

Virtual Teaching Academy
Session 6 Recap
When to Come Together and Why?
3-4:30pm EDT
June 29, 2020

On behalf of the University of Phoenix, Blackboard and everyone associated with the Alliance for Virtual Learning, thank you for attending our inaugural Virtual Teaching Academy. Following each session, a high-level outline will be emailed to you.

For your convenience, important links can be found below. Additionally, please feel free to use the hashtag #VTA2020 across your social media platforms. Don't be shy about the fantastic work you're doing on behalf of your students!

*Please use the "Webinar link" provided below, to join each daily session.

Important links:

*Webinar link: https://applauncher.gotowebinar.com/#notStarted/280718920414727439/en_US

Link to presentations: <https://content.blackboard.com/virtual-teaching-academy>

Link to VTA sessions: <http://content.blackboard.com/virtual-teaching-academy>

General contact email: info@blackboard.com

Note: If you have chosen to add our Webinar sessions directly to your virtual calendar of choice, you will be notified to attend each daily session at the correct local time.

Presenters:

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Session Resources: *The Perfect Blend* by Michele Eaton

The International Society for Technology in Education – www.iste.org

Next Steps: Google “Transactional Distance Theory in Online Learning,” if you’re interested in learning more.

- Session Goals:
 - Learn when/how to best leverage synchronous and asynchronous instruction in a virtual environment.
- Define Key Terms:
 - Asynchronous Instruction – Online learning that can happen anytime, anywhere for students.
 - Example: Students can watch a recorded video on their schedule.
 - Synchronous Instruction – Online learning that happens live, in real-time.
 - Example: Live videoconferencing sessions
- Pros for Synchronous instruction:
 - Most closely resembles traditional classroom instruction
 - Builds community and connection
 - Great for small-group instruction
 - Real-time feedback
- Cons for Synchronous instruction:
 - This method requires access to technology and high-speed Internet.
 - This method lacks a lot of flexibility.
 - This method is not as individualized
 - This method can make it challenging to create a space for reflection for students.
- Pros for Asynchronous Instruction:
 - Student-paced – This method allows students to work until they achieve mastery.
 - This method is highly individualized.
 - Learning can happen anywhere and at any time throughout the day; flexibility.
 - Teachers have more opportunities to incorporate multiple tools and share multiple perspectives.
- Cons for Asynchronous Instruction:
 - Requires more intentionality around creating connections/community building with students.
 - Requires a basic understanding of how students learn online differently than they do in traditional settings.
 - Teacher feedback is not immediate.
 - This method places more responsibility on students to stay engaged and focused.

- Determining what lessons should be “live” (synchronous) versus student-paced (asynchronous)
 - Key Question: At what point do teachers really need to have face-to-face virtual interaction with students?
 - Consider Cognitive Load Theory when answering this question.
- Cognitive Load Theory
 - Devised by John Sweller in 1998, Cognitive Load Theory posits that the brain can only do so many things at a time. Consequently, teachers should be intentional about what they ask students to do.
 - Some cognitive load is good.
 - Young adults can process three-five items at once. Therefore, teachers should actively try to reduce unnecessary cognitive load.
 - How?
 - Be consistent
 - Stick to a maximum of three colors when designing PowerPoint decks.
 - Limit fonts
 - Chunk information
 - Teachers do this naturally in traditional settings.
 - However, online, teachers put too much information on a single page. Consequently, students won’t process it all.
 - Use negative space (empty space between objects on a screen).
 - Leverage student reflection opportunities.
 - Reflection is a meta-cognitive activity. Meaning, reflection helps students focus on what they’re thinking about during a given lesson or assignment.
 - Pro Tip: Reflection is your best friend. Why? Because students need to stop and process information before they move on to something else.
 - Example of a reflective exercise – Have students summarize what they’ve learned in a single sentence.

- As teachers, be mindful:
 - Monitor how your students interact with their fellow students in a synchronous environment.
 - Use the synchronous environment to build a sense of community.
 - This is particularly important during the transition into a new academic year.
 - Transitioning this spring was made a little easier because teachers had already built relationships with students. This will not be the case when the new academic year begins.
 - Monitor how students interact with you, the teacher.
 - Be intentional with your interactions.
 - Rely on small acts of kindness.
 - Sending a “smiley face” emoji to a student can have a huge impact on them.
 - Be positive
 - Be supportive
 - Monitor how students interact with content that’s provided in the synchronously and asynchronously.
 - Initial instruction/ lesson plans should be designed asynchronously. Then, use the data that you gather as your students’ complete assignments for targeted, small-group (synchronous) instruction.
 - Example: If 15 out of 32 students have trouble with one particular aspect of an asynchronous assignment, use synchronous time to reinforce that part of the assignment.
 - Additionally, consider asking students, in the synchronous environment, what they found difficult or challenging about the assignment.
 - Students are far more likely to scan digital text instead of really reading and absorbing it.
 - To help them with comprehension, have students take notes on what they read with a physical pen and paper.
 - Consider creating interactive videos
 - Pro Tip: Keep your videos under six minutes in length. Anything longer and students may tune-out.
- Closing Thought:
 - Don’t be intimidated by the online environment. You’ve got this!