

YOUR BLUEPRINT FOR BUILDING AN ONLINE LEARNING PROGRAM

A Guide for School Leadership





Online education is not going anywhere.

In our recent [survey](#)¹, **81% of parents believe online learning helps their children better prepare for the future and 94% believe it positively impacts their children's ability to understand courses.** Plus, according to [National School Choice Week](#)², 36 states offer online public schools, meaning K-12 students can attend full-time and tuition-free.

No student learns the same way and these stats continue to highlight the need for alternative education programs, like online education, to support them and their families. And now, more than ever, it's important to challenge, rebuild, and re-energize our education system that has – for the most part – stayed unchanged for as long as we can remember.

¹See the FlexPoint 2021 Parent Survey
²See National School Choice Week's article, *The Ultimate Guide to Online School – How Does Online School Work*

With more than 20 years of experience developing comprehensive and engaging digital courses for Kindergarten-12th grade that inspire students and empower educators across the world, we know there is a lot to consider when starting your own online learning program.

With that in mind, we created this guide to help school and district leaders like you learn more about the fundamentals of online learning, its benefits, and how to implement a program to fit the needs of your students, families, and teachers.

Whether you're wondering if online learning is right for your district, or you want to take your online learning program to the next level, this guide is the place to start.

**Your Partners in Student Success,
FlexPoint**



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CLEARING THE AIR ABOUT ONLINE LEARNING

What most students experienced with emergency remote learning is not true online learning.

Use this section as a resource to not only combat misinformation but also determine how you can make online learning work for your school's or district's unique needs.

CLEARING THE AIR ABOUT ONLINE LEARNING

MYTHS

1

Online learning is easier than a traditional classroom learning environment.



FACTS

Online learning is effective because it supports subject mastery and helps students learn new skills.

Skills like time management, studying techniques, and how to communicate. You can help students find success with online learning by implementing instructional best practices and working with an online learning provider that can customize or develop course content aligned to state and national standards.

2

Online learning means students are on their own.



The most effective online learning options require a teacher for every course.

With live lessons, virtual office hours, discussion-based assessments, dedicated check-ins, and other techniques, teachers can ensure they stay connected with students in an online environment. Keep in mind skill sets and strategies vary from the traditional classroom to online or blended teaching. So make sure your staff receives the training they need to feel confident and connected to their students in their virtual classrooms.

INSIGHTS FROM STUDENTS NEW TO ONLINE LEARNING



"I enjoy the level of assistance I receive from my teacher. She never hesitates to give me any assistance I need and keeps me on track in a polite and cordial way. I enjoy learning under her direction and it helps me to know that I have a teacher that cares about my learning and that wants me to succeed."

– FlexPoint Student

CLEARING THE AIR ABOUT ONLINE LEARNING

MYTHS

3

You can't ensure academic integrity in an online environment.



FACTS

Whether online or in the physical classroom, proactive steps must be taken to ensure academic integrity.

There is no clear data showing that students who take online courses cheat more than students in a face-to-face classroom. Schools and districts can work with an online learning provider to create their own safeguards, as well as implement best practices like discussion-based assessments or proctored exams.

4

There are no time limits for completing an online course.



While online courses allow degrees of flexibility in pace and freedom in where students study, they still require a minimum pace to progress.

Districts are encouraged to take time determining and communicating pace and timeline with students. FlexPoint recommends having students complete three to four assignments per course per week to ensure they are retaining the material and building on their knowledge.

5

You must be tech-savvy to teach or implement online courses.



Regardless of your knowledge of technology, you can do this.

These days, most online learning platforms are built to be intuitive and easy-to-use. You can also work with your online learning provider to access tutorials, training, and other resources to get you started.

LEARNING THE ABCs OF ONLINE LEARNING

Now that we've debunked some of the myths surrounding online learning, it's time to start with the ABCs.

This section will outline the steps you need to take to start building your blueprint for online learning.



LEARNING THE ABCs OF ONLINE LEARNING

Start with these worksheets to help you define your online learning program and build your blueprint for success.



Assemble your team of key stakeholders. Then determine what your online learning needs are by identifying which students, teachers, and subject areas you need to support.

- What is the main goal of our online learning option?
 - To expand our curriculum offerings.
 - To provide effective flexible learning options for students.
 - To build a personalized learning program that meets students' needs.
 - Multiple or all of the above.
 - Other _____
- Do we have the time, staffing, and other resources necessary to build our own program? If not, are we prepared to research an online learning provider?

- What are some challenges we've faced with our previous or current online learning option? Can those challenges be solved with a new online learning provider?

- How will we measure success?

- Do we have special student populations that need additional support?

- What state or national standards need to be considered for our digital courses? What happens when standards change?

- Do we have buy-in from stakeholders? If not, what steps do we need to take to get buy-in?

LEARNING THE ABCs OF ONLINE LEARNING

B

Build your timeline and plan for any pre-launch required training.

- Are teachers and staff prepared to teach online? If not, what specific training is needed?

- When would we need to launch or expand our program and/or digital course offerings?

- How long do we have to get our program or courses online?

- When do we plan to host teacher training?



LEARNING THE ABCs OF ONLINE LEARNING



Communicate about when, where, and how you will provide access to your online learning option to all your stakeholders.

- Have we developed or updated our change management plan?

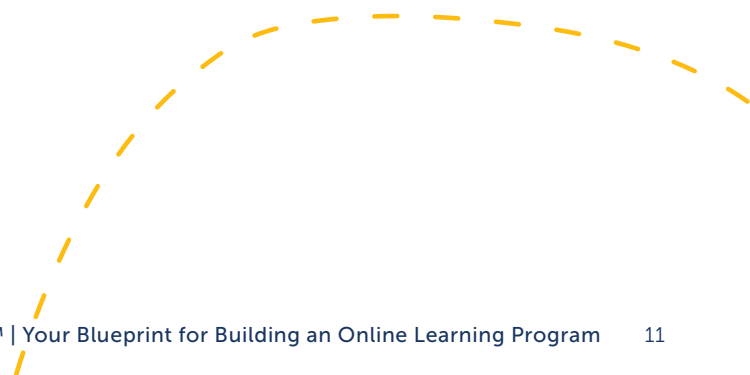
- Do our stakeholders know the difference between online and in-person learning? How can we ensure they are informed?

- Where will students access online courses from—in-school, at home, or both?

- What are the guidelines for online learning?

- Where will students, teachers, and families access technical support? How can they provide feedback on their experience?

- When and how will we communicate with students and families about enrollment processes and online learning options?





KEEPING THE VIRTUAL DOOR OPEN

As a brick-and-mortar school or district, you likely invested a lot of time, energy, and money into creating a community of students, teachers, non-instructional staff, parents, and partners. Even in the online environment, it's important to keep those connections intact.

This checklist provides you with ways to keep the virtual doors of communication open for your stakeholders.

KEEPING THE VIRTUAL DOOR OPEN

Check all tactics that you would like to apply to your program.

Students/Parents

- Ask parents/guardians for their preferred communication method.
- Create a centralized resource hub online—with tools and resources for students and parents who are new to online learning to help them stay on track and engaged.
- Create communications channels where parents can provide feedback and ask questions—like a social media group or message board. Once set up, ensure your team is able to consistently monitor and answer questions.
- Hold a virtual open house with families to introduce them to staff and your online learning option.
- Schedule live morning announcements for your students via an online video meeting platform.
- Host science and social studies fairs online where students can showcase their projects.
- Host virtual career days or field trips for the students to attend.
- Provide families with access to a platform where they can monitor their child's progress.





KEEPING THE VIRTUAL DOOR OPEN

Check all tactics that you would like to implement.

Teachers/Staff

- Send a survey on day one asking teachers and staff to list their greatest concern regarding the school year.
- Host a town hall or Q&A session to allow teachers and staff to share feedback.
- Set up time to review grading policies, communication guidelines, and training expectations.
- Provide a space where teachers can indicate they need help, such as a chat, digital forum, or recurring meetings.
- Pair experienced and new teachers together to exchange ideas, observe lessons, and provide feedback.
- Host regular check-in meetings with staff.
- Host social events to give teachers an informal setting to learn from each other.

FINDING THE RIGHT PARTNER

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to online education. By selecting the right tools and asking the right questions, you can build your own path to success – and we're here to help!

FINDING THE RIGHT PARTNER

At FlexPoint, helping students, teachers, and districts succeed is personal for us. We've spent the past 20+ years building on our roots as a public school district to create digital curriculum that really works.

As your partner in student success, we provide:

- **180+ Award-Winning Digital Courses:** Subjects aligned to your state's standards and seamlessly integrated on the digital learning platform of your choice.
- **Training & Professional Development for Education Professionals:** Dozens of training options—customized to your needs and offered in a variety of formats, year-round.
- **Unparalleled Customer & Technical Support:** As your partners in student success, we'll be by your side every step of the way.

Ready to get started? Connect with us at FlexPointEducation.com/contact.

info@FlexPointEducation.com | 800-374-1430



APPENDIX



ONLINE LEARNING TERMS TO KNOW

We've compiled some key terms and definitions to help you navigate your path to building an online learning program.



ACCREDITATION:

A process to officially recognize an educational program as having met a particular standard or level of quality.

BLENDED LEARNING:

Any combination of online learning and site-based, face-to-face instruction.

COURSE LICENSING:

The purchase of access to online courses for a set period of time.

ONLINE/VIRTUAL LEARNING:

A formal education program involving student-teacher interaction in which a student learns mostly through online delivery of content and instruction with some element of student control over time, place, path, or pace.

ONLINE LEARNING PROVIDER:

An organization that provides digital courses.

LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS):

A technology platform used to host online courses. Additional features of each LMS vary but often include tools for recording grades and communication. Examples include: Buzz, Blackboard, and Canvas.

EMERGENCY REMOTE LEARNING:

A temporary and quick solution to keep students learning during a crisis, transitioning from teaching and learning synchronously in a physical classroom to teaching and learning synchronously in an online setting.

STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (SIS):

A system used to manage and secure student data. Examples include: Maestro, Genius, and Infinite Campus.

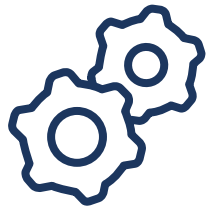
TECHNOLOGY RECOMMENDATIONS

While online learning technical requirements will vary by provider, here's a list of commonly used software and technology to consider before getting your school online.



Operating Systems

- Windows 10 and above
- MacOS 11 (Big Sur) and above



Supported Software

- Microsoft Office
- Microsoft Pages
- Google Docs



Supported Web Browsers

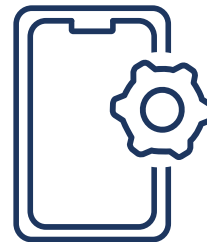
- Microsoft Edge
- Mozilla Firefox
- Google Chrome
- Apple Safari



Mobile Devices & Tablets

While most courses work best from a laptop or desktop computer, students looking to access online learning options on-the-go will be best served with:

- Devices with 7" or larger display size
- Options to save work to local or cloud storage



Minimum Operating Systems:

- iOS 11 or greater
- Android 10 (Queen Cake)
- Windows Phone 10 or greater

