Flexible Learning Topics

BetterLesson™

Class Culture and Student Engagement

Supporting communities, collaboration, and authentic relationships between teachers, students, and caretakers and families.

Flexible Learning Topics for Virtual Workshops and 1:1 Coaching

Social-Emotional Learning: Building Meaningful Relationships

Now more than ever, educators building relationships with students and nurturing healthy peer relationships will help students to seek support when needed, collaborate effectively, and feel safe to express themselves and their thinking. In this session, we will define what building relationships through Social Emotional Learning really means, and explore real scenarios for deploying SEL strategies in a flexible learning environment.

Collaborative Learning: Working Together in New Ways

In this session, we build understanding of what collaboration looks like in flexible learning environments, and explore various examples of how we can support students to make their learning visible and shared across modalities.

Communication and Feedback: Building a Two-Way Street Between Students and Teachers

In this session, we build understanding of how we can enhance our distance learning by developing systems of communication. When students have dedicated ways that they can reach out to peers and share their ideas, their learning won't feel as isolated at distance. We will explore ideas such as back-channeling, tutor spaces, consultancies, and more!

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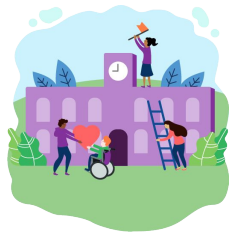
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Class Community: Creating a Safe and Positive Culture through Systems

In this session, we build understanding of how we can create a safe, inclusive learning environment even with variable learning environments. When students feel like they are a part of a learning community, norms for working online, asking for support, and expressing yourself can be integrated into their day-to-day experience. This session will look at some general Dos and Don'ts for establishing a learning community in a distance or virtual environment.

Family Partnerships: Working Alongside Caregivers to Deepen Learning

The most important people in a child's life are their family members and caretakers. As educators, we can always improve a student's learning experience by working closely with their loved ones, and in a flexible learning context this collaboration is more important than ever. In this session, we will explore approaches for creating two-way communication between teachers and families in ways that are responsive to each student's unique context.

Inclusive and Responsive Practices

Equity and trauma-informed practices to better support students' social- emotional realities and address a range of structural and personal challenges that impact student growth.

Flexible Learning Topics for Virtual Workshops and 1:1 Coaching

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Social-Emotional Learning 101: Developing Self-Regulation and Growth Mindset
LAUNCHING AUGUST 2020

Social-Emotional Learning skills include developing an awareness of students' own emotions and mindsets. Once students have an awareness of these aspects of their 'selves', they can regulate and manage their emotions and behaviors can empower students to have their voices heard in positive ways. At BetterLesson, we firmly believe that in order to set students up for success in their futures, teachers must ensure that students learn and practice these social-emotional skills and habits of success while they are in school, and internalize and apply them to themselves and their relationships with others.

Trauma-Informed Practices: Creating Safe Spaces

Incorporating SEL and trauma-informed practices is paramount in meeting the needs of all learners; more so during this time of social distancing, isolation, and ongoing racial violence. In this session, we build our knowledge and skills regarding SEL and trauma-informed practices in order to provide students with a safe and responsive learning environment, be aware of and avoid triggers, and tend to our own emotional wellbeing.

Culturally Responsive Teaching: Moving from Awareness to Action

Historically, the educational system has valued certain cultures over others, promoting biases in curriculum, instruction, and assessment that have largely ignored and devalued the cultural identity of many students. When students feel excluded and unseen, they intuit the message that they are not valued in the learning environment, which can have negative implications on their learning, mindset, and overall future success. Additionally, all students, especially white students, need "windows and mirrors" into historical truths to better understand the perspectives of others. Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning promotes the development of teaching and learning through the lens of creating equitable, replicable, and sustainable practices to support all learners to be successful.

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Equity and Access: Ensuring All Students Meet Their Potential

Recent events, including the isolation resulting from sudden school closure due to COVID 19 and ongoing racial violence have been deeply traumatic to students, families, and entire communities. More than ever, it's critical that we evaluate our flexible learning courses in terms of equity. Thinking about the accessibility of our course for all learners can help us to think about distance learning through a critical and societal lens. This session will support us to look at examples of distance courses, and think about the experiences of students, especially those who need additional support or who will not have the same access as others, in order to audit and make positive changes.

Trauma-Informed Systems: Building Positive Learning Environments

As schools build foundational components of trauma-informed practices with Social Emotional Learning and other initiatives, the next question is: How do we make these practices sustainable and consistent over time? In this session, we explore the concept of "practicing positive", or creating ownership within our classrooms and students through consistent systems that allow us to stay on top of our practice.

Flexible Instructional Models

Integrate technology and student- driven personalization to allow innovative instructional design, meaningful tasks and assessment, and ensure continuity of learning regardless of physical learning configurations.

Flexible Learning Topics for Virtual Workshops and 1:1 Coaching

Setting Up Space:
Organizing Flexible Learning Spaces

In this session, we build awareness of the importance of developing an organization system to set up a way for students to access resources and tasks and dig into shared examples -- from using a LMS, to leveraging a choice-based structure. We will ask participants to think about how their organization systems from in-person learning can be replicated at distance. Participants start to build their own strategic plan for what is most important to them and their students in this area.

Meaningful Tasks:
Designing Engaging Learning Experiences

In a flexible learning environment, students are far more likely to engage deeply in their learning if they are asked to complete tasks and make products that are meaningful and clearly connected to their identities and passions. In this session, we build awareness of the many approaches to asynchronous learning tasks. Participants will see examples and scenarios of asynchronous learning, and imagine converting daily tasks in-person to distance learning. We will ask participants to take an in-person task and convert it to distance learning format based on what we have talked about so far. Participants start to build their own strategic plan for what is most important to them and their students in this area.

Flexible Assessment:
Designing Authentic Assessments to Check Progress

In a Flexible learning environment, students and teachers must have consistent access to feedback on progress so that they start to identify gaps early. Assessing at a distance needs to be approached carefully to ensure students feel motivated and that tasks are equitable. This session will explore some big ideas in providing feedback and assessing progress authentically and ask participants to narrow their focus to an actionable next step around their assessment design.

Professional Learning Reimagined

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Learning Cadence: Using Time to Organize Learning

In this session, we build awareness around different ways to approach the 'cadence', or timelines, of students' needs and learning opportunities. Using examples and scenarios to explore possibilities, we introduce the ideas of 'synchronous' and 'asynchronous' learning, and participants will think about key 'benchmarks' of learning in their own lives. We will ask participants to compare how their schedules from in-person learning will change and remain. Participants start to build their strategic plans for what is most important to them and their students in this area.

Digital Citizenship: Creating a Safe And Thriving Learning Space Online
LAUNCHING SEPTEMBER 2020

As we support students to do an increasing amount of learning in a digital environment, creating consistent expectations and safe spaces can be challenging. In this session, we will define both the benefits and challenges behind traditional digital citizenship approaches and explore new ways to embed and create a safe learning space in flexible learning contexts.

Synchronous Learning: Bringing Live Learning to Life

In this session, we will build understanding of the benefits and challenges of synchronous learning, and the ways in which we can make live classes via video conferencing tools more engaging and impactful. We will also introduce participants to creative ways to use a synchronous space that are not whole-group instruction and can therefore support differentiating the virtual learning experience.

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Asynchronous Learning: Pathways for Students to Learn at Their Own Pace

In this session, participants will experience self-paced learning for themselves and have an opportunity to think about how the creation of a 'pathway' can support students as they work towards mastery. When students have a guide that illustrates how their learning is progressing, it can replicate the positive feelings of completion and success in a purely brick-and-mortar setting. This session will also highlight the challenges of self-paced pathways, and how benchmarking and controlling the amount of time students are self-paced can help.

Make Tech More Meaningful: The SAMR Digital Integration Framework
LAUNCHING OCTOBER 2020

This session allows participants to workshop tools they are using to think about ways to enhance the learning and efficiency that can come from thinking about meaningful tech integration.

Curriculum and Academic Content

Meet all learners where they are; Supporting learners to overcome content and academic gaps through rich and relevant tasks, student centered curriculum, and thoughtful assessment of learning.

Flexible Learning Topics for Virtual Workshops and 1:1 Coaching

Diverse Student Populations: Supporting English Learners and Students with Disabilities

Distance Learning represents a real challenge when it comes to supporting all learners to be successful. In this session, we talk about how Distance Learning can map to the principles of Universal Design, and we can leverage ideas around scaffolding, equity, and targeted support to meet the needs of all learners. In particular, we need to create a plan for supporting special needs students and English learners to get the support they need in this modality.

Stop the Slide: Using Data to Address Academic Gaps
LAUNCHING AUGUST 2020

Students will need support addressing learning gaps more than ever after prolonged time away from school. Creating systems that make addressing those gaps consistent, replicable, and student-centered are key to ensuring that we can differentiate thoughtfully and equitably.

Flexible Math: Introduction to Student-Centered Math Practices
LAUNCHING AUGUST 2020

This session is created to serve as your learning community's launch into a student-centered math initiative within a flexible learning environment/structure. This experience draws on tenets of active pedagogy to dive deeply into some of the pillars of a student-centered math approach, including the leveraging of meaningful math discourse and a problem-study orientation.

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Flexible Literacy: Intro to Student-Centered Literacy Practices

Most educators are familiar with the idea that children learn to read from kindergarten to second grade and then read to learn from third grade onwards. Not surprisingly, this transition is when children can begin to experience challenges in reading due to gaps in their reading skills that only increase as texts become more complex and as students need to use those skills in multiple content areas. Empowering students with explicit instruction on literacy skills and then supporting them to practice those skills at a pace and rigor that is most appropriate for them is essential for students to approach mastery of complex texts. This session explores some of those big ideas of a student-centered literacy approach.

Literacy Curriculum at a Distance: A Deep Dive into EL Education

With the uncertainty of the next school year, this session will explore some Big ideas in Distance Learning and how EL can support continued Student Centered Literacy. We will see some examples and scenarios of tasks and systems supporting students that leverage content and ideas in EL within distance learning modalities.

Math Curriculum at Distance: A Deep Dive into Open Up Resources

Ideally, students would engage in the OUR 6-8 Math Curriculum by working face-to-face with a small group of peers to grapple with tasks and then learn from each other's thinking in a whole-class discussion facilitated by the teacher. Given the current necessity of distance or blended learning, we will explore how creative teachers have been using flexible learning tools to help students engage with the content and big ideas of the curriculum from their own homes.

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Tech Tools for Math:
Student-Centered Practices that Would Make Pythagoras Proud
LAUNCHING AUGUST 2020

Developing student-entered Math practices is a key way to build student ownership of math concepts by promoting discourse, visible learning, and inquiry. Doing all that consistently is a challenge! In this session, we will explore student-centered Math tools that will help to integrate technology meaningfully into math.

Tech Tools for Literacy:
Beyond the Screen, Into the Story.
LAUNCHING AUGUST 2020

Student-centered literacy instruction is a skills-rich and text-robust approach to teaching literacy that emphasizes student choice and ownership of reading, writing, speaking, and listening at all grade levels and subject areas. This approach is enhanced and can often be more engaging and sustainable when we apply technology that helps us to expand the time and space where students discuss, explore, get feedback, and read complex texts. This session will delve into some of the best tools for building a student-centered literacy approach.

Instructional Leadership

Leaders expand their skills in change management, coaching, and feedback to meet the demands of flexible learning environments.

Flexible Learning Topics for Virtual Workshops and 1:1 Coaching

Strategic Planning Prework: Building Awareness Around Key Shifts

In this session, we develop awareness around key ideas in flexible learning, explore rubrics of leadership and change management, and develop ideal outcomes of our plans by looking at example school and district stories. We will develop understanding around articulating your role and communicating vision for instruction to key stakeholders by exploring real artifacts of leadership

Strategic Planning: Goals and Objectives of an Instructional Plan

In this session, we build understanding around the role of teacher ongoing support and professional development in flexible learning initiatives, and continue to add to participant's strategic plan to develop clear goals and objectives of the instructional shifts

Communicating your Strategic Vision: Getting Everyone on the Bus Effectively

In this session, we develop understanding around articulating your role and communicating vision for instruction to key stakeholders by exploring real artifacts of leadership

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Flexible Learning 101: Best Practices and Big Ideas

In this session, we build a deeper understanding of the best practices of teaching and learning flexibly, including distance learning pedagogy, and asynchronous and synchronous learning. This knowledge can support strong instructional leadership and vision.

Setting up Flexible PD: Structures for Shared Professional Learning

In this session, we share big ideas in developing professional learning that can also be flexible. We will engage with a range of strategies and scenarios; including choice-based models and virtual PD. And we will explore the most effective means for transferring increased ownership to teachers over time.

Academic Gaps: Using Data to Stop the Slide and Move Forward

In this session, we focus on academic gaps and remediation strategies and supports that remain student centered. Addressing the gaps that have formed is a key part of any change management strategy entering the new school year.

Trauma-Informed Practices for Leaders: Taking a Positive Approach
LAUNCHING AUGUST 2020

In this session, we define the trauma informed leader's mindsets and strategies that can help build key practices that support staff, teachers, and students. Modeling these practices as a leader is essential to your school's or district's commitment to being trauma-informed.

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Leading for Equity: Prioritizing Needs and Ensuring Access to Resources

In this session, we define and sharpen the lens of equity through targeted scenario based work that explores technology access, English learners and special education needs, and resource deployment

Flexible Assessment for Leaders: Strategically Approaching Data and Feedback
LAUNCHING AUGUST 2020

In this session, we build awareness around the challenges and potential of assessing progress, including the use of feedback from stakeholders, reviewing data from reliable tools, and more. Assessing progress in a flexible learning environment requires approaches that can also be flexible and use a variety of data streams.

Caregiver Connection: Setting Up Systems to Partner With Families
LAUNCHING AUGUST 2020

In this session, we focus on caretakers and families, and developing connections and strategies that engage them as critical stakeholders and powerful allies in the change management of flexible learning.

Supporting Wellness: Utilizing Mindfulness to Meet the Emotional Needs of Your Team
LAUNCHING AUGUST 2020

Though so often left out of leadership prep programs, strategies for cultivating a mindful culture and ensuring staff wellness are essential to successful leadership. At this moment in particular, your team and staff need spaces for reflection, mindfulness, and positive growth. Developing those spaces with them also models ways to support students to navigate an emotional and traumatic time.

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