowing is a big mistake!

Parents may be turning to you to help them understand more about tools their children are using to communicate online with each other. Two great resources to share with parents are free! If you haven't spent time inside any of the several [Common Sense Media "Best of" Lists](#), consider this your personal invitation to dive in! Also, check out ["Wide Open Schools"](#) for curated resources and articles to empower families in this digital age.



SAMR: A Framework for Educational Technology Integration

Whether you are just now engaging in educational technology or have ample experience, it is helpful to have a shared vocabulary to guide you through this journey. A framework that helps define the integration of technology and education is called SAMR. The SAMR model was developed by Dr. Ruben Puentedura and it establishes four distinct degrees of classroom technology integration. Watch the video of [Dr. Puentedura's story](#) and the background of SAMR to learn more.

BEWARE: Digital Busy Work

Substitution, the S in SAMR, is an important first step for anyone integrating educational technology. Understanding how to take a previously unplugged activity and turn it into a digital one is valuable for any educator.

That being said, be mindful of the “substitution trap.” As mentioned in Module 3, it's simple to take a worksheet that would normally be printed and handed out to students in the classroom and put it on a website or learning management system for students to complete digitally. While there might be a place for this, it's not enough to mindlessly continue with this practice. It's essential that we, as educators, challenge ourselves to understand the value of creativity and collaboration in digital settings. You will lose the interests of your students quickly if you don't empower them to create and define their voices as learners, especially in an age where there is so much value placed on individualism, integrity, and being unique.

Student Accountability in Distance Learning Settings

Trust is a pivotal value in any blended or online learning environment. Students deserve to be trusted from day one, and they are especially in need of this trust when you consider all the changes and fluctuations they've experienced with learning during the Coronavirus epidemic of 2020. Part of trusting your students is challenging them and holding them accountable.

Part of trusting your students is challenging them and holding them accountable.



The National Education Association shares ways to hold students accountable that are within your personal realm of influence [in this article](#).

“Establish, practice, and enforce expectations and consequences,” says Kate Ortiz, a retired teacher and classroom management expert. “The goal is for students to take ownership of their own behavior. Creating a positive group identity and helping each student know that they are part of the group helps.”

Consider how a positive attitude, respectful group atmosphere, and clarity around expectations can be tools of empowerment for your students. How are you making that happen in your blended and online learning space?

Synchronous vs. Asynchronous eLearning

Another consideration regarding accountability during distance learning relates to the construct of time. Synchronous and asynchronous learning takes on a unique shape when referring to e-learning. “Synchronous e-learning refers to real time online learning best exemplified by online classes, training sessions, and webinars taught through an online virtual classroom.... Asynchronous learning most frequently refers to teacher and student interactions that occur at different times and different locations. Great examples of asynchronous e-learning can be found in fully online courses. You can even look at email exchanges, discussion boards, and learning management system or course management system activities as examples of asynchronous e-learning.” Finding a balance of this type of learning and communicating effectively with your students about expectations in these scenarios is key for accountability and trust.

Keeping the SAMR model in mind, consider a lesson that you have used with students in the past. What can be done to that lesson in order to bring it over to modification or redefinition?



Rubrics: Making Assessment Transparent

It's so important for students to understand what success looks like. Rubrics are a fantastic tool to help make this happen. Let's look at some rubric options so you can start to wrap your head around the right-fit style and format for you and your learners.

Jennifer Gonzales outlines three common types of rubrics [on this blog post](#). In sum, let's look at the three definitions with examples from her blog.



HOLISTIC RUBRIC: A holistic rubric is the most general kind. It lists three to five levels of performance, along with a broad description of the characteristics that define each level.

ANALYTIC RUBRIC: An analytic rubric breaks down the characteristics of an assignment into parts, allowing the scorer to itemize and define exactly what aspects are strong, and which ones need improvement.

SINGLE-POINT RUBRIC: A single-point rubric is a lot like an analytic rubric because it breaks down the components of an assignment into different criteria. What makes it different is that it only describes the criteria for proficiency; it does not attempt to list all the ways a student could fall short, nor does it specify how a student could exceed expectations.

It is intriguing to think that there are options that can help your students see success from the very beginning of their work. Rubrics also prioritize parents in the learning process. So many caregivers are being presented with assignments and asked to help their child complete them successfully. But many parents don't know what success looks like for these assignments. Rubrics continue to detail process and product so that the learners and their caregivers can be in charge of their journey.

What type of rubric/s do you have experience with? Are you intrigued by the different types mentioned here? What type/s of rubrics you want to try to work with for online learning?

Compliance vs Competency

Distance learning educators have to determine the purpose of assessments very carefully. Classroom teachers check for understanding both formally and informally during school hours. Sometimes you feel the energy in a room when the students “get it.” Other times you assess by walking around the room and noting progress in real-time. Sometimes you can see it on the students’ faces. Your challenge is to think about and plan to continue to check for understanding, but do so across distance.

Let's consider how assessments can support your students by showing us what they are competent in. This concept goes deeper than just completing the work because it's assigned; that's known as compliance. Instead, it considers what skills are being taught and mastered. So how can you assess for competency knowing that each student may arrive at success at a different time, on a different pace, and in a different pattern?

*Consider the following statement:
“Flexible learning requires flexible assessment.”*

Based on the information covered in this module, what might flexible assessment look like in your classroom? How can I guide my students to engage in a balanced, blended learning program?



EXTEND YOUR LEARNING

How can I continue to learn more about blended learning?

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