

Distance Learning Definitions:

Distance and/or e-learning is the overarching term for a variety of learning modalities involving virtual experiences whether they are asynchronous or synchronous. As decisions are made, a full understanding of the benefits, limitations, and considerations of each modality is important.

Synchronous learning – remote learning that happens in real-time with the interaction between the teacher and students that occurs in a face to face environment or in a virtual classroom setting, i.e. access from home via web conferencing.

Asynchronous learning – learning that occurs online without real-time interaction or instruction by an educator. Examples may include but not limited to pre-recorded video lessons, resource videos, assigned readings, and posted assignments.

A **Blended Learning Program** is a combination of synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning that requires access to the Internet, an electronic device, web conferencing tools, and a learning platform. Local school system educators deliver instruction aligned with the school’s curriculum and monitor student attendance, growth, IEP requirements, and provide differentiation for individual students. The use of the local school system educators and curriculum allows for the flexibility of moving between synchronous instruction received entirely at home via web conferencing and traditional instruction delivered in the brick and mortar environment.

Possible blended learning program options are listed below:

- Option 1: Blended Learning can be delivered by synchronous instruction provided by the local school system educator to students in the classroom and/or remote locations and complemented by the asynchronous use of a vendor course and/or resources.
- Option 2: Blended learning can be delivered synchronously with the local school system educator instructing students in a classroom while broadcasting this instruction live to students in remote locations. These remote students are able to participate and interact with the teacher and classmates. This instruction is supported by asynchronous activities and resources.
- Option 3: Blended Learning can be delivered remotely through synchronous instruction to a class of students by the local school system educator and supported by asynchronous lessons and resources aligned with the local school curriculum.

Some examples of how web conferencing tools can support blended learning beyond full class instruction are by providing opportunities for social-emotional connections, differentiating for small groups, meetings that involve parents, delivering conferences, and providing tutoring/enrichment, and office hours.

(There is a process in place to request advanced approval from the State Deputy Superintendent for local school systems who wish to offer a blended learning program. Process documentation is available by request at mvs.msde@maryland.gov or by emailing valerie.emrich@maryland.gov.)

Hybrid (Concurrent) Teaching and Learning is an educational model where some students attend class in-person, while others join the class virtually from home. Educators teach remote and in-person students at the same time using tools like video conferencing hardware and software.

Hybrid Schedule

A hybrid schedule can take many forms. It offers schools the most flexibility when meeting the needs of student groups. It may involve A-Day and B-Day scheduling, half-day scheduling, additional planning time for teachers, and additional technologies to share instruction with virtual students and to allow for teacher mobility in the classroom.

In-person (face to face) instruction

In- person instruction is when the student and teacher of record are in the same physical space. This does not include situations where an adult is supervising instruction but is not the student's teacher.

Possible Virtual School/Program Options are listed below:

- **A Vendor Virtual School (Virtual Program/Academy, CyberSchool, Online School)** contracted by a local school system or LSS consortium is based on asynchronous learning that includes minimal instruction on an as needed basis between students and the vendor. Use of a vendor student course requires content and accessibility reviews by the local school systems or MSDE. Student learning in an asynchronous course demands daily assistance and oversight from guardians, especially for K-8 students. This delivery method requires access to the Internet, an electronic device, and a learning platform. There is a process in place to request advanced approval from the State Superintendent for local school systems who wish to contract with a virtual school vendor. Process documentation is available by request at mvs.msde@maryland.gov.
- *(There is a process in place to request advanced approval from the State Superintendent for local school systems who wish to offer a virtual learning program. Process documentation is available by request at mvs.msde@maryland.gov or by emailing valerie.emrich@maryland.gov.)*
- **A Local School System may host an asynchronous virtual school** using their own educators and courses or utilizing vendor content. *(There is a process in place to request advanced approval from the State Superintendent for local school systems who wish to offer a virtual learning program. Process documentation is available by request at mvs.msde@maryland.gov or by emailing valerie.emrich@maryland.gov.)*