

## 4. Learning Environments & Platforms

### **Description:**

This unit will give you a glimpse into the nuts and bolts of the main digital tools utilized by Rhode Island schools and districts. These tools have a variety of purposes, including: as hubs for organizing assignments and announcements; general communication with students and their families; methods for hosting virtual meetings; and collecting student responses in engaging ways beyond traditional paper and pencil assessments. While this module is not an exhaustive list of what you may see as a substitute teacher, it will give you a good starting point, alongside access to tutorials that you can come back to again and again for reference. In addition, you will gain a basic understanding of the common learning environments/reopening scenarios for schools (full in-person, distance learning, hybrid, etc.).

### **Key Standards:**

- Teachers will be able to navigate commonly used learning management platforms.
- Teachers will learn how to use online tools for student responses and submitted work.
- Teachers will learn how to maximize learning in hybrid and distance structures.

### **Learning Tasks:**

- Respond to a journal prompt empathizing with students while considering your own challenges in various learning environments.
- Learn the difference between and challenges associated with in-person, at-home, and hybrid learning environments.
- Learn to navigate and utilize a widely used learning management system and common online tools.
- Read and/or watch a selection of curated texts, short videos, and activities to help you maximize student learning in various environments with these platforms and tools.
- Continue to build a personal toolkit (“backpack strategies”) of resources that will support you in the field.

## Module 4: Key Concepts

Term	Definition
<b>In-person or face-to-face learning</b>	Full in-person learning comprises face-to-face experiences between students and educators that follow social distancing and sanitization guidelines, with the goal of minimizing the spread of disease while reopening the physical school environment for as many people as possible.
<b>At-home, distance, or remote learning</b>	A remote learning environment connects students and educators through virtual platforms, with little to no in-person contact. Schools may consider full distance learning for immunocompromised staff and students, and keep it as an option for families to opt into based on their needs.
<b>Hybrid learning</b>	Hybrid learning models incorporate some component(s) of both distance learning and in-person learning. There are a variety of hybrid scenarios, but common versions may include rotating different cohorts of students on alternating weeks/days, or having set groups of at-home and in-person learners that get support from the teacher at different points in the schedule. While hybrid learning models provide flexibility, the constraints of staffing and physical space may require schools to prioritize access by grade level, learner needs, etc.
<b>Learning Management System (LMS)</b>	A Learning Management System is software designed specifically to create, distribute, and manage the delivery of educational content. The most basic LMS contains a core functional platform that enables [educators] to upload learning content, deliver lessons to students, send notifications, and share data with authorized users. An LMS most often operates inside of a web-browser, behind a secure sign-on process. This gives all students and instructors easy access to courses on-the-go, while administrators and leaders can monitor student progress and make improvements ( <a href="#">Valamis</a> ). Commonly used LMSs in Rhode Island include Google Classroom, Canvas, Blackboard, and Seesaw.
<b>School Information System (SIS)</b>	The School Information System is primarily used to manage student information within a school and/or district. This could include information relating to basic demographics, admissions, enrollments, attendance, discipline, final grades/certifications, etc. ( <a href="#">eThink</a> ). Commonly used SIS in Rhode Island include Skyward, PowerSchool, and Aspen.
<b>Google Classroom</b>	Google Classroom is a free web service that Google developed for schools to create, distribute, and grade assignments. The primary purpose of Google Classroom is to streamline the process of sharing files between teachers and students ( <a href="#">Wikipedia</a> ). Google Classroom is a basic version of a Learning Management System (LMS).
<b>Canvas</b>	Canvas is a web-based Learning Management System, which is software that allows institutions to manage digital learning. Educators can create and present online learning materials and assess student learning, while students can engage in courses and receive feedback about their skill development and learning achievement ( <a href="#">Canvas</a> ). Canvas is utilized in several Rhode Island school districts.
<b>Seesaw</b>	Seesaw is a platform for student engagement that is sometimes used as a Learning Management System for grades PreK-2. Students capture their learning in a portfolio using creative tools to take pictures, draw, record videos, and more. It collects student work in one place for the teacher to view, and is also shareable with families; however, nothing is shared without teacher approval ( <a href="#">Seesaw</a> ). In Rhode Island, Seesaw is most commonly used with young learners.
<b>Jamboard</b>	Jamboard is a collaborative virtual whiteboard in the Google Suite of free tools. Students can add sticky notes, draw, add images, and type in text boxes, which allows students to make their thinking visible. Like a Google Document, Jamboard allows multiple users to make edits to the same artifact simultaneously. It is similar to Google Slides or PowerPoint presentations in many ways.
<b>Flipgrid</b>	Flipgrid is a free video recording, posting, and sharing platform. Teachers can create a topic/prompt, and students reply in their own words and voices with brief video responses that are viewable to all classmates. The teacher can enable settings that allow users to respond to one another's videos with a video comment feature.

## Module 4: Key Concepts (Continued)

Term	Definition
<b>Station Rotation</b>	Station rotation is a model in which students rotate through learning tasks/modalities on a fixed schedule or at the teacher’s discretion, and at least one of the modalities is online learning. Students rotate through all of the stations over the course of a day or multiple days. Stations might include activities such as small-group instruction, group projects, individual tutoring, and pencil-and-paper assignments. (Adapted from <a href="#">The Christensen Institute</a> ).
<b>Playlist</b>	A playlist is a teacher-curated (and ideally individualized) digital assignment chart that students work through at their own pace. Playlists often consist of a mix of teacher-created lessons and third-party content from curriculum providers ( <a href="#">Cult of Pedagogy</a> & <a href="#">The Christensen Institute</a> ).
<b>Concurrent In-Person &amp; Remote Classroom</b>	In a concurrent classroom model, some students attend class in person while others attend remotely at the same time. The teacher works to meet the needs of both groups of students simultaneously ( <a href="#">Catlin Tucker</a> ). This model has become much more common amidst the COVID-19 pandemic due to a variety of factors.