



Who Should Read

District Leaders

Principals

Directors of Curriculum and Instruction

Instructional Coaches

Academic Teachers

Virtual Teaching Strategies That Improve Learning Outcomes

A Virtual Instruction Checklist for K-12 Educators

District Leadership Forum

How to Use this Checklist

Every teacher must be equipped to instruct in a virtual setting this school year, but many struggle to do this well. This checklist summarizes 20 science-based teaching strategies that are proven to collectively improve learning outcomes in a virtual setting. Use this checklist to equip all teachers with the necessary guidance and support they need to succeed. **Follow the action steps affiliated with your role below to start using the checklist right away.**

If you're a district Leader...

1. Share this resource with principals and directors of instruction.
2. Instruct principals to share the resource with academic teachers in their school and ensure teachers reassess their progress on every 1-3 months during PLCs or in advance of coaching conversation.
3. *[for those using district virtual instruction evaluations]* Refer to the criterion in the checklist to design or supplement existing virtual instruction evaluations.

If you're a school leader...

1. Provide every academic teacher this checklist, encouraging them to use it to as a guide for their virtual instruction lessons.
2. Establish the expectation that teachers complete the checklist every three months during PLCs or in advance of informal coaching conversations.
3. Encourage coaches to review the completed checklist with teachers during informal discussions.

If you're a teacher...

1. Take 5 minutes to self-assess how your most recent approach to virtual instruction aligns with each statement. Only select one answer per statement: 'Always,' 'Usually,' 'Rarely,' 'Never,' or 'Not Applicable'.
2. Identify the statements where you selected 'Rarely' or 'Never.' For these items, refer to the "Next Steps" column to learn actionable, research-based advice.
3. Use the most relevant advice to set goals for your practice and refer to them when designing and implementing your virtual lessons.
4. Repeat steps 1-3 quarterly to assess your progress and discuss your most recent assessments during informal coaching conversations.



Build Trust in Student-Teacher Virtual Relationships

Short- and Longer-Term Strategies	Always	Usually	Rarely	Never	N/A	Next Steps
I dedicate the first 10 minutes of class to build or foster my relationship with students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use the beginning of lessons to check in on students. Formally track their responses for reminders.
I use “yes/and” statements when providing feedback to their ideas and questions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace “no/but” with “yes/and” statements to suggest openness and trigger safety in the brain.
I seek to understand how students landed on a conclusion before correcting their mistakes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Replace “why did you...” with “tell me how you ...” when providing feedback to signal openness.
My face and shoulders are centered in the camera when I interact with students.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Position your camera to frame your face and shoulders. This allows students to access more of your body language on camera.
I reach out to each quiet or disengaged students at least once a week to check in on academic and non-academic topics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Set reminders to connect with quiet or disengaged students at least once a week. Frequent informal interactions signals you care and builds trust.
I contact students who had an unexcused absence or were abnormally not participative within 24 hours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reach out to students who start to appear disengaged within 24 hours. This allows you to learn what they need and reengage them early on.



Prioritize High Value Content & Activities

Short- and Longer-Term Strategies	Always	Usually	Rarely	Never	N/A	Next Steps
The content in my lessons are formally vetted and prioritized to be “high-value.”	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use EAB’s curriculum prioritization tool to identify high-value content in existing curriculum.
My directions for virtual learning activities or assignments take 10 minutes or less.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Re-purpose the same 3-5 templates for activities to create familiarity and reduce time on directions.



Use Asynchronous Videos to Teach New Content

Short- and Longer-Term Strategies	Always	Usually	Rarely	Never	N/A	Next Steps
I use asynchronous videos to provide direct instruction on new content. <i>[Most relevant for 2nd to 12th grade]</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Reserve synchronous time to facilitate learning, review concepts, and provide targeted support. This <i>ideal</i> model boosts engagement and learning.
I disseminate asynchronous videos that are no more than 10 mins in total length.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Limit asynchronous videos to ~10 minutes. This maximizes student attention and prioritizes time on core concepts.



Design Engaging Virtual Lessons

Short- and Longer-Term Strategies	Always	Usually	Rarely	Never	N/A	Next Steps
I dedicate the last few minutes of my lesson to getting students excited about the next lesson.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Incorporate "cliff hangers" sections at the end of lesson plans. This technique is widely used in entertainment and is proven to hook audiences.
I provide students at least 2 different assignments to choose from and options for demonstrating mastery.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide 2 or more student choices for assignments and ways to demonstrate mastery (i.e. written or video submissions). This increases engagement and student ownership of their learning.
I incorporate the words "goal" and/or "challenge" when giving students a task or assignment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Use language that emphasizing student ownership of a challenge, rather than compliance. For example, replace "I want you to__" to "your challenge is__" to promote internal motivation.
I introduce new content by connecting it to students' unique interests, goals, or prior knowledge	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Keep tabs on student interests and goals. Identify the most common ones and incorporate them into lessons to capture students' attention.



Promote Long-Term Retention of Content

Short- and Longer-Term Strategies	Always	Usually	Rarely	Never	N/A	Next Steps
My virtual lessons include verbal, visual, and written explanations of new content.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Enable closed captions and incorporate visuals into your virtual lessons. Students learn best when they can hear, read, and see new content.
Students meet with a learning partner at least once a week to reflect on their learning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Assign each student one learning partner with whom to meet once a week. Peer-to-peer learning reflection accounts for 66% of learning outcomes.
Grades or scores are not included in my first round of feedback.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Separate feedback from grades and scores. Giving students at least one chance to apply feedback before earning a score improves active learning.
My feedback pertains to only 1-3 critical skills or concepts at a time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Limit feedback to only the 1-3 most important skills/content that students must learn. This focuses their attention on developing these skills.
I revisit core concepts of summative assessments throughout the year.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Repeatedly revisit the 3-4 most critical skills at the end of assessments throughout the year. As a result, students will retain essential skills long-term.
I provide students reflection questions to get them to think about their learning (engage in metacognition).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Provide students with self-reflection questions for before, during, and after a lesson to foster deep learning. Give students twice as much time as the direct lesson to think about thinking and summarize what they learned.



Washington DC | Richmond | Birmingham | Minneapolis | New York

202-747-1000 | eab.com