

Distance Learning and Virtual Classrooms

This model provides access to courses or educational experiences online, enabling learners to access content and top-level instructors they may not have had access to otherwise, as well as communicate with students in other locations. There are two types of distance learning: synchronous, where students primarily access courses and communicate with each other and the instructor in real time; and asynchronous, where instructors manage online courses and present curriculum, lectures, and lessons that students access at different times (sometimes referred to as MOOCs: massive open online courses).

Examples

- **Coursera:** A MOOC engine partnered with well-known universities that offers courses, taught via video lectures, text lectures, and discussions. www.coursera.org
- **Big History Project:** Online social studies course for middle school and high school that spans the course of time. Provides professional development, full lessons, and year-long curricula for teachers. Supported by Bill Gates. <http://school.bighistoryproject.com>
- **Peloton:** Peloton branded stationary bikes are used to access both live or on-demand spin classes, thereby offering opportunities for synchronous and asynchronous learning, as well as personal interactions and community building at the physical locations. www.pelotoncycle.com
- **Jam.com:** Online video courses for kids ages 8-14 ranging in non-curricular topics from cooking to becoming a pop star. Courses are based on quests, challenges, and activities for the learner to complete. www.jam.com

Related Jewish Tools

- **Lookstein Virtual Jewish Academy:** An online school of Jewish courses. www.virtualjewishacademy.org
- **Shalom Learning:** Personalized religious and Hebrew courses for at home or in schools. www.shalomlearning.org
- **Bonim B'Yachad:** Collaborates with Jewish day schools to create personalized online courses. www.bonimbyachad.com
- **OnlineJewishLearning:** Offers various online courses including a Hebrew school at Home program; Bar/Bat Mitzvah preparation, a Hebrew reading program and Adult Education. www.onlinejewishlearning.com
- **Gratz/Jolt:** Online Jewish courses for teens (college credit can be earned). www.gratz.edu/jolt
- **The Virtual High School, Online Judaic Studies Consortium:** Online Jewish courses for use in schools with 8-12th graders, completed under the guidance of a trained teacher at the school. www.thevirtualhighschool.org/OJSC
- **CollegeNow:** Online Jewish studies university courses for high school (credit can be earned). www.yu.edu/college-now/
- **JETS/Land of Israel Online:** Online Jewish and Israel related courses for teens and adults that include virtual visits to sites in Israel. www.landofisrael.online
- **ITaLAM⁹:** Digital version of the Hebrew teaching TalAm curriculum, currently in development and being piloted for 2nd grade. Includes both digital and non-digital products, which use videos, games, stories, assessments, and personalized educational activities. www.youtube.com/watch?v=t8MaHu8l4Cw
- **Medabrim:** Comic-based Hebrew language lessons for conversational Hebrew that include online lessons and activities. www.medabrim.com/en/links
- **8-Minute Message:** Automated daily message of Jewish inspiration. www.8minutemessage.com

⁹ *Compedia and ITaLAM formed a partnership in the development of this.*



- **2-Line Torah:** Weekly two-line message about the weekly Torah portion. www.hillel.org/jewish/jewish-education/two-line-torah
- **Mechon Hadar Project Zug:** Users select an online course and are then paired with a havruta with whom they can learn via video chat and use the provided online resources. www.projectzug.org
- **eTeacher Hebrew:** An online Hebrew course with a weekly virtual component taught via video conferencing. Can be done in small groups or one-on-one. www.eteacherhebrew.com
- **Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration Online Master's Program:** Student-paced online Master's program for students who live more than 50 miles from YU. <http://www.yu.edu/azrieli/prospective-students/masters-programs/>
- **Hebrew Union College:** A variety of offerings of part-time online programs that combine on-site and distance learning. <http://huc.edu/academics/elearning>
- **Hebrew College Masters of Arts in Jewish Studies:** An online master's program that uses both asynchronous and synchronous learning as well as video chatting and havruta learning. <http://www.hebrewcollege.edu/online-learning>
- **Israel Institute:** Worked in partnership with a number of leading Israeli universities to launch two MOOCs on the topics of Israel's history, politics, and society. <http://israelinstitute.org/>

Further Suggestions for Jewish Education

- Invest in the creation and support of an immersive Blended Virtual/Real Jewish Day school, with both secular and Jewish studies, taking the best from what exists in day schools and secular learning. Optional in-person mentoring and a social/communal meeting component, as well as teacher training could be included.
- Use online courses as a way to build community, connect, and teach before, after, and during the off-season for programs such as Birthright Israel and camp. Perhaps counselors could lead or TA such courses and earn credit or a salary for this work.



“Make a Jewish Khan-like academy portal with high-quality video and other resources. And make sure you have sufficient funds to support its distribution.”

BJÖRN JEFFERY, TOCA BOCA

- Partner with general Ed Tech companies like Coursera and AltSchool to create courses and material. Both of these organizations have and are currently pursuing partnerships with nonprofit organizations, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Natural History in New York City. AltSchool recently announced partnerships with various schools, one being Temple Beth Shalom Day School in Miami Beach.¹⁰ At the end of November 2016, Coursera will offer a course in partnership with the Hebrew University entitled “Israel State and Society.”¹¹
- Consider the Peloton model which offers both synchronous and asynchronous distance learning as well as opportunities for in-person connections and interactions. Explore this combined model, which provides opportunities for learning and community building, for families with young children or college-age students. Perhaps build on already existing physical institutions such as JCCs, which due to their offerings (e.g., recreation, fitness centers, and preschools) already have audiences from a variety of backgrounds.

¹⁰ <http://blog.altschool.com/next-phase-altschool-mission>

¹¹ <https://www.coursera.org/learn/israel>