Getting Started with
Online Teaching

Tips and resources for K-12 teachers

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Preparing for Online Teaching

The closure of schools in March 2020 took the education community by surprise. Suddenly, for the first time in history, a majority of American students and teachers was thrust into remote teaching and learning. Few were fully prepared for this shift. While schools may reopen as usual in some communities, the risk of further closures is real. Preparing for what comes next is paramount, whether that means a resumption of online instruction or a return to traditional classrooms. The challenges to our education system and to teachers and administrators, personally, are great. We hope, though, that teachers will join us in seizing this opportunity to enhance classroom skills and practice in service to our students.

Frame of Mind

Just as we strive to provide a learning environment for our students that keeps them in the comfort zone, as teachers and administrators we need to do the same for ourselves at this time. We have created this quick-start guide to help you approach the task of teaching remotely using online tools.

Adopting a growth mindset is the most productive way to approach teaching, be it online or in person. We would never expect our students to provide a polished, final-copy version the first time they submit a writing assignment. As teachers and administrators, we should set similar expectations for ourselves. Give yourself permission to "simply create" the video or document. It does not have to look like a Ted Talk. Besides, your students want to see you, engaged in what is familiar and expected: facilitating their learning. Your less-than-perfect products and efforts will make your learning process visible to students and will reinforce their willingness to take risks with trying new tools and publication styles. Take a deep breath and dive in.

You Do Not Need to Reinvent the Wheel

At the end of the document we provide selected additional resources for educators and school leaders. Our work as educators over the coming year will require that we practice flexibility, responsiveness, and a commitment to continued learning. With those values planted in our collective consciousness, we encourage teachers and leaders in each district to establish a shared, curated document where helpful resources are compiled and a list of frequently asked questions are addressed. As no one district can expect to fully plumb the depths of resources online, consider making your collections public and inviting other districts in your area to both share and con-construct tools. Seek out districts and teachers who are already leading the way with digital instruction and use them as inspirations and sources of possible practice.

Consider reframing your Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for the year to focus on how to implement best practice teaching via digital means. Use PLC time to share and model new tools and processes, drawing on the expertise of your colleagues to provide feedback on your lessons. Share promising examples of practice via your district's resources pages. Use these discussions to build a frequently asked question (FAQ) document and resource bases for your district. If we all put forth our best efforts, we will be better able to tackle the task of moving our best practices online.

Remember, we do not need to be that perfect teacher all day every day. We need only to get out there and strive to do our best for our students. Presenting them our real selves, at home or from an empty classroom, giving it our best, is what they want most.

Navigating This Guide

At the bottom of many pages, we present additional resources that you can consult to learn more about teachers who are implementing online teaching techniques, information on the techniques, online tools that will help you try new techniques, and examples of how to implement techniques in your classroom.

Information: Visit these resources to learn more about the highlighted techniques.

Classroom in Action: Visit these resources to see how the highlighted technique can be implemented in an online environment.

Teacher Profile: Visit these resources to see how a teacher has implemented the technique in her/his classroom.

Tools: Visit these resources to check out online tools that will help you move classroom practices into a digital learning environment.

Plan to Take Care of You

Self-Care Is Crucial
The pandemic places continuing strains and stresses on teachers and students alike. We cannot do our best teaching if we are not whole and healthy mentally and physically. During times of crisis, it's far too easy for us to do for others and leave ourselves out of the equation. Make self-care an intentional part of your daily teaching life.

Experiment with the ideas to the right. Try them out, modify them, and find what works for you and those in your household.

(Adapted from [The Distance Learning Playbook](#))

Place
Creating a work-life balance is a challenge when work and life happen in the same place– our home. Set aside a dedicated place where you can work comfortably. You don't necessarily need to have a whole room to yourself, but that's great if you can swing it. You might set up a corner in your kitchen or living room.

Breaks
Just as you would want to provide breaks for your students, be sure that when you have time to step away you use it. Take that 15 minute break you give your students to step outside, read your new book, or do some stretching.

House Rules
If you live with other people, work together to come up with guidelines about how to interact during your work hours, especially during the times you'll be teaching via video conferences. Establish times when you expect that you won't be interrupted, except in case of emergencies. Create plans for how others in your household can let you know that they need your attention or to pass through your "teaching area."

Setting up a Home Teaching Space:
- [Photos: This Is What Educators' COVID-19 'Classrooms' Look Like](#)
- [Making the Most of Teaching From Home (Home Classroom Inspiration!)](#)

Structure Your Day
Creating separation between our work times and personal times is crucial at this time. Establishing boundaries for yourself about when work starts and ends can help you let go of the work day. Remote working can be isolating, especially if you live by yourself. Set aside times to connect with friends and colleagues. And finally, (Adapted from The Distance Learning Playbook)

Routines

Before the pandemic, many of us had regular morning and end-of-day routines. Create new working-from-home routines to start and end your workday. These are great ways to transition to and from your home life and into/from your teaching life.

Collegial Connections

Just because we're separated doesn't mean we cannot connect with our closest colleagues. Reach out to those colleagues who were part of your support system before remote teaching began. Set up times to have both professional conversations by video conference or phone call. Similarly, schedule times for social gatherings via video conference or phone call where you can relax together like you might have over lunch.

Destress

Make a list of things that help you shed stress. Post them near your teaching space. When you're feeling stressed run through the list and leverage those strategies! Try one, if it doesn't seem to do the trick, keep trying new ones. For ideas, check out the link below.

Stress Relief for Teachers.
- How Educators Can (Really, Honestly) Unplug — And How Stress Affects Us
- 15 Stress-Busting Tips From Teachers

Setting Up For Success

Timing

Be consistent about when and where you place lessons, readings, and other learning materials. Students and their families need to be clear about where they will find the materials and plans they need to ensure success. Create weekly and monthly schedules to share with students and families.

Title

Make sure that you name your documents in ways that make it easy for students and families to identify the files they need, e.g. "Mon. Sept. 21 Math Worksheet"

Number

Number parts of your lessons, especially those that students will work through on their own time.

Links

Take the time to insert links to all the resources students will need in each of your lessons. Taking the time to insert a link to a reading, website, or other material will reduce the chances of students getting confused and giving up as they work through a lesson on their own.

Catlin Tucker Online Planning and Teaching Activities.
- Tips for Designing an Online Learning Experience Using the 5 Es Instructional Model
- The Building Blocks of an Online Lesson
- Asynchronous vs. Synchronous: How to Design for Each Type of Learning

Create Your Virtual Classroom

While we cannot touch our virtual teaching spaces, we can put our own signatures on them. Doing so helps to welcome our students, show them that a caring learning environment awaits them, and helps them become oriented to their roles as online learners.
(Adapted from 7 Guidelines for Setting Up Clear Online Lessons and The Distance Learning Playbook)

Home Page

Create a homepage for your classroom. This page should serve to orient students and families to your class. Provide information on how and when students and families can reach you– include your email address, times and links to video office hours, and times between which people can expect a prompt response. Consider building a frequently asked questions (FAQ) list that you add to as you respond to questions from students and families.

Video

Create short, simple (doesn't need to look like a Ted Talk) videos that give the overview of the day's plans and the work students will be doing. Consider recording yourself walking students through each aspect of the lesson that they're being asked to complete, just as you would have given instructions in your "regular" classroom. Check out the links below for more information on making videos.
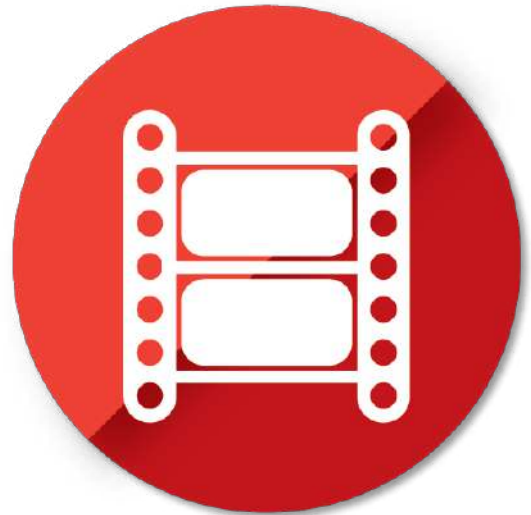
Train

Plan to spend considerable time at the outset of online learning teaching students and families when and where to find the materials they'll need for learning. Once you've established a consistent time and place that you will place materials, students and their families will need support in learning these new routines.

Making a Welcome Video: Creating a Simple Online Welcome video – Come On In!
Making Videos for the Classroom: A 5-Step Guide to Making Your Own Instructional Videos

Crafting Online Plans That Work

Structures for Planning Online

Planning for online teaching involves thinking differently than teachers have in the past. As always, you'll need to emphasize clear communication with your students and their families, creating rituals and routines in your classroom (more on that in the next pages), making sure that your lessons lead students to engage in high quality learning. Adapted from: 9 Ways Online Teaching Should be Different from Face-to-Face and The Building Blocks of an Online Lesson

Building Blocks

Catlin Tucker suggests that teachers think about lesson planning for online teaching by using building blocks. For each block, list your teaching objectives and outline the digital (she calls them online) and offline tools you and students might use. She includes a template for you to use in planning and points out that such a document can be shared with families and students to support their process throughout a lesson.

Balance

Teachers and students cannot expect to spend 6 hours a day on live video conferencing. Part of planning for teaching during remote schooling involves finding a balance between synchronous teaching via video conference and asynchronous lessons that students work through at their own pace, outside of video-conferencing times. You will want to maximize your synchronous teaching time by having students complete work before the lesson to prepare for live instruction. Consider adding asynchronous work for students to complete after the live video lesson, see the Catlin Tucker list of teaching activities.

Recap

Provide a few sentences in your messages to students and families that summarizes the work and activities from the previous day., include a link to that day's instruction in case students need to review or were absent.

Catlin Tucker Online Planning and Teaching Activities.
- Tips for Designing an Online Learning Experience Using the 5 Es Instructional Model
- The Building Blocks of an Online Lesson
- Asynchronous vs. Synchronous: How to Design for Each Type of Learning

End Products of Online Instruction

The pandemic and remote learning prevents us from looking over students' shoulders as they work. As a result, it is even more important that we have students engage in assignments that provide rich sources for us to reflect on and assess. In addition to worksheets and quizzes, consider adding projects (either digital or analog) that allow for deeper points of entry to students' thinking and process. For all student work, continue to provide feedback to students. Feedback can be done in familiar ways by using email, texting, or comments in the margins of documents. There are also a variety of online tools that you can try out to provide feedback. Adapted from: 9 Ways Online Teaching Should be Different from Face-to-Face and

Feedback

Work with your district leaders to allow for more use of formative assessment instead of summative assessments. As much as you are able, provide written feedback to students through emails, texts, or comments on their documents. There are nifty apps, like Floop (that allow you to drop comments on pictures of your students' work. You can also consider making videos to give feedback to your students using an app like Flipgrid. Feedback should be targeted, help a student improve their performance, and reinforce your high-expectations of them. See below for more about quick, high-quality feedback.

Exit Tickets

You can create Google Docs exit slips to be emailed back to you or you can post them in students' classroom folder. You also can get real time responses through many different apps. Whether you use a Google form or try out one of the apps featured below, digital exit tickets can be used to provide you real-time instructional information about what a student needs next.

End Product

As you plan lessons, consider having students create a project for the summative assessment component. See below, for information on using a single-point rubric to guide students' work and your grading. Students can make traditional (analog) projects, such as dioramas, handwritten reports, or posters. When they've finished such a project, they can present to their classmates during a video conference, record a video of themselves presenting their product, or take pictures of their product and send them to you. Or they can create a digital project, like those heighted in the link below.

- Providing Feedback in Online Instruction
    - Flash Feedback: How to Provide More Meaningful Feedback in Less Time
    - Using Exit Tickets
    - Meet the Single Point Rubric

- Response Tools:
    - 5 Online Discussion Tools to Fuel Student Engagement
    - Floop.
    - Flipgrid for ALL! 50+ Ways to Use Flipgrid in Your Class
    - Snapshots Of Understanding? 10 Smart Tools For Digital Exit Slips

- Digital Projects for Students. Student Projects

Running Your Online Classroom

Online Classroom Management
Setting up, teaching, and reinforcing expected behavior is even more critical in an online environment since we will not have the same range of teacher moves (giving "the look" to a student, moving closer to a student, etc.) as we would in our "regular" classroom.

Adapted from: [7 Guidelines for Setting Up Clear Online Lessons](#), [Creative Ways Teachers Are Building Classroom Community Online](#), and [The Distance Learning Playbook](#)

Train
Students will learn quickly and may outpace you. Set aside time to provide students instruction on how to use your video conferencing platform. Give them the chance to explore and experiment with all the affordances/tools that you plan to use during regular instructional time. Do this every time you add a new type of technology. This process will save time as you move into content instruction. Remember to train students in the use of all technology BEFORE any lesson begins.

Rules and Routines
At the start of the school year, have the class develop the basic ground rules for your classroom that should be followed whether they're in large group/small group video conference meetings or engaged in asynchronous tasks such as leaving comments in documents or sending messages. Keep the focus positive. Create a slide of these rules and share the slide and review it before each session or at the top of each asynchronous lesson plan. Plan to teach these repeatedly. Reinforce the process by noting positive examples of student behavior that conforms to the rules. Consider writing out a poster that you can place behind you during video-conferencing or create a slide that you share at the start of each video conference.

Expectations
Define and teach what being an engaged student looks like in an online classroom. What does listening look like in your digital classroom? How should students indicate they would like to respond or have a question? How should they engage ideas shared by other students? In the digital classroom, students can use the chat function, built in reaction features like thumbs up or clapping hands, or just give a thumbs up in front of their webcams.

- Online Classroom Management
    - [Classroom Management: 4 Keys to Starting the Year off Right](#)

- Chelsea Singers' [Virtual Classroom Rules And Expectations](#)

Building Classroom Community

Connecting With Students

The pandemic has separated students from their teachers and from their peers. As a result, it is even more important to attend to the social emotional needs of students. Online and remote learning make doing so more challenging. Building community will require some new and different tricks.

Adapted from: 7 Guidelines for Setting Up Clear Online Lessons and Creative Ways Teachers Are Building Classroom Community Online

Keep It Positive

Continue to reinforce positive behavior. As in the regular classroom, sometimes students will behave in ways that you find non-productive. When these moments arise, you may be forced to use the chat function, your ability to mute a student's microphone or to turn off a student's video stream after you've engaged first-line tactics such as distracting the distractor (see below). As in the "real" classroom, your demeanor makes a big difference to your students. In live or video recorded sessions, be sure to maintain enthusiasm for your topic and "eye contact" with the camera.

Make Time

While time with students during live-video conferencing will be in short supply, make sure to set aside time for building classroom community. Budget in time for students to engage in informal conversation and get-to-know-you activities.

Celebrations

Even though we won't be in the same space as our students, we can still celebrate special events. Establish a routine for celebrations to commemorate student milestones (e.g. losing a tooth, having a birthday) and accomplishments (e.g., completion of a learning cycle or project).

Check In

The pandemic and resulting economic dislocations are causing stress and anxiety among students as well as adults. Now more than ever, it is crucial to check in with students about how they are feeling. On a group level, build in group check-ins using surveys or Google Forms. On an individual level, Set up times that students can check in with you, such as dedicated office hours. Touch base with students who miss lessons.

Make It Fun

Consider a "pet of the day" where for a few minutes each day children show their pet (or a digital pet of their creating for students without a pet), create and share a funny video of you and your family or colleagues, have special theme weeks.

Building Community in the Online Classroom
- How to Create Community in a Virtual Classroom
- How to Forge a Strong Community in an Online Classroom
- 25 Ways to Build an Online Classroom Community
- 5 Virtual Ways to Build a Classroom Community

Managing the Online Classroom
- Extending Classroom Management Online
- Distract the Distractor: Stop Off-Task Behavior Without Drama

Additional Resources

Professional Development for Online Teaching

Michigan Virtual: https://michiganvirtual.org/professionals/

The Resilient Educator: https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/online-professional-development-resources/

PBS TeacherLine: http://www.pbs.org/teacherline/

Sources on Successful Online Teaching

The Distance Learning Playbook
7 Guidelines for Setting Up Clear Online Lessons
9 Ways Online Teaching Should be Different from Face-to-Face
A 5-Step Guide to Making Your Own Instructional Videos
4 Tips for Teachers Shifting to Teaching Online

Support for Major Video Conferencing Platforms

Google Meets
        Google's Education Blog: https://blog.google/outreach-initiatives/education/
        Google Meet Help: https://support.google.com/meet/?hl=en#topic=7306097

Microsoft Teams
        Microsoft Teams Education Blog: https://educationblog.microsoft.com/en-us/category/education/
        Best Practices for School Leaders using Microsoft Teams:
        https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/best-practices-for-school-leaders-creating-teams-and-channels-in-microsoft-teams-for-education-f3663ad9-a835-4971-9acb-6725a543c003?ui=en-us&rs=en-us&ad=us
        General Microsoft Teams Support: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/teams

Zoom
        Tips and Tricks: Teachers Educating on Zoom:
        https://zoom.us/docs/doc/Tips%20and%20Tricks%20for%20Teachers%20Educating%20on%20Zoom.pdf
        General Zoom Support: https://zoom.us/docs/en-us/covid19.html
        Breakout Rooms: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jbPpdyn16sY

Other Apps to Support Online Teaching

Bitmoji Classroom:
Teacher Tutorial:
https://www.helloteacherlady.com/blog/2020/4/how-to-create-a-virtual-bitmoji-scene-in-google-slides-or-powerpoint
Ideas:
https://glittermeetsglue.com/virtual-bitmoji-classroom/

Google Forms:
Teacher Tutorials:
https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/121UK-FUXW26bC0_jl2pMUAsCW_fwnKf8C595Cx1zL2k/htmlpresent
https://support.google.com/edu/classroom/answer/9095575?hl=en

Google Slides:
Teacher Tutorials:
https://edu.google.com/teacher-center/products/slides/?modal_active=none
https://www.brightcarbon.com/blog/how-to-make-an-interactive-presentation-in-google-slides/
Ideas for using Google Slides in Teaching:
https://sites.google.com/view/linksforteachingbymark/g-suite/slides

Jamboard:
https://nerdschalk.com/how-to-use-google-jamboard-with-google-meet/

Kahoot:
https://nerdschalk.com/how-to-play-kahoot-on-zoom-and-google-meet/

Padlet:
Teacher tutorials:
https://padlet.com/anissa1/iPadWorkshop2015
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4F60kOS5HYw
https://www.bookwidgets.com/blog/2017/08/30-creative-ways-to-use-padlet-for-teachers-and-students
Student tutorial:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=delW1Jtog_w

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Tips and resources for K-12 teachers

Office of K-12 Outreach
College of Education— Michigan State University

Collective Capacity Building and Leadership Development

The Office of K-12 Outreach, under the leadership of Director Bryan Beverly, Ph.D., has unmatched experience in developing and implementing customized support for schools and districts in Michigan that seek to turnaround their schools and rapidly improve student achievement. Our unique field-oriented service organization within the university brings a 20-year history of collaboration with schools and districts across the state. K-12 Outreach has experience working with school districts on topics ranging from staff professional development to central office transformations, to equity, and it is available in this new technology-driven environment to help districts plan for school re-opening.

K-12 Outreach is available to help districts plan for school re-opening.

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