Ten Tips for Enhancing Distance Learning
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1. Keep the main thing, the main thing; that is. begin with the end in mind by using the standards-based planning process. Planning is now even more complicated than ever because we need to provide multiple pathways to learning for learners who may not only have learning challenges but digital challenges as well. Some remedies as described below are easier to implement than others.

   - Provide "offline" students tool kits (pencil boxes) that contain markers, colored pencils, tape, a ruler, paper clips, index cards, note pads, graph paper, etc.
   - Middle schoolers in one Calvert County, Maryland, social studies class had the option of using online programs to design posters related to a standards-based prompt or to make a paper poster, take a picture of it with their phone, and send it to their teacher.
   - Sales flyers, brochures, and other free documents can be collected for students to use in posters and other products.
   - Inexpensive cassette recorders are available on Amazon for $15.00. Acquiring the funds for a slew of those, recording lessons and/or stories for teachers, and figuring out how to manage the distribution of them would be a great Project-Based Learning (PBL) initiative for older students.
   - Likewise, it may be that because of advanced technology, abandoned DVD players can be found in closets around your area. Those could be retrieved and teachers and/or older students could be recorded delivering lessons and/or stories on CDs or DVDs. Students who have access to computers, but not to the Internet could watch these recordings on those DVD players and those without computers could listen to such recordings.

2. Pace instruction so students have opportunities to process information, make connections, and apply learning. Make the use of strategies like **Think-Pair-Share, 10:2 Theory,** and **Wait Time** an on-going practice. White boards (yes, miniature slate-like boards students can hold up to display their thoughts and questions.), color-coded signal cards, colored sticker dots, chat rooms, breakout sessions, Flipgard, and phones are handy tools for quick processing exercises.

3. Whether print or digital, worksheets that require regurgitation (repetition of information without analysis or comprehension), mindless practice, or recall level thinking are a waste of time. As alternatives have students write stories, blog, log, journal, and interactive notebook entries, sketch/draw, create infographics, or make podcasts or short videos to process and share their learning.

4. Use this moment to expand resources beyond traditional print and digital text by incorporating the use of realia, props, and found artifacts to promote the 21st century skills of creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication and collaboration, and cultural awareness. **Scavenger Hunts** (find something blue, or round, or that is sold in 5 pound bags, or runs on a AAA battery, or pictures/objects that represent five different homophones, whatever fits the curriculum), or **Find the Differences/What's Missing** tasks (comparison of two photos/displays of a scene or an array of objects) , virtual field trips, creation of models with Legos, blocks, kitchen items, labels off food packaging, student created math problems based on post cards, pictures, advertising flyers about items of interest, and **RAFTs** representing different perspectives, for different audiences, and presented in a wide array of formats. For **RAFT** examples, see "**Let's Go RAFTing**" housed in the **Best Practices in Teaching** section of the **Just ASK Resource Center**. In any case, students could make up tasks and challenge their classmates to respond in ways that demonstrate understanding.
   https://justaskpublications.com/teaching-and-learning-resources

5. Create systems that make online and off line segments of the learning process seem like components of a bigger picture. That is, establish (as appropriate, do this in collaboration with students) rituals and practices that not only provide a sense of order but a sense of community. "Getting to Know You" possibilities can be found in *Why Didn't I Learn This in College?* on pages 22-25 and tips for creating "A Good Place to Learn" on page 42. See also **"Classroom Meetings"** in the *Making Standards-Come Alive!* library on the Just ASK website. It is important to remember that, now more than ever, "the world is our classroom."
   https://justaskpublications.com/msca/classroom-meetings

6. Include frequent checks for understanding. Given that everything that happens in the classroom provides us formative assessment data, it is quite natural that it is frustrating to not have ready access to the non-verbal cues we use when we are face-to-face. Even though there is a risk of being overwhelmed by the length of the list, the **Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA)** presents 75 digital tools to use in checking for understanding. If the thought of looking into each one seems like an impossible task, divide and conquer. Get 5 to 10 colleagues to each take a few to investigate and compile their findings and recommendations in one document. What a valuable tool that would be.
   www.nwea.org/blog/2019/75-digital-tools-apps-teachers-use-to-support-classroom-formative-assessment

7. Provide students growth-producing feedback and give them opportunities to use that feedback to deepen their understanding and improve products they

create. Ask students and colleagues to provide you the same. Go for the gold and teach students to not only self-assess but to self-adjust and set goals as well. You both have to live with the reality that they cannot always get quick feedback from you. For a comparison of GPS systems and GPF (Growth-Producing Feedback) systems read "**It's a Feedback World**" by Bruce Oliver. **https://justaskpublications.com/jfta/its-a-feedback-world**

8. Make assessment a learning experience and perhaps even a bit of a game. See the "**Making Assessment a Learning Experience**" packet in the **Just ASK Mentoring Resource Collection** for 20 ways to increase the rigor of the assessments and/or keep students learning right through the assessment. **http://www2.justaskpublications.com/making-assessment-a-learning-experience**

9. We need to not only "mind the gap," we need to "**mind the app.**" Do not try every new app you learn about and do not introduce too many new apps at once. If you make these mistakes, both you and your students will be crazed and parents will be running out of their houses screaming. In fact, this is a good time to let students teach you. Have them work in jigsaw groups to investigate some apps that might work and report out to you and their classmates… and perhaps teach all of you how to use one or two of them throughout the year.

10. Have empathy, civility, activism, mindfulness, kindness, and respect as rallying cries. The diversity of our life experiences, socio-economic status, family structures, cultural and ethnic backgrounds, races, and restraints on our lives is most likely not as evident in the brick and mortar classroom as it is when we and our students are "out in the world." Visit the library of **Making the Standards Come Alive!** to locate issues by Heather Clayton titled: "**Let's Hear It for Empathy!**", "**Let's Hear It for Civility!**", "**Let's Hear It for Activism!**", "**Mindfulness for Students**", and just for you "**Becoming More Mindful.**" You will find dozens of tips on why and how to address each of these related topics.
https://justaskpublications.com/ msca/library

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