



Virtual Learning Sessions: Distance Learning

Overview

Distance learning is a significant shift—for students, teachers, and schools alike. Whether distance learning is virtual or low-tech, adopted rapidly in a moment of crisis or part of a long-term plan to supplement in-school learning, educators need support to create safe, collaborative, academically rigorous learning spaces where all students can thrive.

In Virtual Learning Sessions, educators will explore some of the first steps and design principles needed to found a distance learning course with a focus on equity and student-centered learning. Over a few sessions, educators can create the structure for distance learning in their context, and gain insight and ideas from peers.

Who are Virtual Learning Sessions for?

Virtual Learning Sessions are designed to support K-12 teachers, instructional coaches, and administrators. We recommend that educators also receive ongoing supports to help them build and refine their distance learning course over time, such as 1:1 coaching.

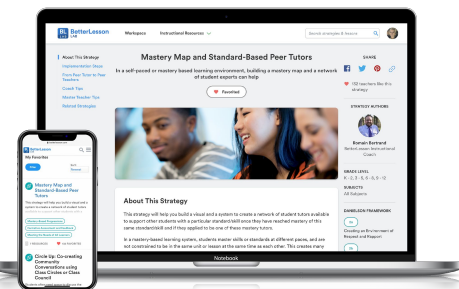
Virtual Learning Sessions are not webinars. They are highly interactive, with opportunities for discussion and to create a plan with manageable next steps. We model what we teach - so teachers and coaches experience the kind of engaging distance learning they will create with their students.

How Does it Work?

Learning Sessions are designed to adapt to districts' and schools' needs:

- **Time:** Each session meets for two hours, via video conference. Participants can attend one or a series of sessions.
- **Coaches:** Each session is facilitated by a BetterLesson coach - highly-effective, experienced educators with training in student-centered instruction, distance learning, and adult pedagogy.
- **Lab:** Participants receive access to the BetterLesson Lab: an online platform where they can search thousands of high-quality blended and distance learning lesson plans, instructional strategies, and videos.

We partner with education organizations to reimagine professional learning, build teacher and leader capacity, and improve outcomes for all students.



“This Distance Learning PD has been a breakthrough of knowledge for me. I feel very equipped with resources to empower students, families, and staff.”

District Instructional Leader, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Teacher and Leader Outcomes

Essential Skills

Distance learning is a huge shift that can take many years to master. Virtual Learning Sessions build foundational understanding so that educators can create increasingly student-centered distance learning courses. They will make big shifts in:



Mindset: Educators believe that distance learning can be meaningful and based in student ownership.



Equity: Educators can design distance learning so that all students get the support and access they need.



Organization: Educators create distance learning courses with easy, consistent organization systems that students grasp.



Experimentality: Educators know how to collect data about students' experiences and make changes to improve over time.

"The BetterLesson facilitators were excellent. They modeled how to build community and make the lesson interactive and participatory, even through the digital platform."

English teacher
Cumberland County Schools

Session Topics

Districts and schools can select the topics that are right for them, from one to a series of sessions:

Session A: Organizing with a Tool:
Setting Up a Space For Students to Learn

Session B: Structuring Your Time:
Setting Up a Cadence for Learning

Session C: Developing Their Tasks:
Setting Up Ways for Students to Learn

Session D: Synchronous Learning Sessions:
Leveraging Video and Real-Time Tools

Session E: Self-Paced Learning Pathways:
Guiding Students Through Tasks

Session F: Collaboration and Communication:
Developing Shared Places

Session G: Student-Centered Culture:
Building the Concept of Community at Distance

Session H: Equity in Distance:
Making Your Distance Learning More Equitable

Session I: Distance Learning in a Hurry:
Making a Quick Shift

Session J: Leading Through Change:
Making Continuous Improvement to Your
Distance Learning Plan (For Administrators
Only)

Session Topics - In Depth

Each session can be adapted to address an audience of teachers, instructional coaches, or school or district administrators. Teacher and instructional coach versions will focus more on pedagogy where leader versions will focus more on school or district-wide implementation or guidance.

Session A: Organizing with a Tool: Setting Up a Space For Students to Learn

Learn different models for your organization system, looking at Learning Management Systems, choice-based structures like learning pathways, and adapting in-person methods. Start to build an action plan.

Session B: Structuring Your Time: Setting Up a Cadence for Learning

Learn different approaches for how to schedule learning time, including “synchronous” and “asynchronous” tasks and key benchmarks. Compare how in-person learning schedules will change or remain. Start to build an action plan.

Session C: Developing Their Tasks: Setting Up Ways for Students to Learn.

Learn about asynchronous tasks (i.e. those students do on their own). Imagine converting in-person tasks to distance learning, considering the student experience. Start to build an action plan.

Session D: Synchronous Learning Sessions: Leveraging Video and Real-Time Tools

Learn about synchronous learning (i.e. where teachers and students meet in real time), including how office hours, video conferencing, and other real-time communication can best support students. Learn specific tools to meet your goals. Start to build an action plan.

Session E: Self-Paced Learning Pathways: Guiding Students Through Tasks

Learn how self-paced learning pathways can help students move towards mastery and build a feeling of success. Experience self-paced learning during the session and explore how to balance self-paced tasks with direction instruction. Start to build an action plan.

Session F: Collaboration and Communication: Developing Shared Places

Learn how to develop systems of collaboration and communication such as back-channeling, tutor spaces, consultancies and more. Explore how such systems help students feel less isolated. Start to build an action plan.

Session G: Student Centered Culture: Building the Concept of Community at Distance

Learn how to create a safe, inclusive, culturally-responsive learning environment. Explore issues like norms for working online, asking for support, and expressing yourself constructively. Start to build an action plan.

Session H: Equity in Distance: Making Your Distance Learning More Equitable

Learn how to evaluate your distance learning course through the lens of equity and accessibility. Explore examples of distance learning courses from the student perspective, and consider additional support needed. Start to build your action plan.

Session I: Distance Learning in a Hurry: Making a Quick Shift with Distance Learning

Learn how the 8 guiding questions in the [Guide to Getting Started with Distance Learning](#) can provide some structure when making a quick shift. Share your challenges with other educators and get feedback and coaching, including with how to adapt current materials to your new reality. Start to build your action plan.

Session J: Leading Through Change: Making Continuous Improvement to Your Distance Learning Plan (For Administrators Only)

Learn how to best support teachers, families, and students to be successful in a distance learning environment, including how to assess progress and continuously improve. Discuss key questions and best practices with other leaders, and experience interactive virtual learning. Start to build your action plan.

Progressions

Progression 1: Ideating a Distance Course

Sessions: A, B, C

This progression introduces participants to three core components of a distance learning course: tools, time, and task. It is ideal for teachers or leaders who are designing a course before or as implementing.

Progression 2: Student-Centered Distance Learning

Sessions: G, F, H

This progression focuses on enhancing your distance learning course to make it more effective and student-centered. It is ideal for teachers or leaders who already feel comfortable with the key components.

Progression 3: Pivoting to Distance Learning

Sessions: I, J, I

In this progression, participants meet for three sessions built around coaching and Q&A. It's designed to help teachers and leaders rapidly deploy distance learning.

Progression 4: Design-Your-Series

Sessions: Any

Districts and schools can design their own progression based on their needs, or allow teachers to choose the next session at the end of each previous.