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Remote Learning During COVID-19

Many schools, both in the US and abroad, have either closed or are rapidly planning for a potential school closure due to the COVID-19 virus. Much has been written about the challenges schools are facing or will face as they suddenly switch to 100% distance learning, including lack of school-wide knowledge on how to use virtual tools, student loneliness in a new remote environment, and the pressure on teachers to quickly revise their lesson plans for a new type of learning.
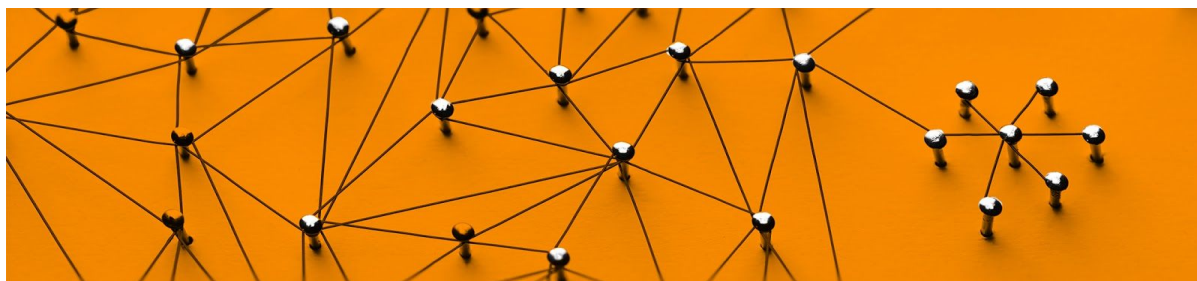
Given this backdrop, schools from around the world have come together to share their distance learning plans and tools with one another in this Google folder and via other crowd-sourced resources (many others are shared in this document as well).

Below we share a set of links from the many resources that have overwhelmed the edu-world. These links are ones that we think may offer the highest value to educators depending on the current need. Thus, we include resources to help administrators who are still writing up their continuity plans as well as tools for teachers who are already in the throes of planning their first set of completely online lessons.

Some interesting nuggets from the many resources we pored through:

1	2	3
Keep the lecture/ instruction portion of the lesson as short as possible. Research says 6 minutes is ideal, and many schools are recommending 10-15 minutes.	Giving teachers the time and space, via various formats, to check-in with one another is just as critical in maintaining continuity as teachers holding lessons with their students.	The idea of "virtual learning tasks" can mean many different things. Students could complete a written assignment, submit a video response, or set up a small virtual discussion group with their peers.

Resources for Administrators

Continuity Plans

Virtually all schools have started with creating a "Continuity of Instruction Plan" or "Virtual Learning Plan". In fact, this spreadsheet has a very thorough running list of different colleges' online plans. The content of the links on the spreadsheet vary widely. Some are fairly general while others get very specific. Some that stand out as helpful websites to look at include Loyola Marymount University, The New York Institute of Technology, and Stanford's very thorough document on *Teaching Effectively During Times of Disruption*.

Communicating with Students and Families

A significant part of continuity is also ongoing communication: to faculty and students, as well as to parents and the broader community. Prizmah, an umbrella organization for Jewish Schools, has shared a Google folder of sample preparation letters ranging from sending out information on the virus itself to sample letters on school closures or describing virtual learning. This example from the folder provides detailed information to parents on what the new platform will be, how parents can support their children, and what the daily schedule will look like for their middle school students.

Setting up Ongoing Guidelines/Policies

The Chinese International School's Virtual Secondary School Protocol is a helpful example of an efficient and streamlined two-pager that describes the policies put in place when the school activates remote learning. In particular, their overview provides this set of guidelines for teachers to follow:

1	2	3
Virtual learning tasks should be designed in such a way that students can complete independently	Virtual learning is aligned with current place in the curriculum, as much as is possible	Base virtual learning on each day's schedule, do not attempt to have students complete virtual learning tasks for every subject, every day
4	**5**	**6**
Virtual learning tasks should not take students more than 60 minutes maximum to complete - as if they were in class for the day	Virtual learning tasks should be emailed to students, or posted on your learning platform and students informed via email	Be flexible and realistic about task completion

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Ongoing Guidelines/Policies (cont'd)

The Seoul Foreign School's guidelines for high school offer a set of shared assumptions for teachers and students as they transition to virtual work. Of note is explicitly naming that the learning will be valued and discussed when students return to school and that it should be meaningful and connect to current practice. While this may seem small, it is not always language that is present in other school documents and provides a chance to say directly to both teachers and students that online learning is just as important as in-classroom learning.

The Hong Kong International's School's guidelines provide a thorough set of procedures for faculty to follow. In particular, these requirements as part of their new temporary school culture can help to ensure that teachers include some in-person time during their lessons to combat the loneliness and isolation students can feel when not in the physical classroom:

- **At least first 10-minutes face to face (explanation, questions, attendance) - All Courses.**
- **Be clear how long students are required to be in the class. Check-ins throughout the 75 minutes are expected.**
- **Touch base with Homeroom 1x per week.**

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Managing Faculty Anxiety

The stress of both the virus itself as well as learning a whole set of new digital platforms very quickly can be a lot for school faculty to have to think about and manage. This handbook provides a helpful set of strategies to promote educators' well-being.

Looking across the variety of documents that have been shared by schools around remote learning, some other general best practices have risen to the surface:

Clarify that continuity does not mean the same.

Remind teachers consistently and proactively the goal is not for things to be the same: classes will look and feel different online and that is completely ok.

Take the time needed to prepare.

Give your school the time it needs to move online: many schools take at least 2-3 days to prepare teachers before school is "in session". Other school districts are closing schools for a professional development day on virtual learning even though schools are not officially closed yet.

Provide ample pauses to discuss and learn.

Allow teachers opportunities to talk to one another openly about their challenges. This could be via regular virtual check-in meetings within and across departments with the sole goal of talking about what is going well and what needs tweaking. Some organizations and schools have created Google spreadsheets where teachers can openly post their questions and issues. Other teachers can go in and respond, and school administrators can look for and respond to trends.

Find ways to build calm.

A Monday morning mindfulness or meditation session via Zoom or Google Hangouts just for teachers may be one small but mighty way to bring the calm into the day and week for all.

Resources for Department Heads and Teachers

Free Courses

Global Online Academy is offering a course, free for members and nonmembers alike, to understand how to design online learning. Similarly, One Schoolhouse is also offering a "Continuity in Crisis" class that teachers can sign up for to organize their online learning plans. Resources aligned to these courses will also be available on the respective websites.

Online Learning Platforms: Google and Zoom

Schools are employing a mixture of virtual modalities. Students learn both synchronously during whole class live streaming sessions or with one-on-one meetings with teachers, as well as asynchronously through assignments teachers are delivering and students are working on at their own pace. Many have created resources that can help those unfamiliar get up to speed on online tools. For example, these slides provide a helpful introduction to Google Meet. The RVIS School in Bahrain also has a set of instructions on how to join a Google hangout that are embedded in all of their online documents shared with students. This video provides a helpful tutorial on google classroom.

The next most popular platform alongside Google appears to be Zoom. Zoom has a helpful blog post about how to make the most of their service during this time, including limits they are removing such as the 40 minute maximum on free accounts.

Online Schedules

The French International School in Hong Kong provides an overview for students as well as parents which includes a step-by-step guide on when they need to log into their Google account, what the schedule will be daily, as well as what teachers will be doing. They note that teachers should only be teaching for 10-15 minutes of the 55 minute lesson, and then students will have time to complete questions and submit them to the teacher.

The RVIS School in Bahrain has shared their schedules for both students and teachers. Teachers are expected to check-in on different content areas at the start of the day. They are then expected to have two face-to-face blocks with their students, and hold regular office hours for the rest of the day.

Task	Time	Sunday
CPT Check In	8:00 – 8:30	Science
Face-to-Face	9:00 – 10:00	1A
Face-to-Face	10:30 – 11:30	2A
Office Hours	12:00 – 1:30	A & A* Day Classes
Office Hours	1:30 – 3:00	B & B* Day Classes

Ed-Tech Products

Schools have also come together to share resources such as job-alike Facebook group information and company product offerings that can be helpful for online learning. This Wakelet site has a similar list, focused on ed-tech products. A professor from the University of Massachusetts Amherst has put together this set of slides which can be used to engage people in getting excited about online learning, and it also provides concrete examples of which software can be of most assistance based on the teacher's need. Some interesting ones include Hypothes.is: an online web annotation tool, EdPuzzle, which provides an opportunity to engage students through video and track their usage, and building an online school community through Flipgrid.

This interview with the co-founder and technology coach at Hong Kong International School is also a helpful lens into how they have organized their school for distance learning, as well as how they are using the Swivl robot and software, a video and collaboration tool.

Other Comprehensive Resources:

This education blogger offers an incredible set of recommendations for how schools can approach school closings and remote learning, particularly for those teaching elementary grades. One excellent example is that of a teacher in the Middle East who sends parents of their kindergarten students a weekly planner along with a suggested timetable. There are no expectations that the timetable is followed exactly due to parents working and a variety of family situations.

This Virtual School Tips and Recommendations by education consultant and author Jeff Utecht provides a quick read on some of the most important pieces teachers, from his perspective, that teachers should be thinking about. For teachers in grades 3-5 for example, he recommends that schools focus on one subject a day to allow for parents to follow along easily. He also notes that schools should promote students submitting video responses for their assignments. An important link to research from Vanderbilt University on effective use of video in education is also an important read.