Modern Classrooms Project

How This Toolkit Works:

As you return to the classroom and plan for the upcoming school year, transform your instruction to put students at the center of their learning. This toolkit provides the essential templates and tools to support you in implementing blended, self-paced, mastery-based learning with your students.

To begin, access our Free Online Course by clicking below and use the tools in this guide to help you along your journey.

Free Online Course

Your Back-to-School Tools:

1 **"Planning A Modern Classroom" Lesson Template:** Guided questions and a customizable template to help you plan a blended, self-paced, mastery-based Modern Classroom of your own.

2 **Instructional Video Design Best Practices:** Guidance to help you create videos that will allow students to master content more quickly as independent learners and be empowered to drive their learning at their own pace.

3 **Pacing Trackers:** A variety of public and student-facing progress tracker examples and editable templates to help you motivate students in a self-paced learning environment.

4 **Learning Management System (LMS) & Classroom Design Checklist:** A brief checklist to ensure that your LMS and classroom set-up is usable, accessible, and equitable.

5 **Routines & Procedures Checklist:** A brief checklist to ensure your routines help your students stay organized and on track.

6 **Caregiver Communication Guide:** Resources to assist in introducing your Modern Classroom to students' families or caregivers.

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01

Planning a Modern Classroom

Allow the guided questions and lesson planning template to help you design blended, self-paced, mastery-based lessons.

Guiding Questions

Unit Name + Goals:

In which unit does this lesson occur?

Unit Assessment:

How will you assess students at the end of this entire unit? How does this lesson contribute towards the knowledge and skills that students will need to succeed on this assessment?

State Standards:

What state standards (if any) will you utilize for this lesson?

Learning Objectives:

What are the skills, concepts, or questions that students should be able to demonstrate, understand, or answer by the end of this lesson?

Mastery Check:

How will you assess student understanding of the above objectives? This should be an individual task that takes less than 10 minutes. Make sure to communicate clear criteria for mastery - what must students know or be able to do to advance past this lesson? It can also be helpful to develop an exemplar response for your mastery check here.

Practice:

How will students develop mastery? Practice should involve application, encourage collaboration, and facilitate revision (if necessary). Practice can include one or multiple learning activities. These activities do not have to be graded.

Instructional Video + Notes:

How will you teach this concept or skill through an instructional video? How will students access your instructional video(s)?

Opportunities for Collaboration:

How can students work together in small groups or as a whole class during this lesson?

Student Metacognition:

What will students do to reflect on what they've learned at the end of this lesson and/or unit? How will completing this lesson help students become stronger learners overall?

Additional Notes/Materials:

Are there other things you'd like to add to this lesson?

01. Planning a Modern Classroom

Lesson Name (# _ _):

Unit Name + Goals:	**Unit Assessment:**

State Standards:

Learning Objectives:

Mastery Check:

Practice:

Instructional Video + Notes:

Opportunities for Collaboration:

Student Metacognition:

Additional Notes/Materials:

Download this template as a Word document, or make a copy in Google Docs.

02

Instructional Video Design Best Practices

Best practices to help you create videos that will allow students to master content more quickly as independent learners and be empowered to drive learning at their own pace.

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High-Quality Blended Instruction

Research shows that by tailoring videos to the precise content we want students to understand and adhering to a few best practices, students will master content more quickly as independent learners, and be empowered to drive their own learning at their own pace.

Best Practices:

Keep Videos Short: Research (on college students) shows that engagement drops after six minutes (Brame, 2015). To keep your students engaged, make videos as concise and focused as possible. Each video should cover one discrete skill or topic.

Use Visuals, Not Text: One large-scale study found that "Khan-style tablet drawing tutorials are more engaging than PowerPoint slides or code screencasts." (Guo, Kim, and Robin, 2014). Saying what's written in text is redundant, increasing cognitive load (Brame, 2016). Visuals should complement narration, and vice versa. Be sure to explain each graphic, and why it is relevant. This video on the Big Bang Theory is a great example.

Personal Feel and Enthusiasm: A study of 6.9 million video watching sessions found that "videos where instructors speak fairly fast and with high enthusiasm are more engaging." (Guo, Kim, and Robin, 2014). Using conversational language is more effective than formal language as it creates a sense of partnership with students (Mayer, 2008).

Consider opening your video by speaking directly to students and embedding your face in the corner of the screen. This video about progress tracking (recorded with Screencastify) is a great example.

Interactivity

Guided Notes: In one study, students who answered guiding questions in writing while watching a video scored significantly higher on a test than did students who watched without guiding questions (Lawson et al, 2006).

Pace Control: In another study, students who were able to control their own movement through a video outperformed students who could not (Zhang et al, 2006).

Embedded Questions: A third study found that embedding questions into videos promote student learning, improve student interaction with videos, and increase time spent with the learning materials (Vural, 2013).
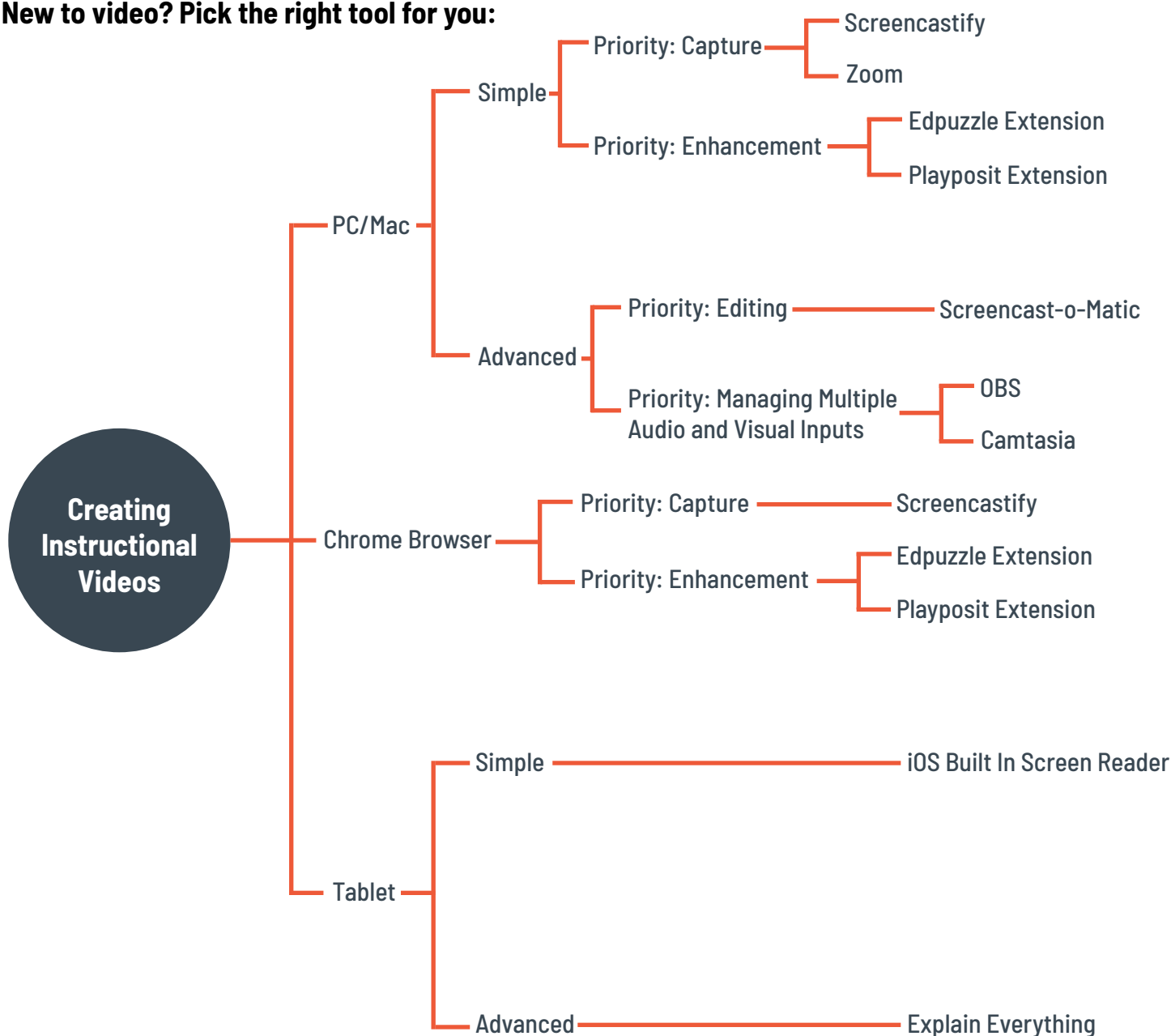
Common Mistakes
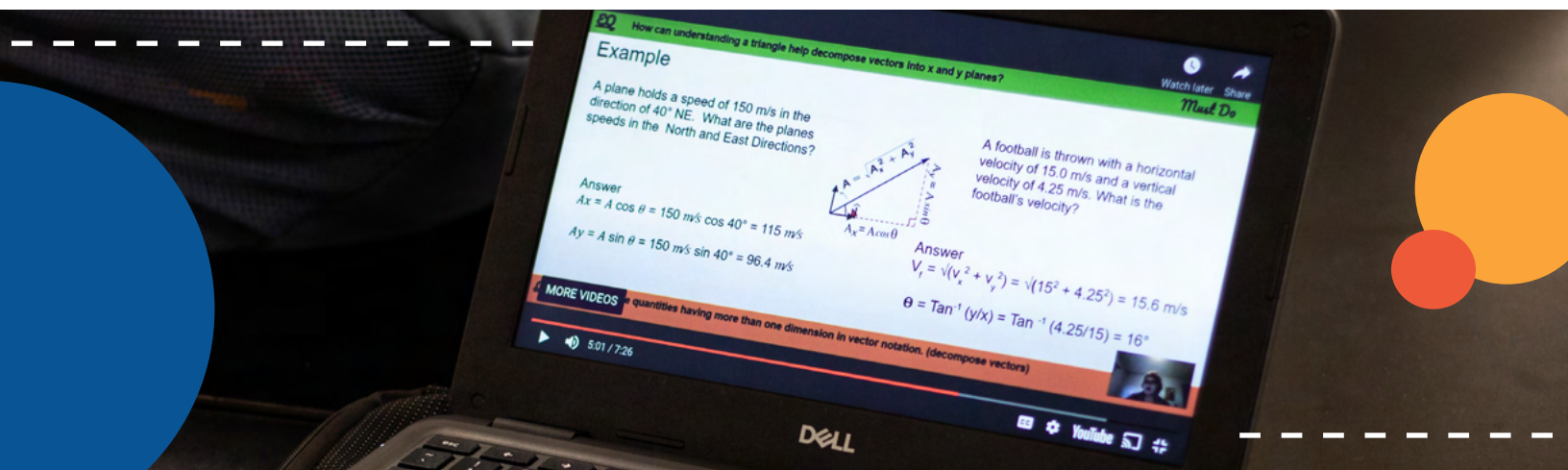
As much as possible, try to limit:

- **Text-heavy slides:** Reading and listening to explanations simultaneously is confusing. Instead, use compelling visuals.
- **Videos that cover too much:** Videos can deliver content or teach skills — not both. Make two videos instead of one.
- **Speaking too slowly:** You may not lose your students, but you won't engage them either.

New to video? Pick the right tool for you:

Creating Instructional Videos

- PC/Mac
  - Simple
    - Priority: Capture
      - Screencastify
      - Zoom
    - Priority: Enhancement
      - Edpuzzle Extension
      - Playposit Extension
  - Advanced
    - Priority: Editing
      - Screencast-o-Matic
    - Priority: Managing Multiple Audio and Visual Inputs
      - OBS
      - Camtasia
- Chrome Browser
  - Priority: Capture
    - Screencastify
  - Priority: Enhancement
    - Edpuzzle Extension
    - Playposit Extension
- Tablet
  - Simple
    - iOS Built In Screen Reader
  - Advanced
    - Explain Everything

There are a variety of tools that perform similar functions. To see a side-by-side comparison of available tools, we've created [this comprehensive review guide.](#)

03

Pacing Trackers

Public and student-facing progress trackers can help motivate students in a self-paced learning environment while keeping them on track to hit their learning targets.

Public-Facing Progress Trackers

Public-facing trackers can be powerful tools for clarity and motivation in a self-paced learning environment. If you are using a public tracker, be sure to frame it as a supportive tool for students and as a measure of their hard work and progress.

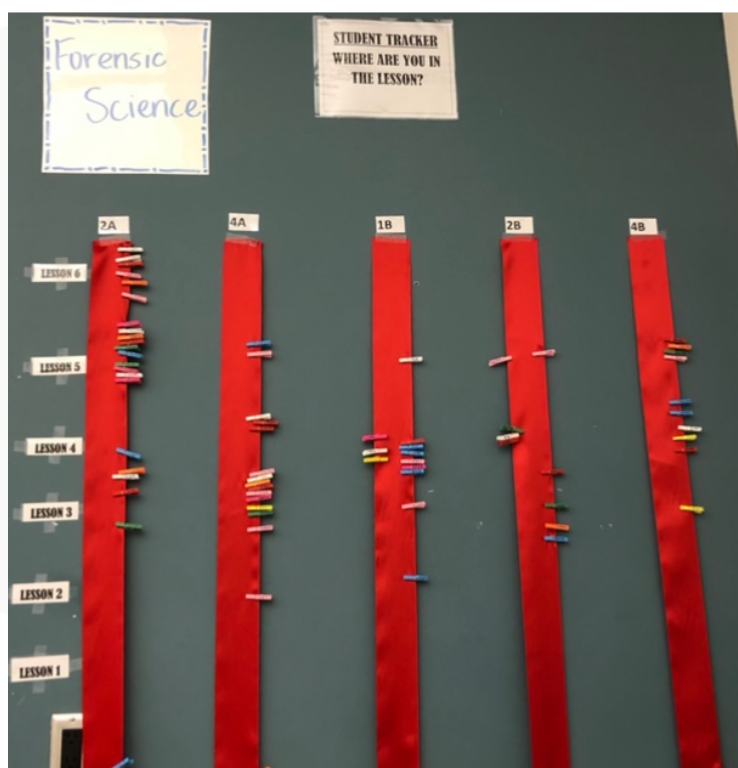### Option 1: Virtual Progress Trackers

This teacher-created tool makes it easy for teachers to track individual students' progress and assign groups of students to work together.

On Pace Lesson: 1.3					On Pace Lesson		
Today's Date: July 11		Suggested Due Date:	April 1	June 1	August 1	October 1	December 1
		Lesson:	1.1	1.2	1.3	1.4	1.5
Student	**Status**	Classification:	**Must Do**	**Should Do**	**Must Do**	**Must Do**	**Aspire to Do**
Rob	Ahead of Pace	Work on 1.6	mastered	mastered	mastered	mastered	mastered
Kareem	On Pace	Revise 1.3	mastered	mastered	revise		
Meg	Ahead of Pace	Work on 1.5	mastered	optional	mastered	mastered	now
Jasmine	Unit Complete!	All Finished!	mastered	mastered	mastered	mastered	mastered
Rex	Catching Up	Work on 1.2	mastered	now			
Annie	Catching Up	Work on 1.1	now				
Joshua	Ahead of Pace	Work on 1.5	mastered	mastered	mastered	mastered	now
Christine	Catching Up	Work on 1.1	now				
Melinda	On Pace	Work on 1.3	mastered	mastered	now		

This is the Modern Classrooms customizable auto-updating tracker. Make a copy of [this tracker.](#)

Option 2: Physical trackers

Trackers like these shift responsibility for publicly tracking progress to students, allowing them to celebrate mastering a lesson by physically updating signs of their progress. We recommend that the teacher maintain their own "master tracker," as well.

In this classroom, students move clothespins with their names up the ribbon as they advance through lessons. Each red ribbon represents a different class of high school students.

Option 3: Trackers that motivate and celebrate students

These trackers have strategies built in for teachers to easily recognize great student progress, hard work, and achievement while using a number system to keep students anonymous.

Student	Lesson
Student 1	Lesson 1 - Work with 13
Student 2	Lesson 3
Student 3	Revise Lesson 3
Student 4	Revise Lesson 3
Student 5	Lesson 3
Student 6	Lesson 3
Student 7	Lesson 3
Student 8	Lesson 1 - Work with 13
Student 9	Lesson 4
Student 10	Lesson 2
Student 11	Lesson 3
Student 12	Lesson 3
Student 13	Lesson 5 - Work with 1, 8
Student 14	Lesson 1 - Work with 18
Student 15	Lesson 4

Student	Lesson
Student 16	Lesson 2
Student 17	Lesson 3
Student 18	Lesson 5 - Work with 14, 23
Student 19	Lesson 3
Student 20	Lesson 2
Student 21	Lesson 3
Student 22	Revise Lesson 3
Student 23	Lesson 1 - Work with 18
Student 24	Lesson 3
Student 25	Lesson 4

Key

- **Behind: (Lesson 1-2)**
- **On-pace: (Lesson 3)**
- **Accelerated: (> Lesson 4)**
- **Revise!!**

Three Stars of the Day:

☆	Student 8 - Showed real hustle getting from lesson 2 to lesson 5 since Monday!
☆☆	Student 20 - Missed two classes but knew exactly where to start when she came back on Monday!
☆ ☆☆	Student 9, 15, 25 - Excellent implementation of feedback on Lesson 3!

Reminders:

1. I am the boss. I wouldn't ask Mr. Collazo a simple question, I would ask a colleague first. Therefore, ASK THREE BEFORE ME!!!

2. Save everything in your AP Seminar Folders with proper naming conventions!

3. No school next Monday, but your assessment is still due SUNDAY @ 11:59pm. (You should be finished with it before the weekend, though!)

We love the "three stars of the day" motivational strategy in this tracker! Make a copy to use in your classroom.

Student-Facing Progress Trackers

Students use these trackers to chart their own progress through a lesson or unit. These may not be as accurate as your tracker, but they give students some ownership over their progression through a course.

Option 1: Gameboards and roadmaps

Trackers like these add an element of creativity and help students reflect on their work as they journey through their lessons.

This is an example of an elementary gameboard that could be adapted to learners of all ages. Download a copy.

Option 2: Checklists

Like game boards, students use these trackers to chart their own progress through a lesson or unit.

Name: _____ Date: _____

UNIT 7: SYSTEMS OF EQUATIONS AND INEQUALITIES

PERIOD 6 ASSIGNMENT SHEET
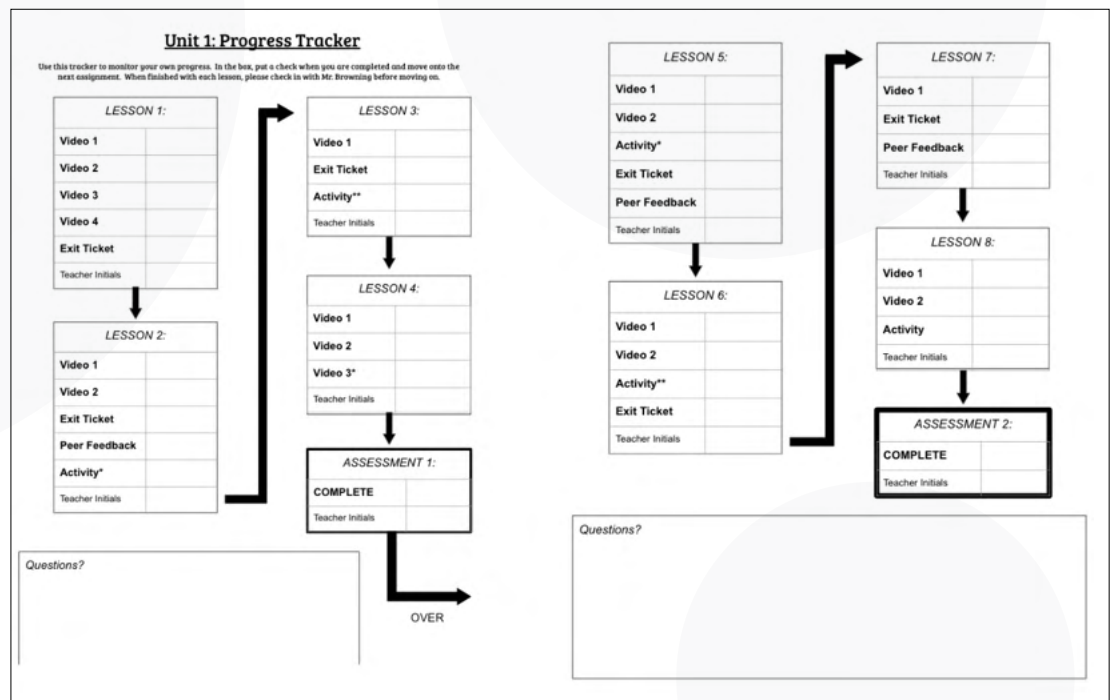
Potential goals for a lesson:

- refer back to my notes when I'm confused
- practice strong time management by using the clock/timer
- help a classmate (at appropriate times)
- use technology responsibly
- be specific when I ask my teacher for help
- pause & think: put notes in my own words before I take a mastery check
- keep my papers organized, so I can find them easily
- read over my assignment and mastery check before submitting them

Lesson 1: Solving by Graphing	My goal for this lesson:	On Pace: 1/16	Guided Notes	
			Assignment	
			Mastery Check	
Lesson 2: Solving by Substitution	My goal for lesson::	On Pace: 1/21	Guided Notes	
			Assignment	
			Mastery Check	

ASPIRE TO DO LESSON: SOLVING BY ELIMINATION

Lesson 3: Word Problems	My goal for lesson:	On Pace: 1/23	Guided Notes	
			Assignment	
			Mastery Check	
Lesson 4: Inequality Systems	My goal for lesson:	On Pace: 1/29	Guided Notes	
			Assignment	
			Mastery Check	

CATCH UP/REVIEW DAY   FRIDAY, JANUARY 31ST

TEST DAY: TUESDAY FEBRUARY 4TH

My goal for this unit assessment:

This teacher makes a simple, student-friendly checklist like this for every unit she teaches. (In her class, students all take their tests on the same day.) This tracker also encourages students to set goals for each lesson and for the unit assessment. Take a closer look and make a copy.

This tracker makes each step of a lesson and lesson progression very clear for students. Make a copy and personalize it.

Regardless of the type of tracker you use with your students, these additional supports will help students anticipate what they need to do next, stay motivated to keep working through instructional content, and have a better understanding of their achievement.

Unit 1: Progress Tracker

Use this tracker to monitor your own progress. In the box, put a check when you are completed and move onto the next assignment. When finished with each lesson, please check in with Mr. Browning before moving on.

LESSON 1:	
Video 1	
Video 2	
Video 3	
Video 4	
Exit Ticket	
Teacher Initials	

LESSON 2:	
Video 1	
Video 2	
Exit Ticket	
Peer Feedback	
Activity*	
Teacher Initials	

LESSON 3:	
Video 1	
Exit Ticket	
Activity**	
Teacher Initials	

LESSON 4:	
Video 1	
Video 2	
Video 3*	
Teacher Initials	

ASSESSMENT 1:	
COMPLETE	
Teacher Initials	

LESSON 5:	
Video 1	
Video 2	
Activity*	
Exit Ticket	
Peer Feedback	
Teacher Initials	

LESSON 6:	
Video 1	
Video 2	
Activity**	
Exit Ticket	
Teacher Initials	

LESSON 7:	
Video 1	
Exit Ticket	
Peer Feedback	
Teacher Initials	

LESSON 8:	
Video 1	
Video 2	
Activity	
Teacher Initials	

ASSESSMENT 2:	
COMPLETE	
Teacher Initials	

Questions?

OVER

Questions?

04

LMS & Classroom
Design Checklist

Ensure that your LMS and classroom set-up is usable, accessible, and equitable.

Designing Your Modern Classroom

Plan with your students in mind. Your classroom should be:

- **Usable:** Students can navigate your classroom effectively and efficiently.
- **Accessible:** Students with diverse needs and abilities can access all class resources.
- **Equitable:** Every student, regardless of background, feels challenged and supported.

Best Practices

Use this checklist to ensure that your LMS and classroom set-up meet the criteria above.
Your LMS should contain:

- [ ] A clear home page with information about accessing support.
- [ ] A video overview that explains how to navigate the LMS.
- [ ] A consistent system for naming lessons and materials.
- [ ] A logical sequence of activities or assignments, with suggested deadlines.
- [ ] Formatting that is easy to read and understand.
- [ ] A posted and accessible progress tracker (if you choose to use one).

Your physical classroom should include accessible spaces where students can:

- [ ] View and/or update their progress trackers (public or individual).
- [ ] Collect and submit their work.
- [ ] Work together in small groups.
- [ ] Complete mastery checks independently.
- [ ] Watch videos (independently or in small groups).
- [ ] Ask you questions.

Supporting Student Learning

During class time, ensure that every student is appropriately challenged or supported by:

- Moving around your classroom, answering questions, and providing encouragement.
- Delivering mini-lessons to groups of students who need additional explanation.

Your LMS and classroom design should help students guide their own learning.

05

Routines & Procedures Checklist

Ensure your routines help your students stay organized and on track.

Running Your Modern Classroom

Clear routines help your students stay organized and on track. Aim for procedures that are:

- **Efficient:** Students can get straight to learning with minimal time or energy lost.
- **Clear:** Students can learn the rules quickly and explain them to their classmates.
- **Consistent:** Students should do the same things on a regular basis, so they become habits.

Essential Routines

Every Modern Classroom should have established procedures for opening class, moving into self-pacing, and completing and submitting mastery checks. Before you launch your Modern Classroom, you should define - and communicate to students:

- [ ] How you will begin class every day (or most days).
- [ ] When students should transition to self-paced learning time.
- [ ] What students should do during self-paced learning time.
- [ ] How students should collect and submit mastery checks.
- [ ] When and how you will review and provide feedback on students' mastery checks.

Additional Routines

There are several other routines you may want to develop in order to facilitate blended, self-paced, mastery-based learning. If applicable, consider defining and sharing:

- [ ] How students should check out and return class technology (laptops, headphones, etc.) each day.
- [ ] How students can get help during class - from you or from their classmates.
- [ ] How students can identify classmates to work with during group work.
- [ ] How students should collect and submit practice work and/or guided notes.
- [ ] When and how you will review and give feedback on students' practice and/or guided notes.
- [ ] When, where, and how you'll deliver mini-lessons to your students.

This is not an exhaustive list - you'll surely add new routines as you uncover the need - and your routines will evolve over time. That's good! Keep tinkering and reflecting, and you'll find what works.

Strong routines will help your Modern Classroom run as efficiently as possible.

Caregiver Communication Guide

Introduce your Modern Classroom to students' caregivers and communicate student progress through your class.

It's important to explain your Modern Classroom by introducing it to students' families and/or caregivers, addressing any specific concerns they may have, and maintaining open lines of communication.

Introduce your Modern Classroom

Inform caregivers: Our resources for families include language, graphics, and links that can be helpful to include in a syllabus, course overview, or LMS.

Orient classroom visitors: Self-paced classrooms can surprise families and others the first time they visit. You can personalize this handout to explain your Modern Classroom to visitors.

Address screen-time concerns: Families want their children to receive developmentally appropriate instruction and meaningful work. See (and share!) our research-based guidance on screen time.

Explain your progress tracker: Families and administrators are often concerned by progress tracking. Explore our guidance on framing progress trackers, or learn more about data privacy concerns.

Share the research: Our model is grounded in research. Offer families our research briefs on the educational benefits of self-pacing and mastery-based learning.

Ongoing Communication

Automate progress communications: If you keep track of student progress in a Google sheet, you can automate caregiver communications using YAMM (Yet Another Mail Merge). Merge in fields to share whether a student is on, behind, or ahead of pace, and share what is on the docket for the coming week or unit.

Develop a schedule for communications: When will you communicate with students' caregivers, and how? Having a plan for this ahead of time will make it easier to stick to a schedule.

What are you waiting for? **Transform your instruction and plan for the upcoming school year.**

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