

Guidance for Parents and Communities

Online Education During COVID-19 Pandemic



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Online Education During COVID_19 Pandemic

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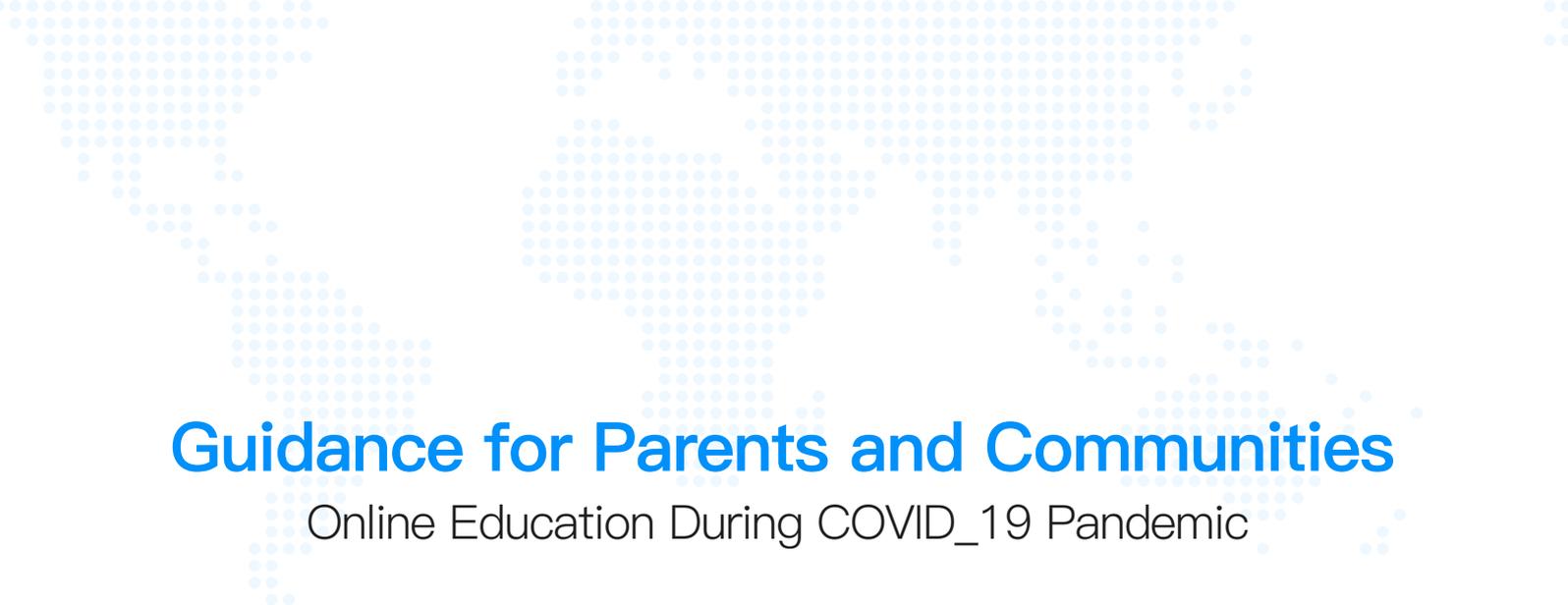
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Guidance for Parents and Communities

Online Education During COVID_19 Pandemic

Center for Higher Education Research, Southern University of Science and Technology

International Centre for Higher Education Innovation under the auspices of UNESCO

May 31, 2020

Preface

As previously reported on the UN News website, the COVID–19 pandemic had forced school closures in 194 countries, affecting at least 1.59 billion students and 63 million primary and secondary teachers. According to UNESCO’s more updated data, as of May 30, 2020, the nation–wide school closures alone enforced in 150 countries had already kept more than 1.19 billion students out of schools, accounting for 68% of the world’s total enrolled learners. Though the world has achieved some improvement in flattening the curve of the pandemic, its sweeping impact shows no sign of abating. Schools are still closed, and students are not returning to their classrooms yet. Alternatively, online education has become a solution to secure uninterrupted schooling.

In countries and regions where there is no access barrier to the Internet, the benefit of online education is obvious. It enables schools to deliver courses online so that teachers can offer instructions, share learning resources, give quizzes, and even organize thesis oral defenses. The stay–at–home learning and working modes have increased the time shared between parents and their children, making parents’ active engagement in supporting children’s online learning experiences and communities’ involvement in creating a favorable learning environment possible.

To maximize the value of online education during the pandemic, the Online Education During COVID–19 Pandemic – Guidance for Parents and Communities has been developed by UNESCO ICHEI, Southern University of Science and Technology, the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (UNESCO IITE), and the UNESCO International Research and Training Centre for Rural Education (UNESCO INRULED) with the support from the National Commission of China for UNESCO. The members of the editorial panel are from Chinese higher education institutions, including Southern University of Science and Technology, Beijing Normal University, South China Normal University, and Foshan University, Guangdong Center for Educational Technology, without whom it would not be possible to accomplish this guide within such a short time.

We hope that this online education guide series can serve as a navigator for the people who might be interested or engaged in online education practice in the post–pandemic era. We also hope that the crisis would be overcome soon and that schools would be reopened so that students and teachers could continue their learning and teaching in a healthy and comfortable environment. We are looking forward to a better future for all humankind!



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Director of UNESCO ICHEI



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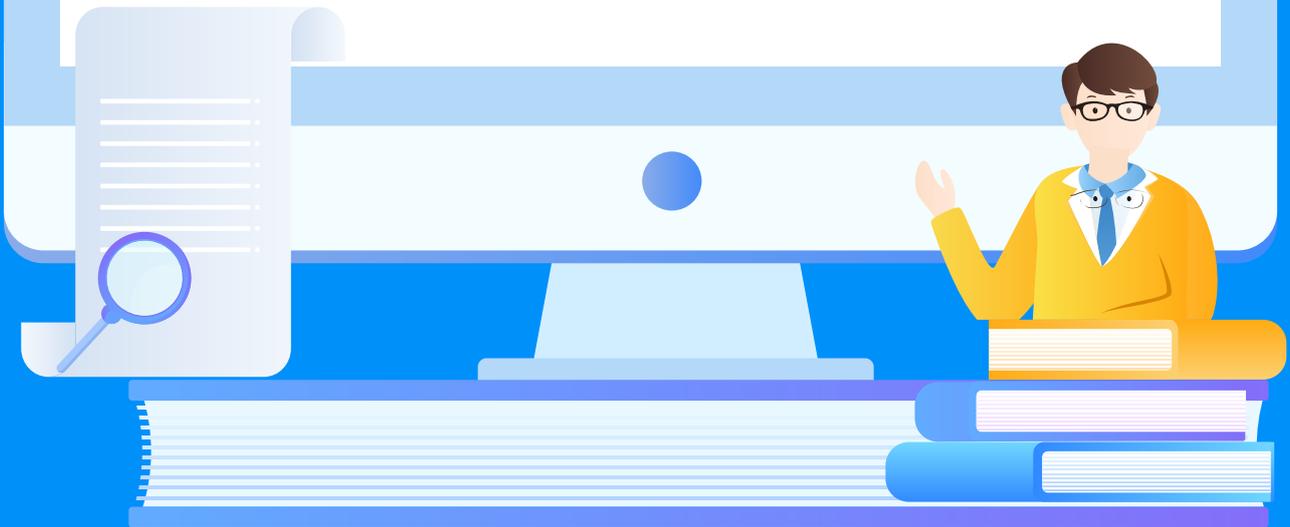
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About Online Education

Background

Since the 1990s, schools and universities started to move their teaching activities online, mainly by uploading texts, images, recorded videos, and other learning materials to online learning platforms for their students to learn asynchronously. More recently, more features and functionalities have been developed for the online education platforms to facilitate the interactions between students and their teachers, including knowledge-building tools, chat forums, instant messaging tools, and webcasting. As online learning platforms and course delivery modes are getting more mature, K-12 schools and universities have also started to blend e-learning into their routine pedagogical activities as an effort to lead education transformation.



Advantages

01. Easy access anytime, anywhere

With online education, teaching and learning activities can be sustained during school closures in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Students can also play back recorded course videos if they miss a live-streamed lecture or fail to understand certain content during the class.

02. Online learning progress data

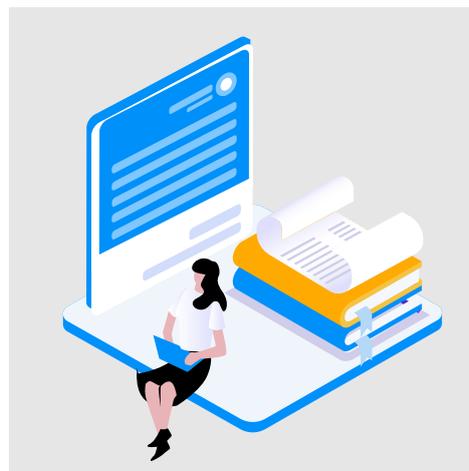
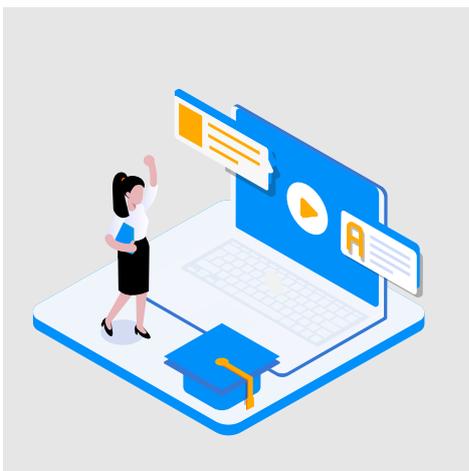
Online education platforms can capture the data concerning students' learning progress, providing an insight into their actual performance.

03. A broader range of high-quality learning resources

There are many online education platforms, offering students with rich, high-quality learning resources and allowing flexible selection of resources as per their grades and subjects.

04. Self-regulated learning

Students can better balance their learning schedule with other daily activities. It also allows them to focus more on challenging topics and skip what they know to make their learning more efficient.



Benefits

01. Developing students' digital learning skills

Online education facilitates the development of students' e-learning skills, the ability of expression, digital literacy, and divergent thinking.

02. Improving teachers' digital literacy

While teaching online, teachers need to constantly improve their skills to integrate resources, use web tools, design online teaching activities, manage the online teaching process, and facilitate online communication and interactions.

03. Adapting to the trend

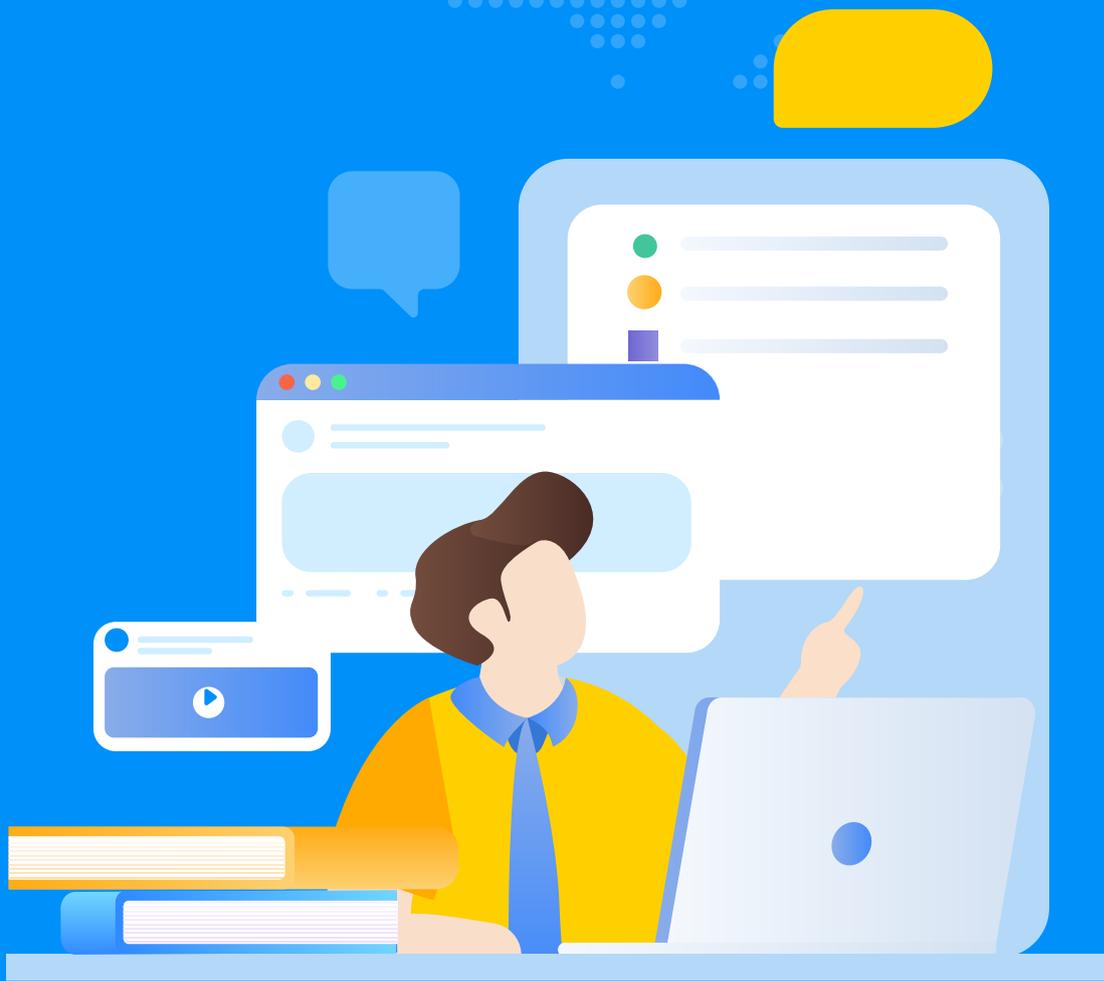
Online education has emerged as a dominant trend in education, providing the students with more choices of resources and versatile functionalities available online to expand their knowledge.

04. Promoting educational innovation

The Internet and information technology (IT) have profoundly changed people's way of production, living, and even thinking, thus becoming a factor fueling the systematic transformation of education. It also supports the development of education by driving the upgrade of educational concepts, changes in educational patterns, and restructuring of the entire educational system.



Readiness for Online Learning



Technologies

Hardware: Computers, tablets, mobile phones, and TV sets are commonly used for online learning activities. Microphones and web cameras may also be required. If conditions permit, printers can be set up to print out electronic materials.

When access to technology is limited, please seek support from government authorities or relevant organizations through programs such as computer donation or procurement led by the Ministry of Education, regional education bureaus, enterprises, or non-governmental organizations; or computer-leasing initiatives launched by your children's schools, if available. In Guangdong Province, China, the provincial government has provided tablets for all 9th and 12th graders from needy families who are going to have their high school or university entrance examinations this summer to support their stay-at-home learning experiences.

Online platforms: Install the designated online learning platforms on your devices and teach your children to use the devices and online learning platforms before they start their online courses.

Environment

Noise-free: Students can be easily distracted when they attend a live-streamed class at home. Create a noise-free environment can help them stay focused.

Well-lit: A well-lit environment is preferred to help students protect their eyes.

Learning online

Learning materials: Since students cannot go back to school to get their textbooks because of the epidemic, you can work with their teachers to ensure the availability of textbooks. For example, use printers to print out electronic materials for them.

Parents' support: It is necessary to keep track of your children's learning behavior while they are studying at home. Help them make their learning plans, review what they have learned, and complete their assignments before deadlines. Also, provide your input on the content that they are struggling with.



| Digital learning resources

The Internet provides a rich archive of digital learning resources, most of which are offered on a free-of-charge basis during the COVID-19 crisis. You can acquire learning materials from online education platforms or through search engines to make your children's learning more productive.

K-12 education:

National Public Service Platform for Educational Resources	http://www.eduyun.cn/
National Primary and Secondary Education Resources Archive	http://so.eduyun.cn/national/index
National K-12 Education Cloud Platform	http://ykt.eduyun.cn/
khanacademy	https://www.khanacademy.org
CoolMath	http://www.coolmath.com
PBS Learning Media	https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/
FunBrain	http://www.funbrain.com
K-2 Primary	https://www.edutopia.org/grade-level-k-2
SAS Curriculum Pathways	https://www.curriculumpathways.com/portal/
Curriki	http://www.curriki.org
teachersnetwork	http://teachersnetwork.org
Thinkfinity	http://www.thinkfinity.org/
Twinkl	https://www.twinkl.com.cn/

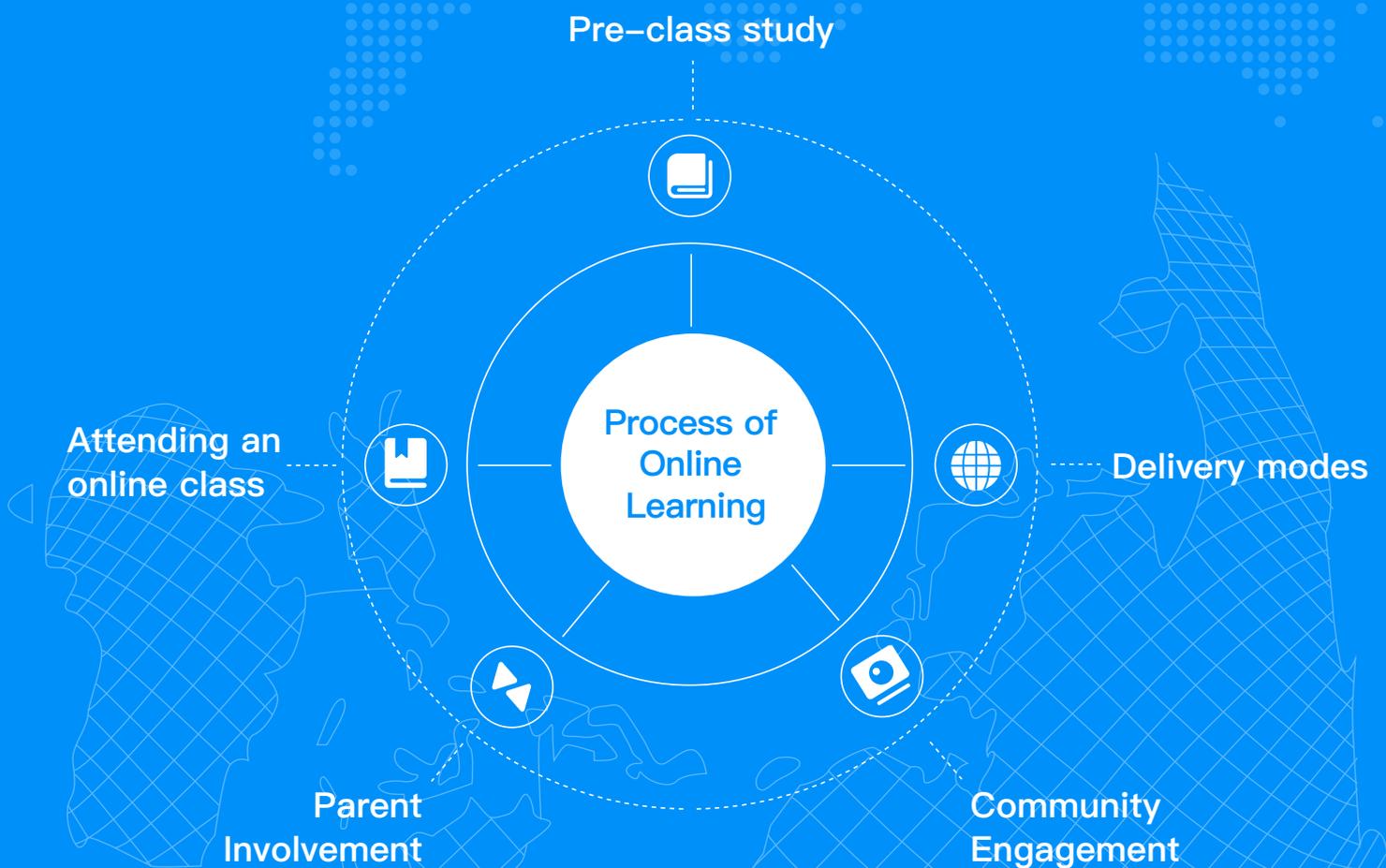
Higher education:

Chinese University MOOC Platform	https://www.icourse163.org/
Xuetangx	https://next.xuetangx.com/
iCourse	http://www.icourses.cn/home/
Zhihuishu	https://www.zhihuishu.com/
Udacity	https://www.udacity.com
edX	https://www.edx.org/
Coursera	https://www.coursera.org
Academic Earth	http://academicearth.org/

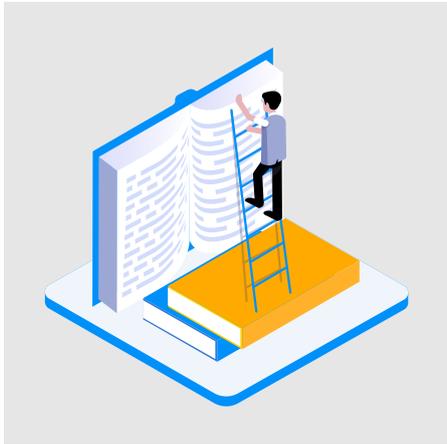
For more digital learning resources, please visit Distance Learning Solutions on UNESCO's website:<https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/solutions>. You can also search learning resources published or delivered in your national/local languages or keep yourself informed of the learning resources recommended by the local authorities.



Process of Online Learning



01 Pre-class study



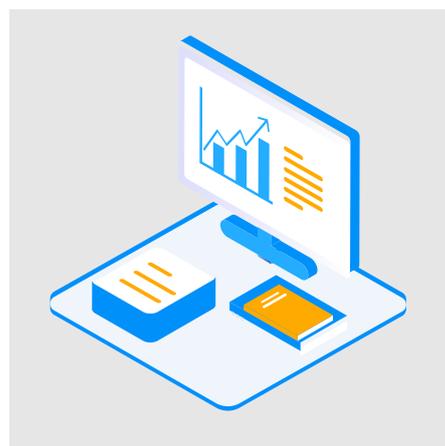
Things to Do: Pre-class Study

- Guide your children to read the textbooks or the learning materials uploaded to the online learning platforms.
- Help them go through the key points of the new lessons.
- Remind them to note down the concepts that they do not understand and ask their teachers for clarification.
- Get the devices ready while guiding your children through their pre-class study.

02 Attending an online class

Things to Do: Attending an Online Class

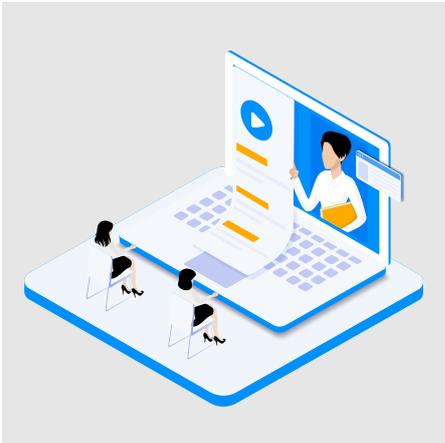
- If possible, accompany your younger children while they are taking online classes and provide your support during the process.
- If you cannot stay with your children throughout the entire session, check on their performance, and help them stay focused from time to time.
- If the network connection or device goes down, try to fix it or switch to asynchronous learning.
- Remind your children to remain in an appropriate sitting posture and protect their eyes.
- Keep the battery of devices fully charged.



03 Delivery modes

3-1. Video-based live classes

During live classes, teachers communicate and interact with their students via audio and video equipment and deliver the lecture through multiple widgets, including PowerPoint slides, instant text messaging tools, and whiteboarding. It maximizes the face-to-face interaction experience for the students.



Things to Do: Attending a Live-Streamed Class

- Help your children get all the needed materials ready for the class, such as textbooks, notebooks, pens, and reference books.
- Navigate your children through the webcast platforms. Check if the session is recorded for future playback.
- Remind your children to attend to the e-learning etiquette.
- Encourage your children to participate in in-class interactions.

Real-World Application

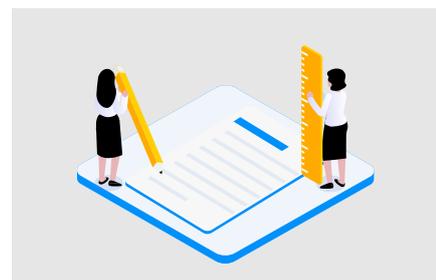
Israel Institute of Technology has adopted Zoom to deliver online lectures to the students from its international campuses in Israel, the United States, and China.

3-2. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) are open online courses available for anyone to enroll. MOOCs offer the learners with a variety of subjects and the opportunities to follow the instructions of lecturers from across the world. We advise you to fully leverage the resources to enhance your children's learning experience. Students can find the courses they are interested in or the open courses provided by prestigious universities to expand their knowledge further.

Things to Do: Learning with MOOCs

- Teach your children to use the messaging and communication tools as teachers may use other platforms to support their teaching activities with MOOCs.
- Help your children select the courses according to their study plans and skip or glance through the content they know.
- Remind your children to check out the learning materials or the content posted by the teachers in the Discussion Forums.
- MOOC platforms keep a record of the learners' learning process online, enabling the teachers to stay knowledgeable about their students' learning behaviors and effectiveness.

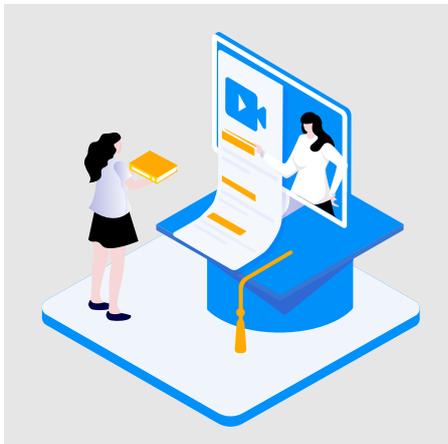


Real-World Application

During the COVID-19 epidemic, South China Normal University is encouraging its teachers and students to tap the resources on the Chinese University MOOC Platform and carry out online teaching activities via Zoom.

3–3. Online seminars

Before an online seminar, the teacher usually would specify the topic and framework for discussion and provide pre-readings and references to the students. The students attend the seminar, participate in the discussion as per the teacher’s instruction, and generate summary reports. Such sessions are beneficial in multiple ways as it facilitates the development of students’ ability of expression, logical thinking, critical thinking, as well as their awareness of teamwork.



Things to Do: Participating in an Online Seminar

- Before the session, check whether your children have finished their pre-readings and study on the assigned topic.
- The teacher or a designated student may host the seminar. If your children are assigned to be the host, remind them to plan and prepare for the discussion.
- Encourage the engagement of your children in the discussion to share their personal experiences, feelings, and thoughts.
- Check whether your children have organized their discussion conclusions into written summaries.
- Guide them to reflect on their own opinions and suggestions and generate their summary reports.

Real–World Application

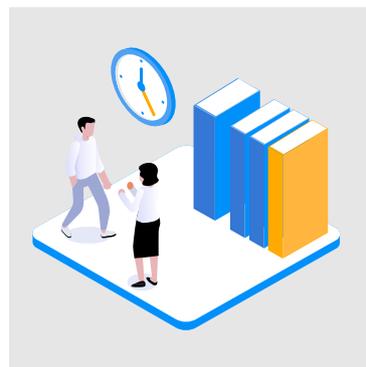
Online seminars have been commonly adopted for the learning process discussion and presentation of theses. Due to the worldwide spreading of COVID–19, Xi’an Jiaotong–Liverpool University (XJTLU) decided to extend the school closure to the end of this semester and move the oral thesis defense online. Instructions have also been given to the teachers to create chat groups for their classes on applications such as DingTalk to communicate with their students through text and voice messages.

3–4. Group collaborative learning

Group collaborative learning is an instructional strategy to organize students’ learning activities in groups. It is an ideal approach to help students achieve their study goals by giving them opportunities to justify their arguments with their peers through dialogues, discussions, and debates.

Things to Do: Participating in Group Learning

- Help your children to set goals and make plans prior to group discussion.
- Remind your children to assign tasks among themselves reasonably as a group.
- Remind your children to set ground rules together with other group members.
- Encourage active and effective engagement.

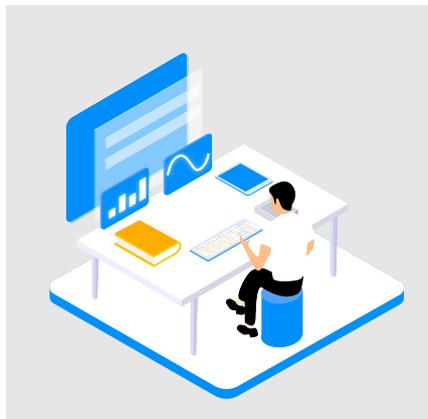


Real–World Application

The “group chat” feature of Skype enables students of a class to communicate with each other instantly in a well–organized way. Teachers can leverage this feature to start group chat among themselves to work with their colleagues in teaching and research. Students may also initiate a group chat to discuss their assignments and project plans.

3–5. Achievement presentations

Achievement presentation is a way to evaluate students’ academic performance during a certain period, as well as to showcase what they have learned. Since students will be required to present their works from different perspectives, such teaching mode encourages the students to express themselves logically and concisely.



Things to Do: Presenting Achievements

- Presentations can be delivered in groups or by individual students. Encourage your children to comment on, question, or give improvement advice about the works presented by their classmates.
- Encourage active engagement and in–depth discussion for inspirations and closer friendship.
- Guide your children to summarize and outline the key points and their opinions from the presentations.

Real–World Application

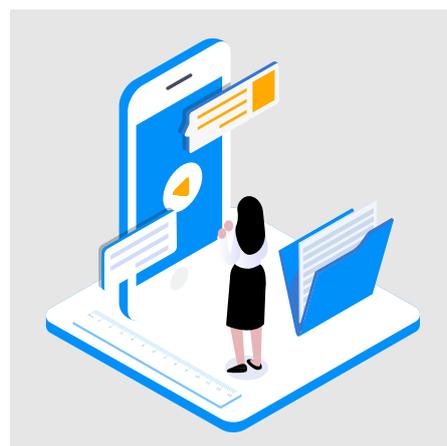
In the physics class of a high school, the teacher asked the students to brainstorm and use the materials they could find to craft a novel coronavirus model. What the students finally presented were exceptional. Some used eggs, tomatoes, and other round–shaped ingredients to simulate the coronavirus; Others adopted the clay modeling technique to create the models. Such hands–on learning experience has provided the students with the opportunity to think creatively and study with fun.

3–6. Online exchanges

Online exchanges can take the form of Q&As or question–based discussions and are usually arranged at the end of a course chapter or organized for defined topics.

Things to Do: Participating in Online Exchanges

- Remind your children of the scheduled time, required tools, and delivery mode of the exchanges, such as live webcasting, text messaging, and audio communication via Zoom, Skype, and DingTalk.
- Remind your children to prepare for the topics.
- Remind your children to respect the ground rules and other requirements.
- Remind your children to take notes or use certain software to record what has been discussed.

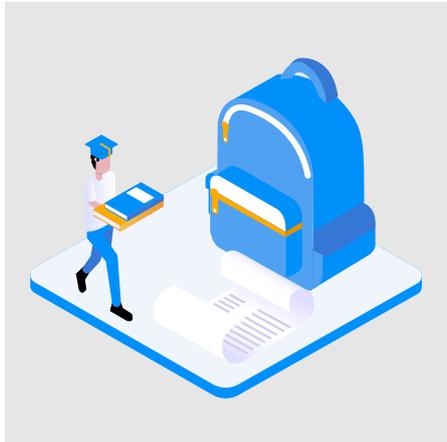


Real–World Application

Juhaida Binti, a teacher from Malaysia, launched a cross–cultural project called “Share Your Country and Knowledge with a Class in Malaysia” to facilitate the cultural exchanges among teachers and students across the world through Skype, and help them to learn about different cultures, boost their confidence and understand the global community.



04 After-class review

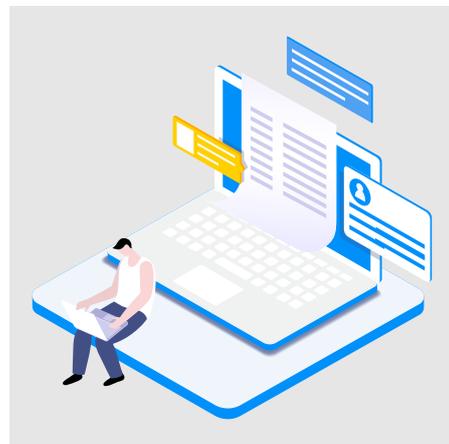


Things to Do: After-class Review

- Ask your children to recall what they have learned in class. Help them review the textbooks or playback the sessions if they have troubling remembering or understanding certain content.
- Check the in-class quiz results of your children to explain and clarify the questions they have failed on.
- Ask your children to review and organize their notes of what they have learned on the same day based on their textbooks to ensure that their notes are complete and accurate.

Things to Do: Periodic Review

- Develop weekly or chapter-based review plans together with your children and help them to regularly review the content.
- Check their grades of chapter-based tests or mid-term and final examinations to help them review the questions that they have failed to answer correctly.
- Help your children review and organize the content they have learned during a certain period in a systematic way and develop knowledge maps to integrate new concepts into the mapping system so as to expand their knowledge network.



Real-World Application

The “Intelligent Form Filling” feature of DingTalk allows teachers to send in-class quizzes and check on students’ responses to better understand their progress and give comments on their performance.



05 Learning logs

Things to Do: Keeping a Learning Log

Key points of the session

Interpretation of the content

Progress

Challenging questions

Self-reflection



Real-World Application

Teachers may ask the students to note down their progress and questions with the “Log” feature provided by DingTalk to facilitate their review and reflection.

| Parent Involvement

Creating a productive learning environment



Ensuring infrastructure support



Helping your children access high-quality learning resources



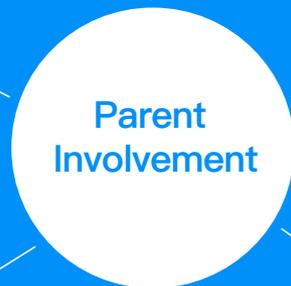
Keeping track of your children's learning process



Helping your children develop good online learning habits



Keeping your children mentally healthy



“

School–family partnership is crucial for children’s development. When learning online, children would require more attention and assistance from you. Younger children may even require your presence while they are taking online classes. If it is challenging for you to accompany your children all the time, you may ask them about what they have learned after each session to gain a better understanding of their progress and communicate with their teachers in time.



During the pandemic, your involvement is invaluable in creating a productive learning environment for your children, guiding them through their learning experiences, clarifying the questions they may have, and supporting their skill development. As parents, you are taking the responsibility to track your children’s learning progress and keep them mentally healthy so that they can complete their learning tasks and still live a joyful life during the pandemic. If you encounter any difficulty in hardware, software, e–learning methods, or other aspects, please seek advice from the teachers, schools, and local authorities.

01 Creating a productive learning environment

- Select electronic devices with a larger HD screen and modulate the brightness of the screen to a comfortable level.
- Avoid direct exposure of the screen under outdoor or indoor light. Sit the screen away from the window to eliminate glare on the screen and minimize eyestrain.
- Place and adjust the screen to the eye level of your child. Keep an appropriate distance (4–5 times longer than the diagonal length of the screen) between the screen and your child.
- Provide comfortable furniture for your child. When adjustable chair and desk are available, adjust the furniture to achieve the following sitting posture:
 - The legs should form a 90-degree angle at the knees when your child is seated on the chair.
 - The elbows are 3–4cm below the desk level when the arms are relaxed on both sides and the back is straight.If the furniture cannot be adjusted, try other ways to ensure the correct sitting posture following the principles described above.
- Minimize noises and distractions in the environment.

(Source: Guidelines for Children and Juveniles on Myopia Prevention During COVID-19 Epidemic issued by the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China)

02 Ensuring infrastructure support

- Test the stability of the network connection beforehand to ensure an uninterrupted learning experience.
- Test the connection of TV or radio network if such media are adopted for online learning.
- Teach your children to use online learning devices and platforms.

03 Keeping track of your children's learning process

- Help your children make weekly and daily learning plans and check whether or how well they are accomplished.
- Help your children keep a healthy routine to include proper physical exercises and ways to maintain a good mood.
- Be your children's learning coach to assist through the process, remind them to finish the assignments on time and check their performance.
- If conditions permit, quiz your children periodically to evaluate their achievements.



04 Helping your children develop good online learning habits

- Keeping a routine: Early to bed, and early to rise. Help your children to keep a regular daily routine.
- Keeping a good sitting posture: Remind your children to sit upright when reading and writing. Keep a small gap between their body and the desk. Place the book 30cm away from their eyes. Keep their index finger one inch away from the tip of the pen.
- Protecting eyes: Remind your children to have a screen break every 20–30 minutes and look into the distance for 10 minutes. Screen time should be shorter for younger children.
- Easing eyestrains: Blink more often. Apply a warm compress. Look into the distance. Apply artificial tears when necessary.

Source: Guidelines for Children and Juveniles on Myopia Prevention During COVID-19 Epidemic issued by the National Health Commission of the People's Republic of China

05 Helping your children access high-quality learning resources

- Use search engines to search for learning materials based on the needs of your children to improve their learning productivity.
- Provide your children with suitable software tools or resource platforms according to the content of the courses they are taking.

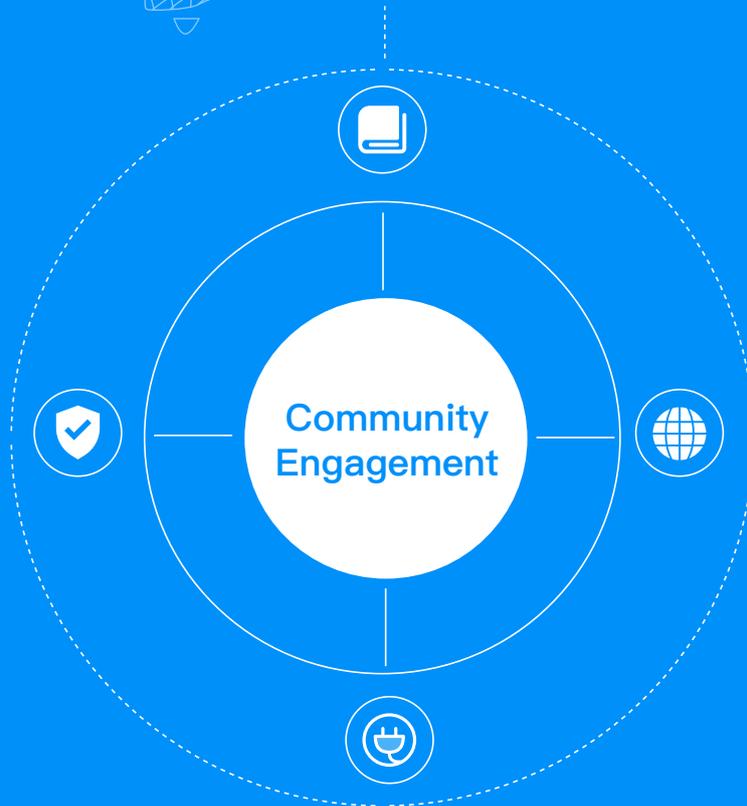
06 Keeping your children mentally healthy

- Maintain good communication with your children. You can have a knowledge of what they are feeling and thinking through communicating with them and guide them to learn more about online learning.
- Guide your children to understand why they have to learn online. Help your children develop good online learning habits and a sense of social responsibility by telling them that e-learning is necessary as the coronavirus pandemic has put everyone at risk.
- Keep your children positive through the pandemic. As some information online may easily lead to their misperception of the pandemic and impair their mental health, guide your children to better understand the pandemic so that they can tell the truth from misinformation online or offline by themselves.
- Make your children responsible for the safety of themselves and others. Shifting to online learning is to prevent outdoor gatherings and limit the spread of the virus. If there is a need for your children to go out, remind them to take preventive measures such as washing hands frequently, wearing masks, and staying out of crowded places to protect themselves and others.
- Teach your children how to seek help. Ensure that your children know how to seek help or help themselves in emergencies so that they will not get trapped in desperation. Meanwhile, let them know that people are kind and willing to help to encourage them to give a hand to others.

Community Engagement

Providing a favorable community environment for online learning

Monitoring community safety during the epidemic



Ensuring stable network connection

Ensuring power supply





Providing a favorable community environment for online learning

- Prevent gatherings of residents or students through circulating the information concerning disease containment.
- Minimize noise in the communities through, for example, reducing unnecessary renovation projects or banning loudspeakers and honking.
- Work with the community residents to create a supportive environment for the children so that they could have a good learning experience as they would have in school.
- If possible, provide such regular services for the students as stationery procurement and document printing.

Ensuring stable network connection

- Ensure network connection stability in the communities to prevent downtime.
- In the case of emergency downtime, notify the parents and initiate the contingency plan.





Ensuring power supply

- Ensure stable power supply to prevent a power outage.
- In the case of emergency downtime, notify the parents and initiate the contingency plan.

Monitoring community safety during the epidemic

- Check the body temperature of the visitors at all community entrances and ensure that people wear a face mask when they go outside.
- Prevent and disperse gatherings.
- Clean and disinfect the public areas in the communities.
- Report to the local authority if there is any suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case. Intentional underreporting is unacceptable.



Quality of Online Learning



1 01

High-quality teaching content

Although the solutions to online teaching may vary in different regions, the quality of learning content shall be ensured for successful online education. You can also contribute to your children's learning experience by screening the resources online.

Good e-learning habits

Your children may be easily distracted — especially by the idea of playing games — when electronic devices are used during online learning. Therefore, parent oversight is necessary to make sure that the students finish their learning tasks and prevent them from overuse the devices for activities other than learning. Also, encouraging them to keep a healthy routine with appropriate physical exercises can help them stay focused and achieve better performance.

02 |

1 03

Interactions and feedback

Interaction is an important element of learning activities, such as the interaction between teachers and students, among students themselves, and between students and the learning materials. One of the advantages of online education platforms and tools is the capability of real-time and efficient interaction and feedback to support the effective delivery of the courses.

Active student engagement

During the process of e-learning, it is necessary for students to follow the content, answer teachers' questions, and communicate with the teachers and classmates to ensure effective learning.

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Finishing assignments by due dates

Assignment is a tool for teachers to evaluate students' progress, identify potential problems, and provide prescriptions accordingly. Therefore, you need to make sure that your children finish the assignments by the deadlines.

Raising questions

Questions should be encouraged as they help students reflect on what they have learned. If your children cannot reach their teacher for a prompt reply, work with your children to find the possible answers to their questions.

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Pertinent evaluation/assessment

The main purpose of learning assessment is to thoroughly understand the students' learning process and effectiveness. It is an integral part of pedagogical improvement. Review your children's assignments or test grades may keep you updated about their performance. Asking questions or giving brief chapter-based tests can also help you to understand their daily progress.

Learning resources

As parents, while assisting the learning process, you can also work with your children as their learning coach to screen the resources online that suit your children the most to support their learning experience.

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| FAQs

01.What should I do to prepare my child for online learning?

First, understand the requirements and arrangements of online learning from the local authority and the school, including the designated online platforms or tools, the learning schedules, and the specific online learning modes. Second, set up the hardware for online learning, including the computer, tablet, microphone, earphones and get the learning materials ready. Third, create a good learning environment. For your child, he or she needs to finish the pre-class study, attend the online classes, review the content after class, and keep the learning logs.

02.What should I do to help my child develop good habits for active engagement?

We advise that you work with your child to develop daily and weekly plans according to the school schedule. Help your child to arrange his or her time every day to get up in the morning on time and finish the required learning activities, including morning reading, online classes, pre-class study, after-class review, and assignments. Your child may need some time to adapt him/herself to the online learning activity. Therefore, we encourage parent-child partnership to help them stay focused and take notes in class, thus, nurturing good habits for their new schooling approach.

03.What kind of online learning platforms or tools should I install for my child?

There are different types of platforms and tools used for online learning, such as integrated online learning platforms (e.g., DingTalk, BB, and MOODLE), instant messaging tools (e.g., Skype), live webcasting platforms (e.g., Zoom), and subject-specific platforms (e.g., Music Tree). You can download the ones as required. Since the requirements vary across regions and schools, you may refer to the arrangement of your child's school or specific needs.



04.How do I prepare online learning materials for my child?

Usually, teachers would list out all the materials students should prepare for online learning and notify the students or parents. In addition to that, you can also search for resources online for your child to further expand their learning experience.

05.How can I keep track of my child’s learning performance?

It is high possible that you would not be able to sit with your child through all online sessions and offline study activities. But it is important for you to understand how he or she is performing. You can check, from time to time, on his or her pre-class study and learning plans, sitting posture and appropriate screen breaks, level of focus, engagement, and completion of their assignments.

06.Is my child learning effectively online?

Asking your child about what he or she has learned after the online sessions and reviewing the finished assignments would help you to understand how your child is doing in learning new things through online teaching. You can also give some tests to check on their performance after each chapter to help you make improvement decisions, for example, to review the content that is challenging for your child or consolidate what he or she has learned.

