

Adapting Emerging Technologies in Distant Learning

Steps to establishing a virtual classroom beneficial to both educators and students

White Paper



Adapting Emerging Technologies in Distant Learning

Introduction

As emerging technologies continue to disrupt almost every aspect of our lives, we can see them slowly making way to transform the education system as we know it.

For one, it has made distance learning easily accessible for students from all over the world. Making it an essential part of the mainstream education system. After all, the internet has made it possible for students to select the time, location, and medium for their education. This flexibility and easy access alone, has made distance learning a popular means of education among people nowadays.

Research shows that in 2017, [4.6 million students](#) from public institutions across the United States took part in distance education – 3 million were enrolled in at least one course online.

In this white paper we'll discuss some of the powerful tools and platforms that made it possible for them to pursue distance learning courses online.

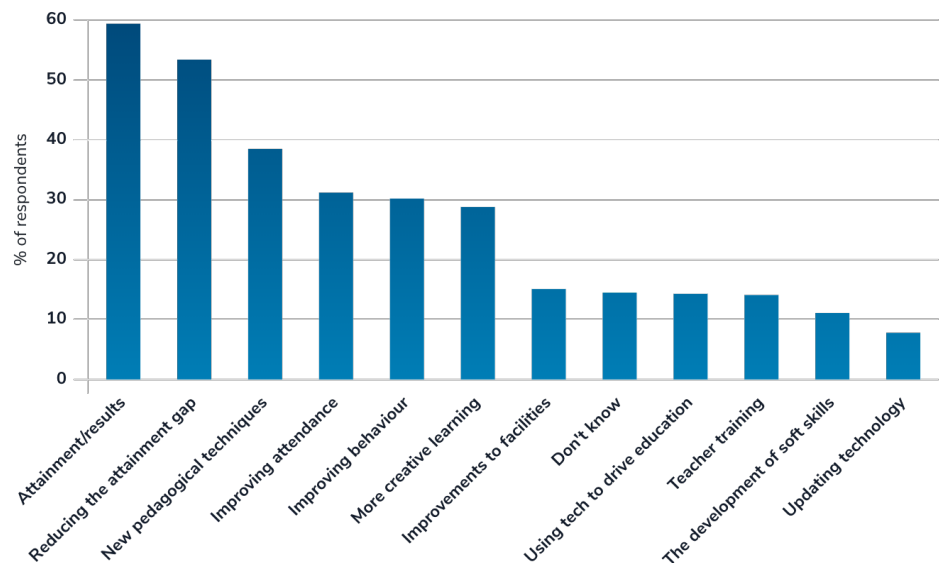
Education Sector And Technology

The education sector has successfully incorporated technology in several meaningful ways to drive engagement and accelerate their learning processes for the students.

As educational institutes find software and digital tools to augment their curriculum, it is more important than ever to give teachers the resources needed to practice these new assets. Their roles remain stronger than ever, as [a study held by Promethean](#) makes it evident that almost 60% of teachers continuously strive to innovate their teaching methods by using the most appropriate technologies.

It has become possible to streamline Learning Management Systems (LMS), digital textbooks, and other software that prepare the students for their chosen careers.

What are your school's key priorities next year?



Adapting Emerging Technologies in Distant Learning

On the other hand, students also enjoy unlimited access to research material and educational apps at all times. Technology has also made learning more interactive and collaborative, making it easier for students to engage with their course material.

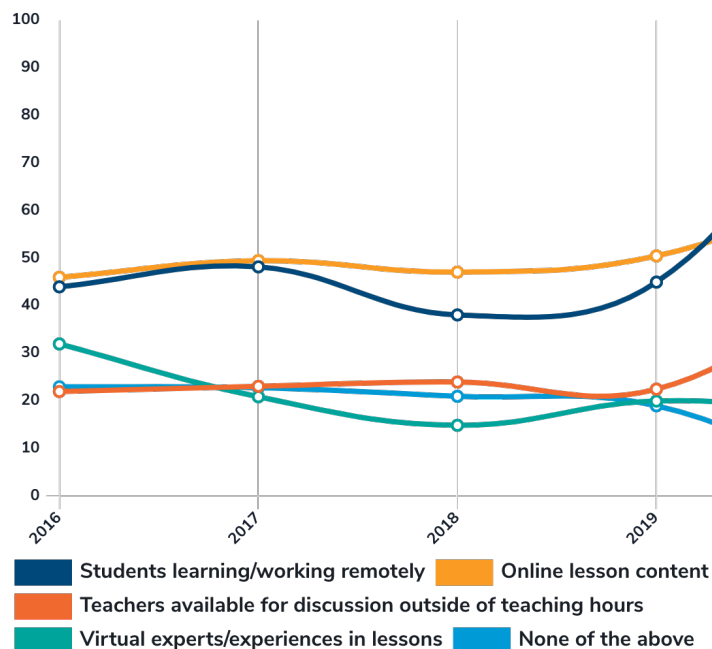
Education Shifts To The Virtual Landscape

Virtual classrooms seem like the next step to ride the tide of innovations in new classroom technology. Teachers and students both are massively benefiting from this [shift to virtual education](#) ranging from pre-K to adult education levels.

Beyond its use in increasing students' engagement with studies, virtual education has found a permanent place in the education sector, owing to its efficacy and easy access. A learning management system that enables video lectures, online chats and feedback on virtual assignments has made this shift to online possible.

Now, the shift to online education has posed a host of new challenges for educators and students alike. This includes investing in the right technology, lack of training for educators in navigating the digital realm of education and minimizing students' distractions.

Which of these strategies have you (teachers) used?



[Promethean: The State of Technology in Education 2020/21](#)

IT And Other Technical Solutions To Distance Learning Problems

Although distance learning comes with its perks, it does pose some inherent challenges, especially when it comes to supporting, training, and maintaining discipline among learners.

As educational institutions from all over the world adopt new classroom technology, pedagogy, and the right IT tools can be used to overcome these challenges.

Adapting Emerging Technologies in Distant Learning

Virtual classrooms are not the perfect replacement for a traditional classroom; instructors struggle with communication and collaboration. This is why they need IT tools and software that bridge the communication gap between teachers and students while making the entire learning process completely transparent.

[Distance learning requires software](#) for the organization and storage of files from where the teachers and students can access them easily. Let's go into detail to determine how each type of software can minimize distance learning challenges for the teachers.

Communication Software

Communication is an essential component of distance learning. This is because there is a very marked lack of visual cues for those attending classes online.

Many teachers have had to offer online education without formal training or distance learning tools to help them deal with the new challenges of teaching students via the internet.

On the other hand, students are overwhelmed with the sheer amount of log-ins involved. At the same time, IT personnel worry about the best way to simplify distance learning, ensuring that streams go on without interruption.

These issues have magnified the importance of communication software more than ever.

Educators Must Use Communication Software To Ensure Maximum Effectiveness

With the right communication software, educators can create a more personalized environment for students with varying learning needs and at different levels. The teacher must offer them a sense of community even when they are learning from isolated environments.

The right software can establish communication between teachers and parents to ensure transparency with their child's education and keep them updated on their child's progress.

Moreover, they can engage with other teachers and staff members on crucial matters relating to distance learning.

Communication Software Holds A Big Tech Opportunity For Teachers

With access to the right communication software, teachers can easily take advantage of the flexibility that distance learning offers. Here are several ways how these distance learning tools play a crucial role in virtual education:

Focus On Each Student

As every student is different and has their learning styles, teachers require unique personalized strategies to help them learn a particular topic. With communication software, they can focus on one student at a time and get connected with them beyond school hours as well.

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Communicate With Parents

Educators need constant support from the parents to help a student achieve academic success. The right communication tools allow them to discuss the student's progress and keep them updated on their day to day learning process without an in-person meeting.

Introduces Classroom Environment To Virtual Learning

With video conferencing, online feedback, and real-time communication, this new classroom technology enables teachers to incorporate a classroom environment to virtual learning. This motivates the students to participate in their lessons and ask for guidance on incomprehensible topics while learning remotely.

Popular Communication Software For Distance Learning

The best communication software should be utilized to establish an effective online learning environment that is easy to operate and helpful to teachers and students. Here are some recommendations.

Bloomz

[Bloomz](#) is a mobile application created for seamless parent and teacher communication. It enables real-time communication where the educator can keep the parents informed with just a quick note or snapshot. Moreover, it allows teachers to track students' behavior and progress while keeping the parents in the loop. Other important features include a photo and video sharing, calendar integration, and user monitoring.



"With Bloomz, teachers and schools save time by having all the tools they need to communicate with today's parents and students in one easy-to-use (and free) app."

Google Classroom

[Google Classroom](#) is a free distance learning software that works as a comprehensive virtual classroom where the educator can offer video lectures, assign homework, take quizzes, and assign group projects. Some of its best features include built-in google tools, including google slides and docs, calendar, ability to integrate media content, and a grades page.



Google
Classroom

"A free and easy tool helping educators efficiently manage and assess progress, while enhancing connections with learners from school, from home, or on the go."

Canvas

[Canvas](#) is a learning management platform that automates all administrative tasks to focus on their teaching job. It is similar to Google Classroom as it allows teachers to assign homework, group projects, make dynamic videos, quiz students, and access the platform analytics.



"With Canvas, admins and educators can easily integrate the systems and apps they need to support every student, at every stage, in any learning environment."

Adapting Emerging Technologies in Distant Learning

Collaboration Software

Teachers are often solely responsible for shaping the entire virtual classroom experience. That's why they need to leverage the right collaboration software to encourage their students to participate during lessons.

How Educators Should Use Collaboration Software

Education IT tools such as collaboration software are essential drivers of active digital learning, creative thinking, and mutual creativity. This software has made this all possible through features like file sharing, video-conferencing, real-time chat, and more.

Now teachers can use this software to maintain the same level of interaction among the students as there would normally be in a physical classroom. By leveraging collaboration software, the teacher can allow the learners to interact with other learners in different locations or time zones.

In addition, it helps them build a positive learning atmosphere where the students are encouraged to collaborate and offer their feedback in a safe learning space.

Collaboration Software Can Be Advantageous For Teachers

When it comes to collaboration between a teacher and students, interacting on a specific task or project ensures that everyone participates awhile, lessening the learning curve and making it easier for both of them to make the most of distance learning.



Increased Flexibility

Collaboration tools allow the teachers to share important updates and exchange information without worrying about the student's time zones and location.

Collaboration With Enhanced Mobility

These education IT tools enable educators to interact with different staff members or other teachers, which has proven to enable real-time communication, especially when in different locations.

Improved Sharing

The collaboration tools allow educators to share important files, documents, or project tasks with the students and other participants regardless of their format type. This way, the teacher can make sure that the students are working on the same thing to avoid repetitions.

Adapting Emerging Technologies in Distant Learning

Popular Collaboration Software For Distance Learning

Mural

Here are some recommendations for some popular collaboration softwares that educators can utilize to stay connected with their students, and maintain organization.

[Mural](#) is an interactive whiteboard tool that promotes collaboration and the sharing of ideas. It enables the teachers to present teaching material enticingly to encourage participation from students living in different locations. These presentations then serve as samples for the students to either brainstorm solely or work in groups.



“MURAL makes it easy to embrace visual collaboration for schools and universities of all sizes.”

Explain Everything Whiteboard

[The Whiteboard](#) is a creative collaboration tool used for making attractive presentations that students can visit individually whenever they need to. In addition to making presentations, it allows teachers to ask students to solve a problem on this tool as well. Students can easily import their documents, narrate their thinking, and annotate their files, thus encouraging teacher-student collaboration.



“Amplify your everyday communication right from your browser’s window so it’s visual and easy to grasp.”

Parlay

[Parlay](#) is the perfect collaboration tool for productive class discussions that encourage students to develop their critical thinking skills. It enables them to read a prompt, give their feedback, and then discuss it with their fellow students, all through a remote location.



“Richer discussions. Start to finish.”

Cloud Storage Software

Cloud storage software is another important distance learning solution that has made distance learning more flexible and accessible to thousands of people living in different parts of the world.

The Right Way For Educators To Use Cloud Storage Software

A virtual classroom needs a cloud storage space for safe and secure access to students’ information and other important files. Teachers use these cloud storage software to sync their data on modules and lessons within shared folders that the students can download seamlessly.

Homework can be easily collected through drop folders with an expiration date so that the students can easily complete their homework and upload it on the cloud. Not only this, but they are also password protected that further offers no room for vandalism.

Moreover, the cloud storage software also allows the teacher to track the students’ grades and keep a close eye on their progress to gauge the need for additional guidance on their weak points.

Adapting Emerging Technologies in Distant Learning

This further reduces cost as the cloud storage software eliminates the use of expensive hardware that is of little use when its capacity is filled.

How Cloud Storage Software Helps Teachers

Cloud storage software is internet-based data storage service that allows the teachers and students to access educational content from anywhere with an internet connection. Furthermore, as an essential distance learning solution, it offers the following advantages:

Promotes A Collaborative Learning Environment

Cloud storage software ensures an interactive learning experience with immersive features that mimic traditional face-to-face classroom learning. It enables remote collaboration where students from different parts of the world can work on a project mutually.

Centralized Data Collection

The cloud software storage offers insights into the student's progress, which can be tracked by teachers to offer guidance and reference material to improve their problem areas. It offers comprehensive information on students' behavior and how they interact with the material available on the cloud.

Centralized Data Collection

The most appealing feature of cloud storage software is that it removes the geographical barriers associated with education. This way, students can learn at their own pace while on the other hand, teachers can enjoy the tools offered by the cloud that can further solidify their influence.

How Cloud Storage Software Helps Teachers

Utilizing cloud storage is an easy and effective way to stay organized and collaborate for students and educators. Here are a few recommendations for some cloud storage software:

Google Drive

[Google Drive](#) is a cloud storage software that allows teachers to store and access files, documents, and presentations that can be later accessed through any mobile device. It comes with other distance learning tools, including G Suite for Education, Google Slide, Gmail, and a lot more. Teachers can easily store their lesson plans and share them later through a link that the students can easily access through their free Google Drive accounts.



“Store, share, and collaborate on files and folders from any mobile device, tablet, or computer.”

OneDrive

[OneDrive](#) is a Microsoft owned cloud storage software that enables teachers and students to connect by sharing personal files and assignments. It also allows them to chat and collaborate on the uploaded files in real-time. The entire collaboration over the cloud, including the storage of important files and documents, is completely secure, including the shared links with expiration dates.



“Save your files and photos to OneDrive and access them from any device, anywhere.”

Blackboard Cloud

Blackboard Cloud is another cloud storage software that offers a host of services within the Blackboard Cloud Services. It comes with multiple security layers, including passwords, digital certificates, CAS, and many more.

It also hosts a full-fledged LMS system that offers analytics and reporting tools and a host of open educational resources.

Blackboard

“Access your cloud storage accounts in the Blackboard app to attach files in assignments and discussions.”

The Complete IT Solution for Distant Learning

The traditional classroom has completely transformed over the last decade. Being physically present in the classroom is no longer necessary, or even required. With the rise of the internet and mobile applications, online or distance learning has gained more popularity, making it easier for teachers and students to collaborate remotely.

Although this comes with its own set of challenges, teachers and students can easily leverage some of the practical digital learning tools that can help them adapt to the changing educational landscape smoothly.

As one of the leading IT providers for the education industry, CRA specializes in delivering tailored solutions for schools and classrooms, both physical and virtual.

As the go-to managed service provider (MSP) for a variety of technology solutions for classrooms, we utilize our industry knowledge to carve out the best solutions so schools they focus on what they do best with ease of operations and peace of mind.

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