Hold orientation both online and on campus

As you transition back to school for the 2020-2021 school year, you face a range of new learning scenarios. You have to flexibly accommodate remote learning, in-person instruction, and combinations of both.

Microsoft is committed to helping you navigate these challenges, so we've put together a handful of resources to help with orientation and other back-to-school events. Are there resources you need that we haven't provided? Leave us a comment and let us know.
Considerations for orientation

Below are some issues you may be considering at each stage of orientation.

**Before orientation**

- How will you ramp up faculty and students on new tools?
- How will you set students up with the technology they need?
- Are there any key materials students need to have as the school year begins?
- How will you ensure inclusivity and accessibility for all students, while maintaining security?

**During orientation**

- What size of orientation events do you need to hold, and will there be external participants?
- Do you need to host campus-wide events like leadership addresses?
- How will you engage with students outside of sessions and get a pulse on their social and emotional adjustment?

**Beyond orientation**

- How will you help students socialize and plug into the campus community?
- How will you continue to engage students and personalize learning after orientation?
## Orientation roadmap

Click on each step for more information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before orientation</th>
<th>During orientation</th>
<th>Beyond orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prepare instructors and admins for orientation</td>
<td>Hold orientation sessions via Teams meetings</td>
<td>Help students plug into the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set students up with the tech they need</td>
<td>Host larger sessions via Live Events</td>
<td>Personalize the educational experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect students to resources and services</td>
<td>Stay engaged with students outside of sessions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure a foundation of security and accessibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Prepare instructors and admins for orientation

Staff need to be trained on key tools before orienting students, and Microsoft offers comprehensive tutorials to ramp them up as quickly as possible—including the Teams Guide for Faculty and free self-service learning paths on Microsoft Learn. You can also rely on personalized assistance from Microsoft Store specialists, a team of experts helping to run trainings, execute events, and provide support every step of the way.

School Data Sync generates teams based on class rosters or other groupings in your Student Information System. Automatically create groups in Teams, Intune for Education, and third-party apps that will help organize students and leaders when orientation begins.
Set students up with the tech they need

Device and Internet equity are especially important for hybrid learning. This Forms template is available for you to customize and send to students, to help gauge their needs in relation to technology and Internet access. The survey could fit well in your orientation materials.

Microsoft also offers affordable Windows 10 and Surface devices with LTE capability so that students can stay productive—whether they’re on campus, at home, or on the go. Visit the Education Store to explore accessible, highly secure devices for students, faculty, and admins.

Microsoft offers powerful, versatile Surface devices with touch and inking for more experiential and accessible learning, plus LTE options so students can connect from anywhere.
Connect students to resources and services

Send out the Back-to-School Kit to give students detailed instructions on downloading and using Microsoft 365, including Teams as a central collaboration hub that provides a holistic educational experience. The kit provides student discounts for Surface devices as well.

Connect students to Microsoft’s student resources portal for helpful tutorials and templates. There are also courses on Microsoft Learn and LinkedIn Learning tailored for students—whether they want to practice the productivity tools they’ll be using in their daily lives or get a head start on cutting-edge digital technologies.
Ensure a foundation of security and accessibility

Microsoft is dedicated to keeping your virtual orientation environment safe. Teams includes rich privacy controls for meetings—define roles, moderate conversations, prevent interference from unwanted attendees, and monitor consent for recording. And it’s built on a trusted cloud platform that defends data and identities.

Microsoft also offers free, comprehensive, built-in accessibility tools to help include all learners. Just a few examples include live captions and transcription with translation, Accessibility Checker to ensure accessible resources, Immersive Reader to make reading and writing inclusive, dictation, and Focus Assist.
Hold orientation sessions via Teams meetings

Microsoft Teams is a hub for digital learning—both synchronous and asynchronous—with all your apps in one place and integration with your LMS. One leader can run a simultaneous session for socially distanced on-campus students and for remote students watching the stream from home. Meetings support up to 1,000 attendees, and Teams includes robust controls for guest access.

Available free for Education users as part of Microsoft 365, Teams offers many new features to keep students engaged during sessions, including screen sharing for presentations, hand-raising, meeting chat, pre-recorded videos with narration, innovative views like Together Mode, and more. Breakout rooms are coming in Q4 of 2020.

Together Mode
Host larger sessions via Live Events

If you need to address a group of over 1,000 participants at once, you can use the Live Events feature in Teams. Live Events support up to 20,000 attendees, plus captions to ensure the session is accessible for everyone.

Note that Live Events do not include the same participatory features as regular Teams meetings; attendees cannot speak, chat, or raise their hands. Rely on Live Events for broad addresses—like a welcome from your principal or university president—where participation is less crucial.

Live Events in Teams are free through September 30
Stay engaged with students outside of sessions

In addition to live orientation sessions, Teams makes it easy to upload and share documents, presentations, videos, and other materials for students to complete on their own time. Use the Assignments tab to assign readings, quizzes, and more with set deadlines for class teams.

Teams also offers features to help you check in on students outside of regular orientation events. For instance, you can use the Reflect messaging extension to ask students how they’re feeling about a particular issue or just in general. You can make results anonymous.
Personalize the educational experience

Microsoft’s Power Platform can help you tailor orientation or instruction to every student’s needs. Integrated with Teams, Power Apps and Power Automate enable you to quickly create low-to-no-code apps and flows to simplify classroom tasks, provide engaging mobile tools, and much more. Power Virtual Agents offers customizable chatbots to answer students’ questions using AI.

You can also view Class Insights in Teams and visualize data about students’ grades, accomplishments, and more through Power BI. Check out the Microsoft Education Blog to read about how schools have used Power BI to bolster student success.
Help students plug into the community

Socializing is many students’ major concern as they start school, and it can be even more stressful in remote situations. Teams allows students to create their own teams for whichever groups they choose—from clubs to student government to social circles. IT retains control over naming, permissions, retention, and other governance issues.

Also consider setting up meet ‘n greet sessions for students to virtually get to know each other. A group leader can easily share a set of icebreaker questions to get the conversation rolling. Or students can make their voices heard through Flipgrid videos integrated with Teams through the Flipgrid connector.

Video Responses in Flipgrid
Through Microsoft’s video conference platform Teams, thousands of students across the country were able to hear their names called during the virtual graduation initiative. This may seem like a small thing in the midst of global pandemic, but it’s huge when you’re a student who’s worked extremely hard for the one moment when you, your family and your friends celebrate... It’s not just our students win, but it’s everyone's win.

SANDRA WARE
Community Partner and STEM Education Advocate
State Education Consultant Over Virtual Learning for State of Michigan
During the transition to distance learning, Teams Meetings and Live Events helped us stay connected at every level, from class sessions to staff meetings and town halls for students and employees. Being able to meet, collaborate, and engage with each other and students in a rich virtual environment will remain critical as we head into the new school year and beyond and continue to adapt to the times, as SUNY Empire has done since 1971.

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