



Prepare for Online Learning: MSON Guidelines for Administrators and Teachers:

1. Stick to Mission and Values

Your school is your school no matter what, and its community will go through this together and emerge even stronger. Think through the essential values of your school. How will “moving the school online” match those values and be right for your community? For example, you may consider:

- The technological readiness of your faculty and student body. Have you done any online or blended learning before? What are the systems that everyone uses most comfortably already? (Lean into those!)
- The elements of the school day that are most important and how you might recreate them.
- The various ages of your students. How much scaffolding will they require to learn more independently and from home?

2. Assess Student Technology Needs

The recommendations below rely on internet and technical resources. Not all of your community members may have reliable internet access at home. Similarly, not all may have a laptop at hand. Take the pulse of your student body on this issue, as every community will be different.

At home internet and device guidelines:

- In an ideal world, each of your students would have access to hard-wired ethernet, i.e., a wired ethernet connection to a modem, and a personal laptop or desktop computer. For full-time students in many online schools, this type of connection is recommended if not required.
- A wifi connection is your second-best option. Wifi is not as stable for video conferencing as hard-wired ethernet, but it certainly does the trick.
- Families with no at-home wifi may nonetheless have smartphones with internet access. Most of the LMS and video conferencing options for schools have app versions. Families in that situation should download those apps. Families with no wifi may be able to create personal hotspots using smartphones to enable internet on laptops.
- For video conferencing, we recommend headphones to reduce background noise and improve clarity. (Headphones also tend to discourage inappropriate parent involvement in class—particularly an issue for older students.)

3. Leverage Your Learning Management System (LMS)

Most of our schools have in place LMS’s such as Canvas, Google Classroom, Schoology, etc. Teachers should build out LMS pages for their courses if they have not already. It’s most



important to include a syllabus and set up all assignments with a way for students to see the assignment, complete it, and upload the work.

In most platforms, you can also set up a grade book, take attendance, and so much more.

4. Flip your Classroom

Many teachers are already adept at flipping their classes. The key principle is reserving class time for interaction (discussion, debate, presentations, etc.), and out-of-class time for watching recorded lectures, reading or lab work, and completing assignments, some of which might even be group activities.

MSON has resources to help teachers create a syllabus for a flipped classroom with fewer class meetings than a traditional schedule. Our “making the cuts” activity will help teachers determine what they absolutely must do live with their students and what might be done in an asynchronous format.

5. Screencast like a Pro

In order to flip a classroom, find ways to deliver content out of class time, or asynchronously, through screencasting. Please see our resources on screencasting.

6. Connect by Video

In a flipped classroom, class time is reserved for interaction; a video conference is your best tool to bring your classroom community online.

Consider what options you already have available locally. Does the school have a license with BlueJeans or Zoom? Are your teachers facile with Google Meet or Skype?

If the school does not already have its own license with a provider like BlueJeans or Zoom, MSON can set up virtual meetings for you. While we cannot set up a meeting for every one of the school’s classes, we could do so for key meetings. We can also advise on what service may be best to use and how to prepare your teachers and students.

7. But How Do I...?

There are endless tips and tricks online teachers deploy to do just about everything online. We are happy to answer questions (via email, calls, meetings, webinars) on the following:

- Student lab work online
- Assessments and academic dishonesty
- Submitting assignments that require handwriting
- Teaching subjects that require hand-writing or specialized formulas
- Playing videos in a video conference
- Providing students a virtual white board to collaborate



- Encouraging class participation
- Executing group projects
- ...and more!

8. Build a Schedule

Once teachers feel comfortable with a flipped classroom approach, consider adopting a modified version of your school schedule. Because students (and teachers!) may be distracted at home and/or required to attend to household duties, sitting in back-to-back video conferences for a full school day may be impossible. Consider dividing course meeting times in half (e.g. moving from four times a week to twice a week), and explore covering content asynchronously. Those now “free” periods are also great times to make teachers available for “office hours” or more informal conversations through video conferencing or phone.

9. Keep it Real

As we discuss extensively in our teacher training, *great teachers make great online teachers*. Your ability to relate to students and create a true classroom community carries over into the online classroom.

Use your time together in virtual meetings to connect. Especially in a situation like a pandemic-induced quarantine, students will be anxious and feel a major sense of disruption. Take your time together to care for one another.

Break the ice in the new format by asking each student a question. Emphasize participation. Get students accustomed to sharing and speaking openly.

Be yourself. Engage in content the way you would in the school building. Students yearn for a sense of normalcy in these situations. Structure familiar activities, and bring out class rhythms, traditions, and even inside jokes.

10. Make Lemons into Lemonade

There is much you can do in a virtual meeting that adds to community and enhances learning. Notably, teaching students from their home environments adds a richness we don't always appreciate. Give students permission to share what is going on at home, perhaps highlighting something you might not know otherwise.

Consider ways to bring students' home experiences into the classroom and into the learning. Are there projects they could do that make use of their surroundings—such as an at-home lab experiment using everyday items or an interview exercise where students talk to their family members?



Similarly, teaching online in a video conference is an opportunity to share an aspect of yourself your students may not know. While accounting for good lighting (try to avoid backlighting!) and a professional situation (although we can't always stop a wayward pet from wandering in!) be thoughtful about what you show. Teach in front of a bookcase with your favorite mystery collection—or near a window showing your neighborhood. Acknowledge the situation and leverage its power to build even deeper student-teacher and student-student relationships.

11. Move Beyond the Classroom

Full-time online high schools, such as Stanford Online High School, build community not only in the classroom but also outside of it. Many of the activities our schools cherish can exist online: homeroom/advisory, assemblies, extracurricular activities, counseling, college counseling, etc. Even physical education can morph into the online space!

Here are some basic tips:

- Hold assemblies via video conference
- Create a “lunch” period—a video conference, chat, or whiteboard space where students can actually eat their lunches at the same time when home and still interact. Use it as an excuse for students to share more about their home situations, families, cultures, etc.
- Create an LMS page for physical education. Have students log activity and share creative ways to be active at home. A jumping jack contest perhaps? A yoga flow found online that everyone follows?
- Move clubs online. There is no reason students cannot practice debate speeches in video conferences, watch French television in French club, or collaborate on the Yearbook from home.
- Hold college counseling sessions via video conference. (Administrators can use online scheduling tools such as [Doodle](#) or [Calendly](#), or even a simple Google Doc to schedule sessions.)

12. Start Now

Before a quarantine goes into effect, fire up the systems. Even if you think you know “how it all works,” try it out, and go deeper with your tools. For example, teachers should:

- Post assignments and collect student work through the system.
- Use a message board function to answer class questions.
- Record a funny video answering student questions or presenting content via a screencasting tool.
- Have students connect to video conferences from laptops from within your school building and ensure their ability to connect.

Your school may even consider an “online period.” Pretend you cannot meet in person for one period, even if everyone is in the school building. Meet from laptops in a video conference, and assign (and later collect) an assignment.