**Tips for Teaching online in BC. Canada**

*Abstract*

Over the last few months, the pandemic has created many challenges for all educators, students, and parents as they transitioned into home-based learning due to the government lockdown or stay home.

The [coronavirus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coronavirus) has made the 2019–20 school year one we will never forget. With no notice or preparation, teachers worldwide were forced to pivot to online teaching. Majority, if not all, have performed heroically. A big shout out to all these teachers for creating remote learning environments that work through the curriculum. Teachers painstakingly planned for a memorable online learning experience for their students. While the context of our work has changed, our mission to serve our students and their families remains. Working in this new reality is a significant challenge, particularly given the uncertainty, ambiguity, and isolation experienced by lots of people especially educators residing alone and members of our communities.

Based on my experience as a past online learner and as an educator, I have outlined and explained some strategies on how teachers who are new to online teaching and educators who are still struggling with teaching online can be comfortable to be able to communicate knowledge to their students. These strategies here are not in any way an all-encompassing idea for teaching online, it is a guide to help ease the stress of searching for the best method of teaching. In writing, I was more focused on British Columbia province (BC) in Canada and not the whole of Canada, though as you read, some of the strategies can also be applied in any teaching environment worldwide.

*Acknowledgement:*

I acknowledge here that these strategies are only possible in a community where there is constant supply of electricity. A community where students, teachers and parents have access to the internet. Without access to the internet, online learning is not possible.

*Keywords*:

Online learning, coronavirus, covid19, BCEd., remote learning, remote teaching, online teaching,

Teaching online

Below are some strategies to help first time teachers or teachers who are still not comfortable to teach online to use to engage their students and parents for an effective delivery of knowledge.

1) Do not use attachments (if you have families using cell. phone to access your class online)

2) use plain text instead of PDF files (if you have families using cell. phone to access your class online)

3) Use hybrid, flipped classroom, or blended learning method. It’s using a relatively short, live video to check-in on your students and having a meeting with them. This is a self-paced work, with the teacher been available to students over email, phone, text or any other method that is convenient to both.

4) Have a videoconferencing with your students every morning at 8:30am just as in normal school day, and take attendance using MyEdBC After attendance, a circle time may help the teacher understand what the students’ emotions for the day. Ask about their health, their household-parents/or guardian, brothers, sisters, uncle, auntie etc. This is the best opportunity for the teacher to know his/her student’s background to be able to create a teaching plan for the student in future.

5) After circle time, teach your students just like they are in the classroom. To make class fun, use [random-name-picker](miniwebtool.com/random-name-picker/) to select students who you should ask question. Also, you can use [Google survey](https://docs.google.com/forms/u/0/) the survey form to test for understanding-use 2-3 emojis or thumbs up or down. This gives you an idea whose understanding your teaching or not understanding. After a lesson is taught, assignments should be assigned to students. Depending on grade it is important that you let the students’ parents know that an assignment has been given to your students. As in-class assignments, there should be two type of assignments, one will be the compulsory assignment with a due date given, and the second will be bonus/or extra assignment that is not compulsory without a deadline. Some parents want their kids to be engaged at home with homework, while some parents do not want homework given because they don’t have time to assist their kids with the homework. So, giving a compulsory and non-compulsory assignments satisfy both type of parents.

However, in online teaching, be aware that “assessment is one of the top causes of student stress. So, every time an assignment deadline approaches, you’ll be face with a tsunami of student questions” (Hardy, 2017).

 When teaching primary and intermediate students online, a teacher needs the assistance of their parents/ or guardian to succeed, the simple reason is that, children between the ages of 5 to 12 years old cannot get online without the help of their parents. Digital device (computer or cell. phone) needs to be given by the parent and used in their presence. Online permission to most educational apps requires the parents to sign in or give consent before the student can get into the app., lastly, the parents will be acting as the technical support when there is problem with the device and not your student. This is the reason that it is very important that parents should be involve in any method of online teaching.

6) Set time between 12:00-12:30 to meet with parents at least once a week. This time is good because this is the time most parents are on lunch break during regular working time and your students are not supposed to be online during this time because its lunch break at school. Online learning should be model like the regular in-person classroom.

7) Regular communication by telephone, email, giving feedbacks on submitted work with students will help your student get through online learning. Communicating regularly with your student who doesn’t have access to the internet will help that student know that he/she has not been abandoned by the teacher. As Gonzalez (2020) puts it “In some cases where students & parents simply can't be reached via Internet, regular phone calls are working for some teachers. To maintain privacy with your number, [Google Voice](https://voice.google.com/u/0/about) may be an option.

School district role in online

School districts are partnering with local radio stations to deliver lessons especially to primary students. Similar to other educational TV programs like Knowledge Network, Sesame Street, PBS radio, etc. your school district can develop curriculum and deliver it via these local radio and TV stations

Accessing internet and online education

Major internet providers like Telus and Shaw are giving free WiFi in their hot spots for the next couple of months. Check for [Telus hot spots](https://wififinder.telus.com) in your local area, you don’t have to be a customer to use Telus Wi-Fi. On the other hand, you have to be a Shaw customer and register your device to use its Wi-Fi services.

 As teachers, parents and students get use to online schooling, teachers will need to be flexible and understanding as families research their options. There are different options of getting a free/ or reduced price for desktop ($107) or laptop ($120), The Canadian government gives computer devices to students through [Computer for Schools Plus (CFS+)](https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/cfs-ope.nsf/eng/h_00056.html). The program is also for low-income Canadians, Not-for-profit organizations, and indigenous communities. In British Columbia, discounted devices for low-income families can also be accessed through the [Reuse tech BC](https://www.reusetechbc.ca/). There is also a free internet access that can be accessed through the Connecting family’s initiative. It was designed to connect hundreds of thousands of low-income Canadian families to the internet. According to the government website;

 *participating internet service providers are voluntarily contributing*

 *to the initiative by offering $10 internet service (plus tax) to eligible*

 *families who currently receive the maximum Canada Child Benefit*

Giving a family a free device and free internet access does not guarantee that the family will be able to use the device and connect online immediately. We need to provide the family with technical support.

Check-in with your students via Google forms or Microsoft 365 form or best, use your circle time to continuously check in on your students.

An alternative to use for students without internet access or devices at home is using #whatsapp. In Canada unlike most other countries, #whatsapp is a free app. The app doesn’t require as many GB as Facebook or Google or Office365. Teachers can use the app to teach academic courses like Math, English, Social Studies, and Science. For example, to teach Financial Math, write the content of the problem and explanation of how to arrive at the answer. The same can be done in English, if you’re working on comprehension and reading, copy and paste a long text and have your students read the text, write the meaning of the vocabularies on the text, and answer the given questions.

 *Whatsapp is used around the globe and it doesn't require as many GB as*

 *Facebook or Google. I teach English Lessons through Whatsapp. I send*

 *vocabulary and audios, and ask them to send back audios of readings and*

 *questions. I even send pictures where they can do the exercises by writing*

 *on them with the TEXT option on wsp. It's cheaper and in some countries*

 *[like Canada] it comes for free with the Internet plan for cellphones.*

 *Teachers can copy and paste long texts and have their students read them*

 *and answer questions. I'm available 24/7 for my students, we even have*

 *groups where I encourage conversations through audios. It works for us.*

 *I live in South America where the Internet service is very expensive.*

 *I also teach individual lessons on Whatsapp videocalls” (Marcon, 2020).*

Furthermore, in online teaching, teachers should stick with what they are familiar with. Do not try to assign for yourself or too much apps to use in your online class. Having a routine/schedule just like in normal in-person class will greatly help to plan your class and have meetings with other teachers, students and their parents. Do not over whelm your students with too many ‘compulsory’ assignments. Giving all students between 1 to 3 assignments everyday will be helpful compare to overloading ‘all’ students with 4 to 6 assignments per day. Feedbacks should be given in all submitted assignments, this is to allow your students to celebrate their successes online.

 As Daren Johnson reports

 *respond to student and family questions asap. Call home if students*

 *are not appearing online or not completing work. Where possible,*

 *connect through video with your students. Seeing your face &*

 *expressions, body language, hearing your voice-- all will help them*

 *better process your lessons. Remember you are still a mandatory*

 *reporter. If you see/hear something concerning while online with a*

 *student, contact admin. and/or counseling. Be mindful of your own*

 *video presence. Minimize background distractions and stay professional*

 *(don’t film in front of your liquor cabinet, for example!). Be personal—*

 *it’s okay to have your kids, pets, etc. make an appearance, and your*

 *students will probably love seeing that side of you*

Let your students know through your actions and words that you support them to prioritize their health and wellness right now. According to Cleaver (2020) this is not the time to uphold the standards of academia. It is the time to uphold and practice our humanity.

In conclusion therefore, while it may be challenging teaching online to elementary kiddos within the ages of 5-12 years old, especially for teachers who have not taught online before now, It is important to realise that teaching online school is just another method of delivering knowledge to students. For this reason, it is the responsibility of teachers to learn about the new online teaching methods because this method of teaching has come to stay and will not be leaving anytime soon.

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