

Ramping Up Academic Engagement and Support in Virtual Learning

Two Virtual Professional Learning Series for Middle and High School Educators

The Learning Reality:

After this spring's ... experiment in online classes, teachers and school districts across the country are preparing for what will be anything but a normal fall semester. ("What We're Learning about Online Learning", New York Times, June 13, 2020)

For many districts, constraints placed on the number of students permitted in physical classrooms are resulting in entirely virtual schedules or hybrid schedules that incorporate in-person and virtual learning in the fall and throughout the year.

The Learning Challenge:

I miss sitting in a classroom with a teacher and other students, having discussions and asking questions. ("What Students Are Saying about Remote Learning", New York Times, April 9, 2020)

What we're finding in the research thus far is it's generally harder to keep students engaged with virtual lessons. - Jered Borup, George Mason University ("What We're Learning about Online Learning", New York Times, June 13, 2020)

Nurturing the relationships that drive learning poses real challenges when in-person instruction is not possible. Many teachers have been learning new platforms and working hard to maintain relationships with students and translate curriculum into an online learning environment. As a result, there have been few opportunities to focus on integrating strategies that foster engagement and support students' academic, social and emotional development in virtual learning environments. For many teachers, coaches, and administrators, these are uncharted territories.

Effective virtual learning demands an even more responsive teacher presence, more refined facilitation skills, and more care and attention to the kinds of questions, discourse, and learning tasks that will hold students' academic engagement.

The Professional Learning Opportunities:

1. Best Practices for Virtual Learning - Seven two-hour sessions

This professional learning series builds teachers' capacity to design, organize, and facilitate research-based and highly engaging synchronous lessons that stand alone and can be supplemented with one-to-one or small group sessions, asynchronous learning tasks, and in-person instruction.

2. Coaching and Supervising Virtual Learning Instruction - Five ninety-minute sessions

This professional learning series maximizes capacity in leaders to use a "look-for" tool to collect data on best practices in a virtual learning environment, provide strategic and targeted professional learning on the data collected, and share feedback using a coaching protocol with teams or individual teachers.

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1. Best Practices for Virtual Learning Seven two-hour sessions

Audience:

- Administrators, instructional coaches, department heads, ILTs
- District instructional leaders
- Teacher teams, whole faculty
- Open enrollment for individual teachers

Session Topics

1. Fostering and sustaining positive personal relationships
2. Organizing a virtual learning environment
3. Ramping up learning tasks for rigor and meaning
4. Strengthening engagement through student learning protocols
5. Integrating robust formative assessment
6. Targeting academic support for individuals and groups
7. Ritualizing the virtual learning environment

2. Coaching and Supervising Virtual Learning Instruction Five ninety-minute sessions

Audience:

- Administrators, instructional coaches, department heads, ILTs
- District instructional leaders

Session Topics

1. Exploring virtual learning best practices
2. Implementing a “look-for” tool to collect data on virtual instruction
3. Using data to inform professional learning sessions
4. Facilitating engaging follow-up professional learning sessions
5. Coaching teams and individual teachers

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