



Making Sense of
SCIENCE

SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL LEARNING SESSIONS



SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL LEARNING SESSIONS HAPPEN WHEN FACILITATORS BOOST ENGAGEMENT AND MINIMIZE ROADBLOCKS

Boost Engagement

Be sure the session honors learner's prior knowledge, is relevant, and provides time and space to collaborate. The learning goals need to match the format and the allotted time of the digital learning experience. The agenda should allow ample time for participants to process, apply, and reflect on the content covered — not just have content delivered to them.

Lean into the platform's tools and supplemental applications to bolster engagement (e.g., polling, annotating shared docs, large group discussions, small group discussions). Know how you will respond to the chat, and if you are using breakout rooms, be sure transitions are not jarring and expectations are clear.

The presenter should be knowledgeable about the topic and convey enthusiasm for the content they are presenting. Presenters convey this interest with their facilitation moves, expressions, and body language. Communicate on camera using lots of expression and non-verbal cues as appropriate.

Make sure the presenter is well lit and that the camera is set at eye level. Consider how to arrange computer windows so that your eyes are as aimed at the camera as often as possible.

Minimize Roadblocks

As a presenter, you should think of your plan as just that — a plan — and be ready for the unexpected. Be flexible. Calmly respond to unforeseen hiccups. If possible, plan for a technical assistant who can share links, field questions, and provide support in the moment so you can focus on facilitating.

Digital learning is still very new for most participants, so include space for people to figure out how to navigate the platform. Similarly, participants may not know how to behave or engage in a remote learning session. Set norms around interactions. Special effort needs to be made for teachers who have historically been marginalized in professional learning (e.g., teachers of color, teachers of low SES students, elementary teachers, etc.).

If you are sharing resources, set up file sharing in advance so that everyone can access files, but keep the number of places to go for resources to a minimum. Be sure there are workarounds in place for participants who struggle.

Embrace the fact that remote professional learning is not second best to in-person learning, but there are different benefits and limitations, and help your participants shift their mindsets as well.

WANT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL LEARNING?

PATRICK MOYLE | pmoyle@wested.org



Patrick is a Professional Learning Specialist with the Making Sense of SCIENCE project at WestEd and a champion of enriching science education for adults and children.