

Questions from our Virtual SEM Webinar

Do you have suggestions to support student independent projects who do not have resources or home support?—Yes, we do! You can try the free trial of Renzulli Learning and use the Wizard Project Maker. You can also access a series of free on-line resources that are included in the SEM book published by Prufrock Press on our website at UConn. See for example, the on-line version of the Management Plan for Projects—

http://www.prufrock.com/Assets/ClientPages/pdfs/SEM_Web_Resources/Mgmt%20Plan%20for%20Individual%20and%20Small-Group%20Investigations.pdf

Students are craving feedback when they share creative products. Are there any thoughts about strategies, resources, protocols, etc. that would support peer-to-peer feedback?

Renzulli Learning has free peer to peer opportunities for doing Type III projects with other schools if you are using it, if not, we have also enabled students who are doing independent Type III's to meet with other students from the district to exchange ideas and progress updates.

Laurel are you and other teachers planning/working together on these great ideas or are you doing all of this on your own time? Time is always an issue, isn't it?

Laurel: It's complicated. I write my own lesson plans and create materials that I cannot find in the curriculum materials and websites (and often adapt curriculum materials into Seesaw). For many lessons, I refer to curricular materials and simply adapt the provided plans to fit my class rather than reinventing the wheel. For reading and writing, I am collaborating with a literacy specialist to plan reading and writing, but I still create the overall plans and then she makes suggestions on refining them. I check in with the other (in-person) second grade teachers about where they are in the various subject areas and try to align my work with theirs, but we don't share plans in detail. I meet with the district math specialist/remote team coordinator weekly and with the district literacy coach about monthly to discuss assessments, results, and resources. We also have a technology integration specialist who sends out ideas of good apps to use or "tricks" to make the best use of the apps we have, but those aren't specific to my class. One accommodation to planning time that my district made this year, knowing that whether remote or hybrid, additional planning time would be required, was to make all Wednesdays half-days for instruction. My non-Zoom time is mostly occupied by providing individual feedback on student work and on planning/prep. I consider the time I spend providing individual feedback to be not "just grading" but an important aspect of remote instruction, so I try to provide at least a little bit of feedback on everything that isn't self-correcting. I also spend some of the non-Zoom time driving around town delivering materials to a few of my students whose parents can't get to the pickup location, and some of it in 1-1 instruction. To do remote instruction effectively without working 12 hours a day, I think it is important to allocate time to "remote feedback" in the same way that you do to meeting with individuals in live class

In summary, I hope by sharing these resources with you, I can save you some time—speaking of which—here they are:

Apps and Websites to Consider for Differentiation and Enrichment

Book Creator (shareable digital book making) – <https://bookcreator.com>

Epic! (free digital books) – <https://www.getepic.com>

FlipGrid (easy video creator) – <https://info.flipgrid.com>

Set (logic game) – <https://www.playmonster.com>

Dreamscape (gamified language arts practice) – <https://www.squigglepark.com/dreamscape>

StoryBird (art-supported book making) – <https://www.storybird.com>

Dreambox (gamified math practice) – <https://www.dreambox.com>

Code.org (home of the Hour of Code - learn to code) – <https://code.org>

National Invention Convention – <https://inventionconvention.org/home-page/>

Mystery Science (video-supported distance/live science curriculum) – <https://mysteryscience.com>

A few more contests and competitions:

Doodle for Google Art Competition – <https://doodles.google.com/d4g/>

U.S. Kids Magazine Art Contest – <http://uskidsmags.com/artcontest/>

National Young Composers Challenge – <https://youngcomposerschallenge.org/>

Photo Competition – <https://rangerrick.org/photo-contest/>

Nature-Inspired Art Competition – <https://www.gettoknow.ca/enter>

Even more lists of contests and competitions – <https://www.hoagiesgifted.org/contests.htm>

Fatigue has taken over in my class. We've been remote from day one and my students are just exhausted. How can we jumpstart now to stay strong through June?

What a great question! We think the best way to eliminate fatigue is to make this fun—at least for part of each day and we would suggest starting with some very fun and exciting virtual field trips. The other way is to group students together in their areas of interest and have them exchange ideas for some small group mini-projects that they can share with the class. Perhaps, having them conduct a small enrichment activity for the other students to change their role will help.

How do you suggest how to do this when you are teaching both virtual and face to face at the same time?

Laurel: I'm not doing this, so I don't have a good example to provide—but I would expect that if you teach with mini-lessons, you could still do that with "everyone." Then you could establish routines, like independent reading or workstations, during which the students would work independently while you work with individuals and small groups and provide feedback on virtual learners' work just as you would with a fully in-person class. To do remote instruction effectively without working 12 hours a day, I think it is important to allocate time to "remote feedback" in the same way as you do to meeting with individuals in live class.

Can we access Renzulli Learning in other countries—Yes, the trials are free across the globe and you can get student profiles in several languages, but the activities are mainly in English.

How do you encourage teachers to do more differentiation when it seems like “more work?”

By appealing to their sense of doing what is right for most students to continue learning new material. We have to keep helping everyone realize that we need to use assessment to teach—that as Joe likes to say—assessment for learning should be our focus, as well as assessment of learning.

What tools/strategies do you use to keep my students motivated during the whole class instruction time?

Laurel: I limit whole-class instructional time as much as possible, but when I do it, I use simultaneous response strategies like thumbs up/down, fist of five (1 finger up = I don't understand, 5 fingers up = I understand very well), entering answers in the Zoom Chat Box, and writing on personal whiteboards. I also use these strategies in the small groups at times, but I find them to be necessary in the large group. I also log in to Zoom a few minutes early so that students who want to can also log in and chat with me or each other, to support a feeling of community. I use breakout rooms occasionally as well, but they aren't my go-to strategy for getting students engaged because even though I can randomly pop in to any room, I can't observe the rooms simultaneously.

You can also try to use exciting Type I's to motivate students to care about the topic in the beginning of each lesson, then follow up with creative and critical thinking activities that promote important skills during each unit of instruction.

Laurel, how do the parents like the 30-minute zoom blocks? and does the admin support that? What do students do when they are not on?

I have received only positive feedback on the schedule. Admin is very happy that I have assessed my students and am teaching them in small groups based on those assessments. The parents were complaining about their children being on Zoom too long and unable to really participate because the group was so big in the previous arrangement. It's much easier to manage a Zoom group of 4–6 than of 18. It feels more like "real" teaching because each student can participate and it is easy for me to identify and call on students who don't volunteer. Also, the students have a bit more camaraderie with each other in the small groups, I think, because they actually get to see and talk with each other.

I was encouraged by my admin to strive for mini lessons under 10 minutes with Zooms around 15 minutes. Most of my Zooms are scheduled for 30 minutes but actually only include about 15 minutes of instruction, with an assignment to do independently after the mini lesson. After the mini-lesson, I give directions for where to find their assignment (if it's online) and what it is, and then either students can choose to stay for assistance or I will ask specific students to stay for 1-1 conferencing (reading/writing). The students do their independent work when they are not logged in to Zoom. The students have some independent work to do that is not tied to Zoom instruction, so they also spend some of their time on those tasks. For example, they are expected to do daily reading, typing practice, and word study, and they also have "over the week" tasks

related to science and social studies that occupy their non-Zoom time. All the auto-differentiation learning systems we use (Freckle, Khan Academy, Dreambox, etc.) give me information about time spent and completion, so I can follow up with parents if a student doesn't do their independent work. I also provide a checklist of assignments as part of my weekly schedule to help students and parents figure out what to do in their non-Zoom time.

A typical "class" on Zoom looks like:

- 1) I take attendance on a spreadsheet while admitting students to the Zoom
- 2) Instruction and guided practice (Goal: ≤ 15 minutes)
- 3) Directions and send to independent work (~2 minutes)
- 4) Students work independently or stay for help or 1-1 conference (time varies; e.g. after writing instruction, students might work for half an hour on the writing task)

Maybe we could be “chunking” learning- 3 weeks of “regular” learning and then a week of curated virtual events gathered from these sites- yet, has to be connected to Standards etc. to fly with admin???

We have found that we can connect almost every exciting Enrichment Cluster we have offered with some of our core standards, and if we can do this, we also know that we can connect most virtual enrichment with standards as well. For example, many standards incorporate problem solving and inquiry, and this connects well with Type III opportunities. Many enrichment activities enable students to lead discussions or ask important questions, to make choices about how they will use their time, and use real world skills (also incorporated in most Enrichment Triad Model activities). We also see students use writing to extend their critical and creative thinking and problem solving skills. All of these important skills are incorporated into some of our most important standards, and of course, one of the most important is giving students opportunities to be creative and communicate the results of their creative work, so generally, addressing standards can be done while incorporating enrichment into your teaching.

Thanks for these great questions!