

keeping learning going...

how can we design and deliver great remote lessons to primary students?



why is this important?

It goes without saying that designing and delivering engaging remote lessons is key to keeping learning going over the coming weeks and months. As teachers, we know the impact that missing just a few days of learning can have on a learner's progress. The well researched 'summer learning loss', where kids' achievement declines by a whole month of school learning time over the holidays, is a great reminder of the importance of supporting students to stay motivated and engaged for every remote lesson. Unfortunately, the pull of Netflix, social media, computer games, and working out novel ways of raiding the pantry when Mum isn't looking, means we have a lot to contend with when we're designing and delivering remote lessons!

We know you're amazing at designing lessons for your classroom, and with this rapid switch to remote learning design we wanted to share some tips for designing and delivering lessons that capture student interest and, most importantly, ensure their learning continues despite all of the crazy going on in the world at the moment. This is a brilliant opportunity to show your students that learning happens beyond the walls of the classroom too, and to help them see themselves as life-long learners.

key ideas in this kit



the structure of a great remote lesson

Maintaining energy and momentum when designing remote lessons for primary students.



tools to keep learners engaged

Keeping primary learners engaged and excited about learning, even from their family's dining room table.



keeping track of learning progress

Remote tools for formative assessment and feedback to keep track of primary students' progress.

the structure of a great remote lesson

reflection

When this switch to remote learning first happened, the easiest thing for us to do was to convert our pre-planned lessons into remote lessons, maintaining as many of the learning outcomes, lesson activities and feedback junctures as possible. Whilst this approach worked in the early phases, we're now at the stage where we can think really purposefully about the differences in design and delivery of remote lessons.

Before you read ahead it may be worth reflecting on the advantages we have when we're structuring remote learning.

tools

There are a couple of key things you can do to ensure you maintain energy and momentum when designing and delivering lessons.

- **Social connection:** It's more important than it has ever been. It would be easy to fall into the trap of sending out PDF packages of work that students can work through independently with little need for interaction with others, but take stock of all of the work you share and make sure that over the course of the week you're also asking your learners to engage with others - peers, siblings, parents, grandparents - in order to complete some learning activities.
- **Keep them short:** If your students have access to technology and you're video conferencing with them, keep your sessions short and sharp, and talk for no longer than 10 minutes at a time (set a timer on your phone!). Those of us who have engaged in MOOC learning or tried to do an online degree know how hard it is to stay focused and listen to someone talking for hours on end.

the structure of a great remote lesson

- **Flip the learning:** As primary educators, we understand that not all of your students will have access to technology all day. If you can't video conference, you can create an important point of connection between you and your students by sharing a quick video with them at the beginning of each day. If you're a kindergarten teacher, you might want to record yourself reading a picture book to the camera, or doing a little finger puppet play to explain the day's suggested activities. If you teach older students, you might record a video to help explain a particular content area or skill you want your learners to master that day, or if the creative juices are running low, check out the videos over at Khan Academy.
- **Online and offline:** Build in a variety of learning experiences that require online and offline time. We don't want primary students sitting in front of a screen all day, and they don't want to be doing the same thing day in, day out. Consider all of the online and offline activities you have available to you: asking students to take photographs of things they can then draw or write about using one of the Harvard Visible Thinking routines; asking them to record a video talking about their learning pit journey that day; create a 'How can we..?' question and work as a class on a big-picture project where students have different roles and you bring all of the pieces of the puzzle together at the end of the week; getting them to write, perform and record a short play or puppet show; asking them to make something that makes their community a better place amidst the chaos; providing them with media articles to analyse and question, etc. There are so many opportunities for engaging learning and variety is key to keeping things interesting.

action

Take some time to brain-dump all of the different types of activities you could lead with your students over the coming weeks and months. List as many different types as possible, aiming for at least 100. You might like to recruit a colleague to help you! Use this list as inspiration as you design and plan your remote lessons.

keeping learners engaged

reflection

There are lots of tools we have under our belt as teachers that we use to keep learners engaged each lesson regardless of whether we're in the room with them or not! We've seen some awesome lessons happening in schools, from teachers dressed as zombies in a zombie apocalypse to inspiring guest speakers sharing harrowing stories about personal experiences. If we get the 'hook' of a lesson right, students come with us on the learning journey.

Perhaps start this section by making a list of the top three 'hooks' you've used in lessons to capture the interest and attention of students.

tools

There are three questions you can ask yourself when you're planning an engaging remote lesson. To help answer the questions, we've included some tools and ideas to keep lesson design and delivery fresh and exciting!

- **Make it matter:** If you can't answer this question, your students definitely won't be able to answer it! Showing students why their work is important is key to any long-term engagement. Your role is to work out ways of connecting the key content and skills to students' experiences, interests and goals, which means knowing your students well! Some ideas here to boost authenticity include inviting guest speakers to Zoom into one of your lessons or to create a flipped learning video for your particular group of learners, making connections between the content and skills you're teaching and the global or local news, and framing all learning around big ideas and design questions that the students are engaged in so that they're working to solve problems they care about. For inspiration to design these big ideas and questions, take a look at the projects developed and shared on the High Tech High website.

keeping learners engaged

- **Stretch their thinking:** Moving through a bulk of content often results in broad but shallow learning. Instead, we'd encourage you to dive deep into a set number of content areas over the coming weeks, using questioning and provocations to encourage students to think and question deeply. Use a provocation like a YouTube video, a poem, a news article or an interview to get students thinking about the bigger picture and the context in which their learning sits, and then use a series of questions over the course of the lesson to build depth of understanding and metacognition. You might like to take a look at socratic questioning frameworks to help scaffold a series of questions, or the SOLO taxonomy. As you're planning your lesson, detail the provocation and questions you want students to move through as they engage in the learning.
- **Share the learning:** Learning for the sake of learning might engage students who will go on to be philosophers and academics, but the majority of kids in our classes will want to have a purpose for their learning! They'll want to produce something tangible that can be celebrated and that they can get feedback about. As you're planning each lesson, consider how your students will share their learning with you and how you can make this meaningful. In a project based learning unit, this would be called 'the public product' - the production of something tangible, presented to an authentic audience at the end of the unit of work. We should consider this at a micro level of lesson design, too. If a student works for 45 minutes on something, where does that something go? Who will see it? How will they know if it is of value, or if they are on the right track?

action

Reflect on the current lesson planning template you're using for each of your remote lessons. Does it help you to reflect on these three questions when you're designing learning? If not, take some time now to develop your own lesson planning template.

keeping track of learning progress

reflection

We can design the best learning experiences in the world for our students, but if we're not getting feedback about their progress and modifying our approach accordingly, we might as well be delivering the content to the empty tables and chairs in our classrooms!

Take a moment to reflect on the last lesson you delivered remotely and the extent to which you differentiated it, provided feedback and drew on formative assessment strategies.

tools

All great teachers have a range of strategies they use to differentiate, run formative assessments and provide students with feedback. Here are some of our best tips when it comes to using these key teaching tools in remote learning environments.

- **Keep differentiating:** There are three ways you can differentiate learning strategies and materials in remote learning. First, consider the content of the lesson and whether all parts are relevant for all students. There are some great online tools like Newsela which translates content into a variety of levels so that all students can access the materials. Similarly, online learning programs like Maths Pathway determine the starting point for your learners and build a mathematics learning journey specifically for them. Next, consider the process of the lesson, or the modes used. Some students might want to work independently to explore a topic, whilst others might want to form teams and work collaboratively on a shared document at set times during the day so that they feel connected and part of a team. Finally, you might want to differentiate the product students are creating through their learning (eg. one student reviews a novel for the paper and another takes a photo series to link the book to their own life experience).

keeping track of learning progress

- **Formative assessment:** Also known as 'assessment as learning', formative assessment helps students and teachers reflect on individuals' progress towards set learning objectives and success criteria. The guru on formative assessment is Dylan William and we're sure many of you are aware of his classroom tools like talking sticks, traffic light cups and mini-whiteboards. When it comes to assessing formatively in remote learning environments, the mode of feedback delivery is probably highly dependent on the mode of learning you're using and whether lessons are being delivered synchronously or asynchronously. If you're delivering synchronous or live learning, ask students to have their videos on and to give you a thumbs up or thumbs down to reflect their understanding. If learning is happening in students' own time, you might like to share an online form with some visible thinking routines embedded in it at the end of each day for them to respond to once they've completed their learning. We also acknowledge that you're probably doing a lot more marking and providing a bunch more feedback than you normally would, so work out ways of streamlining this process - perhaps by voice recording feedback for individuals or the whole class.
- **Feedback:** When we're designing and delivering remote learning, new avenues for giving feedback are open to us. One of the best strategies we've seen is the use of screen recordings by teachers who open the work submitted on their computer and record themselves reading through it in live time and providing feedback and comments on the learning as they read. These video files can then be shared with students for them to watch.

action

Reflect on the remote lesson planning template you've started to design or you use currently. Does it prompt you to differentiate content, process and product every lesson, to design formative assessment opportunities, and to provide feedback to learners? If not, modify your template now. You might then want to share your designed template for the benefit of colleagues at your school and beyond using #keepinglearninggoing.

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the EC crew



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