

Best Practices for Teaching Online

- Answer your students' questions as quickly as you can! While we all struggle to "disconnect" - if a student doesn't know what to do, they can't make forward progress. Make sure every direction you write for students (and parents) is VERY clear too. (Hint: Have someone else read your directions if possible to see if they could follow them!)
- When recording a video (asynchronous), look at the camera, not at the screen. Face a window for better light. Also, when you hit the record button, be ready with a smile and a hello!
- If you are using a new site, even ones that don't require a login, send it to Tech Team in advance for use. If so, to see about it being whitelisted for "no Internet access" students.
- If you plan to use a YouTube video, send it to the tech team 24 hours in advance (if possible) to be sure it is unblocked.
- If live teaching (synchronous), plan a buffer activity - talk about your pets, play some music, have a "bell ringer" until all students login.
- Focus on ed tech resources already being used - now isn't the time to start with a whole bunch of new tools! What have you and your colleagues already been using with students that they are familiar with?
- Set a time to check in to each class/group -- don't think that you can run your "normal" class schedule. Students will not be checking in as often as you think they should/as often as you'd like them to; be patient with them getting used to not seeing you regularly but be there for them. They are going to feel like you are not really "there" for a while because they are not seeing you on a regular basis so provide feedback for assignments (even if it is "great job" or "I got this one"). Once students get into a new routine and know when you are "there" for them, they will feel more comfortable and will work better. Students know the technology (for the most part); they need to know someone is at the other end of the computer.
- Be very responsive! Try to respond to student submissions of work and messages to you about assignments as quickly as you can, especially if they are going to need to make changes or resubmit the work.

- Establish a routine of reaching out to students who are inactive and make sure you copy in anyone else who might be able to give the student a nudge.
- Be willing to modify assignments, provide additional resources, or help students access the work through a different platform. My district uses schoology and the heavy traffic has made it unusable by both students and teachers for hours at a time. Sharing docs directly with students and parents has helped for those who are frustrated.
- Just as we ask kids to set up a specific time to work, so should teachers. I have class times every other day where I either meet with kids or record teaching videos. I also have specific times when I am preparing coursework or grading. I also have a quitting time each day.
- Remember the best practice of providing feedback to students consistently and in a timely manner: Students will need this feedback on a regular basis more than ever to feel connected as well as to still see the work they are doing as purposeful.
- Google Slides is an effective platform to use to provide instruction – students can work through each slide, in order.
- Provide A LOT of examples for students: Modeling becomes very important so students do not feel so much like they are figuring things out “on their own”.
- Less is more: Do not overwhelm students with too much new material and/or too many tasks at once.
- Chunk lessons/work provided to students weekly then provide students with daily “to-do” lists for the week.
- Make everything as simple as possible for students as far as how to communicate with you, directions to follow, where to find online materials, how you will use Classroom, etc.
- Be flexible when it comes to communicating with students, assessing them to check for understanding without giving them a test at home, how they can complete their work (ex. -- some students may be more comfortable handwriting their work, taking a picture of it and uploading the photo to send...certainly acceptable if the alternative is not doing the work at all!).
- Keep it simple. Assume that students will not read all of the instructions. Assume that things will go wrong and that technology will not cooperate.
- Be flexible with deadlines and with accepting late work or work in an alternate format (ex: in an email versus in a Google Doc).

- Reach out to kids personally and let them know that you're struggling too and that they aren't alone in this. Offer to help. Think about your slowest student and your highest achieving student and how long it will take each of them to do what you are asking - don't give too much work. The kids aren't all in a structured environment that's conducive to doing their normal amount of work. An hour a week is better than nothing.
- Try things out before you assign them and be prepared for 4000 more questions than you would normally get. Be patient. Give kids multiple chances to redo things.
- Give students suggestions/recommendations such as "I recommend you commit one hour a day to completing unit assignments". Kids need guidance and structure so by giving them this direction I think they are more likely to do it. I also tell students when I will be checking back in with them such as "I will check your progress on Wednesday" as this hopefully will motivate the student to complete work by the next check in time.
- Synchronous vs. Asynchronous: Decide if you want to interact simultaneously with students or not. (I find it easier to work asynchronously.)
- If someone else has already done it, use their material. (That is, if you can't do better than Khan Academy, send your students links to the Khan Academy videos)
- The other thing is to communicate - a lot!!! I give weekly updates to each kid, send out class messages and to do lists, and just try to stay connected.