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More resources and trainings for teachers, school administrators, families and communities are on our [Learning Goes On website](#). See [Spanish-language version](#) of this edition.

Instructional Tools

Models of Instruction to Help Students Interact and Engage in Hybrid, Face-to-Face and All-Remote Settings

by Dr. Paula Johnson, IDRA EAC-South Director

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to sweep across the globe, communities are still adjusting. For many students this means getting used to attending school from their homes. And for many teachers, this means transitioning face-to-face lessons to a virtual presentation.

Not surprisingly, so many of us are concerned about our students' ability to stay focused. After all, their computers are not only portals to the world; they can also lead to endless possibilities of distraction.

Over the years, I've honed my strategies for keeping students engaged online. As a career education teacher at an online school, I have valuable experience leading an online classroom. That's why I want to share four tips that will make your lessons come alive online and grab your students' attention.

Use Interactive Activities

Now that students are no longer sitting in front of you or with their peers in a classroom, you have to find new ways to encourage interaction. Fortunately, there are many activities you can incorporate into your lessons to foster an engaging and interactive learning environment.

First, consider starting your lessons by directing students to a discussion board. The questions I ask students as the class begins may not always be about the material. Instead, I ask stress-free questions like their favorite book or movie, which warms them up before we jump into the lesson.



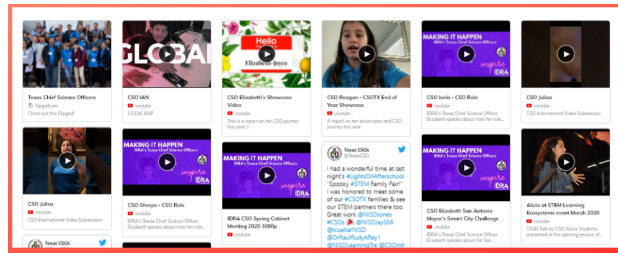
Collaboration boards serve as a useful tool that enables students to view and respond to classmates' messages. Though they are not seeing each other face-to-face, these boards allow them to engage in shared discussions together.

Another helpful tool that I love to use are breakout rooms. In a brick-and-mortar classroom, you would typically separate students into smaller groups and have them spread out and work together. It is just as easy online. You can place students in virtual meeting rooms where they can chat and brainstorm together and strengthen their teambuilding skills.

Encourage Engagement and Questions

Engagement is not easy, but it is a necessity.

I have found that to increase engagement in the class, I have to ensure that students understand every lesson. By creating short instructional videos to walk through assignments, everyone can get on the same page, and they can re-watch a segment until they grasp the main ideas or concepts.



Then, you can turn around to the students. Supplement your lessons with interactive activities that engage them in the material. For example, I occasionally create FlipGrid pages to provide a visual component to lessons.

Also, when students engage with the content, be sure to encourage questions and ongoing discussion. It can be intimidating for students to ask questions face-to-face, and for some students this anxiety increases in a virtual setting.

Making Testing Fun... Yes Fun

Online school defies some of the traditional concepts we have when it comes to teaching. So, as you modify your lessons, consider unique ways to test students' knowledge of the subject.

Make sure you are presenting the material in an applicable and identifiable way. Test their knowledge as you move along by including polls and discussion questions. Another favorite is to include games that are relevant to the lesson.

For example, I use PowerPoint-based games like Jeopardy and Family Feud. These programs are already familiar to them and gets them engaged in the game from the start. Using an all-time student favorite, Kahoot, helps as well. The competition among students can be fierce, but they learn the material at the same time in a fun and interactive way.



Embrace the Virtual World

The virtual world provides so many opportunities to enrich student's education. But also recognize that some students will need more guidance than others. As a CTE teacher, I know my students understand computer systems, but not all students have that same background. Serve as a guide for those who need help.

And not all students have to be STEM-focused to thrive in an online classroom. There are plenty of online resources for teachers of all subjects to use to build their lessons.

Moving Forward

As schools transition this fall, some teachers are returning to a brick-and-mortar classroom while others will remain on the digital path. Either way, I urge you to consider the lessons learned and continue to incorporate that into your teaching plans moving forward.

Online education can make your lessons come alive and really get students excited about learning. At a time when there is so much uncertainty in the world, helping students focus with engaging, informative lessons, is key.

Online Learning Resources and Tools

The [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics](#) have organized an online community of practice that is working together to develop a set of lessons and resources to teach students about mathematics concepts related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The site includes activities that guide teachers and parents in helping students make sense of the global medical crisis and how it has affected our lives. Visit the [Coronavirus and Pandemics Math Resources](#) site.



PreK–8: [BrainPOP](#) engages students through animated learning videos, games, quizzes and activities.

Grades K-6: [Cool Math 4 Kids](#) offers lessons and games that make math fun.


Grades: 6-9: [PBS Math Club](#) from PBS Learning Media. Middle schoolers will love this engaging video blog. Each episode covers Common Core Standards and uses pop-culture references to make math learning culturally relevant.

Grades 6-12: [Mathalicious.com](#) challenges students to think critically about math through real-world topics that students can relate to.

Grades: 6-12: [VirtualNerd](#) has more than 1,500 recorded video lessons ranging from middle-grade math through Algebra 2. Lessons are in bite-sized chunks and include links to additional videos for students to review background knowledge.



14-Minute Podcast Episode



Classnotes Podcast #206

Bridging Academic & Home Knowledge with "Home Works" Lessons

Listen Now! <https://idra.news/Pod206>

Children First
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Transforming Education

COVID-19 has forced a re-imagining of instruction to promote learning and engagement in virtual lessons. Dr. Martina McGhee saw this as an opportunity to help elementary students extend their academic learning with their everyday lives at home.



In this episode, Dr. Stephanie Garcia, IDRA STEM and gender equity education specialist, talks with Auburn University's clinical professor, Dr. Martina McGhee, about her new project entitled, Home Works. In response to COVID-19 and the increased need for quality distance learning resources, Dr. McGhee and her undergraduate students created meaningful learning experiences for elementary students.

Listen to this episode to learn more about the Home Works learning model and how to leverage their free resources for educators and families.

See [Home Works – Elementary Education Distance Learning Curriculum](#)

See IDRA's [Classnotes Podcast #206 webpage](#) for more resources

Webinars On-Demand



Free Webinars on Equitable Practices for Online Learning

These free webinar recordings are available for viewing at your convenience.

Equitable Practices for Teaching Online

Digital Divide: Connectivity, Infrastructure and Devices

Tools & Tips to Alleviate the Homework Gap

Facilitating Online Math Sessions

PBL at Home & Across the Curriculum

ELAR Series:

* Journal Writing About the Present for the Future - ELAR Webinar Part 1

* From Journaling to Personal Narratives - ELAR Webinar Part 2

* From Journaling and Personal Narratives to Letter Writing - ELAR Webinar Part 3

Chief Science Officer Students Determined to Promote STEM Despite School Closures

Teaching Science in Virtual Learning Environments

How a School District Tackled the Digital Divide

Teacher, Parent and Student Perspectives on Using Google Classroom Effectively

Student Perspectives on a Changing School Climate

Nurturing Students' Hearts and Minds

Partnering with Families to Reopen and Reimagine Schools

Getting Schools Ready to Support Students Facing a New World of Challenges

Youth Tech Mentors Bridge Schools and Families - Creative Community Responses to COVID-19

[See Webinar Hub](#)



Intercultural Development Research Association **IDRA** Learning Goes On

A COVID-19 Resource for Education

Visit our Learning Goes On site for news and resources for supporting educators, families, policymakers and advocates.

<https://idra.news/LearningGoesOn>

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IDRA works hand-in-hand with hundreds of thousands of educators and families each year in communities and classrooms around the country. All our work rests on an unwavering commitment to creating self-renewing schools that value and promote the success of students of all backgrounds.