



Distance Education allows for a continuum of instructional support; however, the amount of instructor involvement positively impacts the quality of the student experience, and increased involvement means increased student success<sup>1</sup>. To ensure learner persistence, programs need to think about how to best communicate with learners and track their progress, syncing these two tasks to promote engagement.

## Adapting Instruction to Virtual Classrooms

### **Transitioning to Online Classes**

You can start with the mindset of moving an adapted version of your classroom instruction online. You might do this by using a website to share useful resources online or an online curriculum created by a publisher. Offer webinars or video tutoring sessions to support instruction.

**Use one primary curriculum.** Making use of a core online curriculum makes it possible for students to become familiar with one online environment and, through actively using it, build skills and confidence using web-based resources. Focusing on one curriculum helps teachers become local experts on it - deepening their knowledge of its content and how it's laid out. Explore this [new repository for edtech resources](#) to learn more about different core curricula. Be sure it's mobile friendly.

**Provide supplemental learning activities and resources.** Even the most robust curriculum cannot cover all of the needs of a learner or provide all of the content required to address required standards. Supplemental resources fill the gap. Be sure all resources you introduce are mobile friendly. See our homepage for links to learning resources.

**Use a digital homeroom to link to all learning activities.** Learners need to be able to access all learning resources (e.g., links to the core online curriculum and key complementary online resources) and support documents (e.g., instructions for logging in, program information, and teacher contact info) from one place. You can build one using free website tools like Google sites or Weebly, or use an LMS like [Google Classroom](#), [Canvas](#), or [Moodle](#), which offer free options.



**IN-PERSON  
INSTRUCTION**



**VIRTUAL  
CLASSROOM  
INSTRUCTION**

**Rethink classroom activities.** You can create a virtual classroom that offers peer-to-peer engagement. For tips and sample activities on how to adapt face-to-face classroom instruction for remote, virtual instruction, read through the [edtech section](#) of the National Immigration Forum's report on their mobile-first remote English classes for immigrant workers.

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<sup>1</sup> Zhao, Y., Lei, J., Yan, B., Lai, C., & Tan, H. S. (2005). What Makes the Difference? A Practical Analysis of Research on the Effectiveness of Distance Education. *Teachers College Record*, 107(8), 1836–1884.

## Monitoring Learning & Tracking Progress

You need to keep track of learner progress toward the goals they set in your orientation session. In the short term, this will help you know who to reach out to and when. In the long term, it will help you understand how many teaching hours are needed to support how many students.

**Use reporting from your core online curriculum.** Some adult education programs rely on the reports available in their core curriculum, which often report student progress, percentage of correct responses on quizzes and activities, percentage of assignments done, and time spent on tasks. The reports are a great way to measure progress with the learning activities included in the curriculum. These same reports are also available if a teacher has designed a course using an LMS.

**Use a database to track check-ins and learner progress.** You can use a simple shared Google spreadsheet or a database tool like FileMaker Pro or Microsoft Access to log important information. Consider documenting these data points for each student you support:

- NRS testing dates and results
- Date and amount of time spent doing in-person instruction
- When and how communication has occurred
- Learner work in supplemental online activities
- Proxy hours earned

**Consider using Digital Badges.** Digital micro-credentials are a way to display and document skills learned. Once a task is completed, a learner gets a digital badge, which can be included in a student portfolio to show mastery or a skill to employers or postsecondary education institutions. Websites such as [Credly](#), [Badgr](#), and [Bloomboard](#) allow teachers to design and distribute digital badges to students. Teachers can also track who has earned what badges. Many LMS have integrated badging systems.

## Communicating with Learners

Sustaining communication with learners is the best way to support persistence. Think about ways to support peer-to-peer collaboration as well as teacher to student communication.

**Use text messaging** [Our EdTech Center research](#) showed that learners and teachers alike feel comfortable using texting to support teaching and learning. Consider using What's App or Remind for easy outreach and frequent nudging.

**Keep lessons and assignment sharing simple.** Use simple tools that don't require lots of onboarding. Use your class website or LMS if you have one; if not, use Google Docs or Padlet for giving assignments. You can create a class Facebook group and post links and short writing tasks there. Follow up with video calls using [Google Hangout](#), [Skype](#), [Zoom](#) or [Big Blue Button](#). You could use recorded, threaded video discussions using the free tool [FlipGrid](#).



Other useful resources:

EdTech Center@ World Education - [\*Essential Tips for Starting Distance Learning\*](#)

EdTech Center@World Education - [\*Instruction and Assessment in Distance Learning\*](#)

ISTE's [\*Learning Keeps Going\*](#) (Guidance and resources for distance instruction)

Dr. Torry Trust University of Amherst [\*Teaching Remotely in Times of Need\*](#)

Tan Huynh's [\*Ideas for Structuring Virtual School\*](#)