

Guidance for Digital Learning

MDE key terminology

Digital Learning defined: Digital learning is learning facilitated by technology that offers students an element of control over the time, place, path, or pace of their learning. Types of digital learning include:

- Online Learning: Learning delivered by a department of approved online learning providers using Internet.
- Blended Learning: Learning where a student learns part in a supervised physical setting and part through a digital delivery of instruction.
- E-learning: Refers to the online interaction between student and teacher in either a physical or online setting.

Getting started

- Take baby steps! You do not need to have your entire digital learning environment completed and ready to go day one.
- Give yourself credit, you are a content expert, you do not need to also be a digital learning or digital tools expert. Be comfortable co-learning with your students as you go.
- Create and build content in steps or phases so you can easily adjust as needed.
- Determine your expectations for the digital learning environment with parents and students for interactions, promoting good digital citizenship.
 - International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) Digital Citizenship Infographic: <https://www.iste.org/explore/infographic-im-digital-citizen>
- Determine your online office hours, a specific window of time where students know they can connect with you virtually.
- Take a student inventory – identify the students in your class or course that could help troubleshoot or answer questions by classmates.
- Use the lesson plans you’ve already created for your classroom; transitioning those to digital can be easier than you might initially think!

Utilizing best practices

Evidence of an effective digital learning environment:

- Organized
- Supportive
- Creative/Rigorous
- Collaborative/Connected
- Engaging

Organization

- Keep it simple, use a clear and consistent organizational structure for parents/students to navigate.
- Avoid uploading documents and files without clear headings or being attached to learning targets.
- Avoid large chunks of text without a visual or an opportunity to process what’s been read.
- Have purpose when using color, numbering, and graphics. Use them to help with the organization and clarity of your digital environment (notes are labeled #1 each day, videos #2 each day, etc.)

Communication

- Provide opportunities for students to communicate with each other about content – create discussion boards or shared docs with purpose that you can moderate easily.
- Determine the way you'd like students to communicate with you individually. Apps like Remind or features like video conferencing can be a way for individual reciprocal communication.
- Send or post a daily update for your students/parents at the same time each day. Share any important pieces of information like due dates or highlights of content you've added or changed.

Instruction

- Pick your tools and stick with them. This may not be the time to try multiple new tools in your instruction.
- Give students a daily learning agenda: learning objectives, tasks, check for understanding, etc.
- Break learning into smaller manageable chunks with short checks for understanding along the way.
- Offer both text and video for teaching content. Apps and add-ons like Screencastify or Explain Everything can help you record your instruction upfront to post on your site and can be reviewed at any time.
- Offer opportunities for students to still work in small groups or pairs on projects – students can assist you in creating videos, sites, or other digital content to use in your platform.

Assessment

- Focus on the standard you're assessing and give students a menu board of digital tools they could use to show you what they know or let them choose their digital tools to increase engagement.
- Use smaller checks for understanding often and consistently. This will help you identify specific supports students might need along the way.
- Provide students immediate feedback using features like pre-written responses for incorrect answers or allowing students to provide feedback on each other's work.

Supporting students and families

- Create a welcome space in your platform with information about you, your class, and your course that parents/students can reference at any time.
- Give students and families a chance to get familiar with your platform, especially if they've never used it before. A scavenger hunt of the site or a quiz they can do together is a great way to familiarize everyone with your digital learning environment.
- Determine the best way for parents to share questions or concerns. Providing parents, a specific window to virtually connect can be helpful to them as they support their child in their learning.
- Offer opportunities for students/parents to download content or assessments for doing the work together. You can still have them enter answers or submit writing online for immediate feedback.
- Students will work through content at different speeds, offer digital extensions for students who may work through content quickly that could support the learning of all (i.e. students can create songs, artwork, or videos to submit to you to use as content resources for the class)