PLTW Quick Guide to Online Learning for Teachers

About This Guide

This Quick Guide was created for PLTW-certified teachers in PLTW Network Districts and Schools as they support students and caregivers who engage with PLTW curriculum in online and blended learning environments. As a professional in the field, use your best judgment to design instruction for your unique situation; this Quick Guide is a reference tool that may be helpful throughout the year. One of two Quick Guides, this resource provides a quick overview of top strategies and tips for creating a supportive online learning experience based on research-based best practices. The other Quick Guide is specifically for Program Coordinators, Site Coordinators, and Administrators. There are also eight full-length guides focused on Program Coordinators, Site Coordinators, and Administrators, Other Educators, Teachers (Grades PreK-5), Teachers (Grades 6-12), Caregivers (Grades PreK-5), Caregivers (Grades 6-12), Students (Grades PreK-5), and Students (Grades 6-12), that can be found HERE.
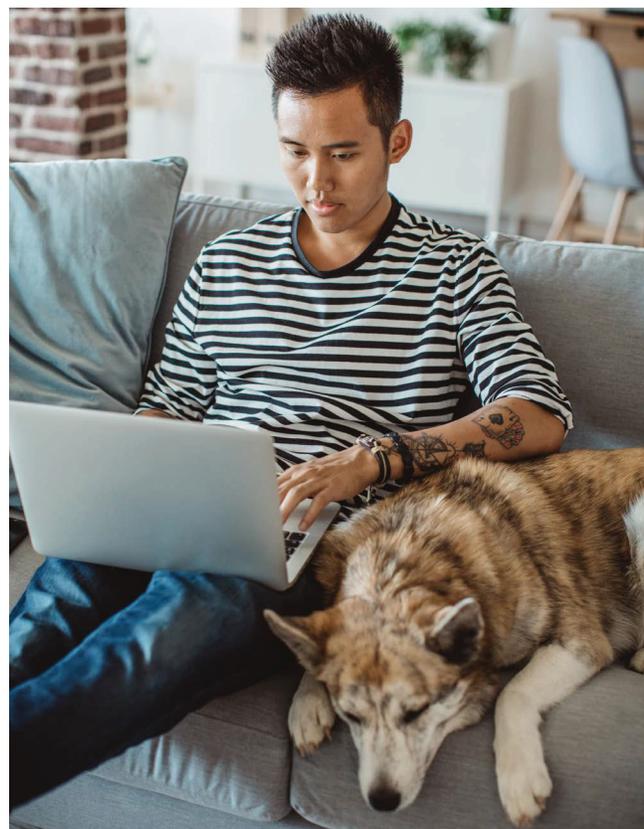
Role of the Teacher

As teachers, you are the glue that holds your community of learners together. Because of COVID, many of you were thrown into remote learning, which many have mistaken for online learning. True online learning takes intentional planning and includes human elements of collaboration, communication, community-building, well-being, relationship-building, interaction, and support. As you know, each school/district implements online and blended learning differently. This section provides you guidance related to creating a supportive online and blended learning environment using research-based best practices.

Establish Your Space

Take Action: Create a physical space supportive to online and blended learning.

Reflect:
- *Is my work space quiet and private?*
- *How am I setting boundaries with others about my work time?*

- Resource: Consult ergonomic guidance to make sure your physical space is set up with your wellness in mind.

Take Action: Create a supportive online space for yourself.

Tips:
- *Make sure you have high-speed Internet service and anti-virus and malware protection software to protect your system(s). Check with local or national technology organizations to see if they are offering any assistance.*
- *Organize your virtual desktop.*

- Set up and organize documents and folders for all your classes.
- Clearly name folders for easy retrieval.
- Create bookmarks for frequently-visited websites.
- Use a calendar with deadlines, and note priorities.
- Set up email management; archive emails in labeled folders.

Take Action: Cultivate your health and wellbeing.

Reflection Checklist:
- *Am I maintaining an upright posture?*
- *Am I drinking enough water to stay hydrated?*
- *Am I eating healthily to keep my energy up?*
- *Am I getting up periodically to move and stretch my body, rest my eyes, wrists, and back?*

- Resource: Wellness for Educators
- Resource: Headspace

Take Action: Set a routine.

Tips:
- *Establish daily goals.*
- *Compose a weekly group email to the entire class.*
- *Make phone calls to update caregivers, mentors, and students to build support for helping the student be successful. For younger students, use web conferencing or phone calls with caregivers.*

Reflect: How am I spending my day? Is it as efficient as it could be to maintain a healthy work/life balance?

Take Action: Establish online learning environment schedule, rules, and procedures.

Note: Don't feel that you need to recreate what is done in school and classroom schedule-wise. Instead, in online and blended learning environments, try transitioning your interaction with students from whole group instruction to a combination of one-on-one meetings with students as well as small group meetings.
Tips:
- *Divide content into smaller pieces (15-30 minutes) when possible; make expectations clear and concise.*
- *Create a set of norms or expectations for students to respectfully interact online with you and others.*

Reflect: Knowing that it's best practice in online learning not to recreate what I do in my in-school learning environment, how am I establishing a schedule that works for myself and my students?

Support Your Students

Take Action: Assess students authentically and provide meaningful feedback.

Tips:
- *Offer feedback on student written work while they're in the drafting process.*
- *Embed short quizzes to gauge student learning and determine if additional supports are needed.*
- *Use discussion-based assessments using web conferencing to make sure students can explain what they know.*

Reflect: How am I using the platforms available to my school/district to assess my students in meaningful ways in online and blended learning?

Take Action: Build relationships, communicate, and conduct regular wellbeing checks with each student and their family.

Reflect:
- *Have I considered sending weekly emails to check in with students and cultivate my relationships with them?*
- *Have I thought about offering regular, consistent online office hours?*

Take Action: Engage in ongoing professional learning to keep up with rapidly changing technology, pedagogy, and best practices.

Reflect: Are there any professional learning communities (PLCs) I could create or join to better support my own professional development in online and blended learning?

- Resource: Digital Learning Collaborative
- Resource: International Society for Technology in Education

Take Action: Engage and motivate students in online and blended learning.
Tips:
- *Emphasize learning and mastery over accountability and completion.*
- *Incorporate student voice, interests, and choice in your activities and assignments.*
- *Use weekly "kudos" emails.*
- *Make fun videos.*

Ask students to collaborate with each other using:
- *Elbow partners*
- *Think/pair/share*
- *Small group sessions for presentations, discussions*
- *Peer reviews (use rubrics and clear guidelines)*

- Resource: Slideshow from an online teacher

Take Action: Ensure access, minimize opportunity gaps, and build equity by keeping in contact with students and their caregivers to ensure they have what is needed to be successful.

- Resource: [Digital Learning Collaborative - Students with Disabilities](#)
- Resource: [Edutopia - How to Improve Distance Learning for Students with IEPs](#)
- Resource: [Universal Design for Learning](#)

Take Action: Collaborate with all stakeholders to support students.

Tip: Provide and maintain student support resources and connect with other teachers, mentors, ed tech, librarian/media specialist, tech staff, peers, and others to support students in building their self advocacy, time management, study habits, and other online learning skills.

Take Action: Model and ensure academic integrity, digital citizenship, and provide a safe space to learn.

Reflect:
- *How am I guiding my students in developing their digital citizenship?*
- *How am I guiding students to prevent cheating online and to perform safe and effective Internet searches and evaluate resources?*

- Resource: [ISTE Digital Citizenship](#)
- Resource: [ISTE blog post - "8 ways to prevent cheating in the digital age"](#)
- Resource: [ISTE blog post - "Today's news: Real or fake? [Infographic]](#)
- Resource: [ISTE blog post - "What every teacher should know about copyright law"](#)
- Resource: [Copyright Law and Fair Use Guidelines for Teachers - Hall Davidson](#)

Acknowledgments