

## ENGAGING E-LEARNING PLATFORMS, CREATIVE LESSONS MAKE DISTANCE LEARNING FUN

By Corporate Communications Division, Ministry of Education

As Brunei is currently facing the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic, teachers and students have been adopting online tools and platforms for teaching and learning on an unprecedented scale. Learning virtually has become a significant means to sustain skills development and acquire knowledge as schools have shifted to Home-Based Learning (HBL).

Face-to-face communications among teachers and students feel like a lifetime ago. Now that every educational activity is being conducted virtually at home, students can feel demotivated to continue distance learning. Therefore, keeping up with the current trends of educational technology is crucial for teachers in bringing fun and engaging e-learning experiences to spark students' interest and imagination.

### Tips to Make Distance Learning Fun

According to Dr. Roslena binti Pehin Dato Indera Sugara Dato Seri Laila Jasa Haji Johari, Senior Education Officer, Head of Teachers Unit, Brunei Darussalam Leadership and Teacher Academy (BDLTA), "Teachers need to re-engineer their lessons for digital media and learn a new host of communicative and collaborative applications and programmes to make lessons more intellectually engaging.

"Using video conferencing, digital classrooms and breakout rooms allow students to collaborate and communicate with their peers as well as to engage in creative work that may result in finding solutions for problems posed by teachers. Learning this way is more personalised," Dr. Roslena said.

"Moreover, teachers can use digital game-based learning tools and gamification as well as a rewarding system for every task completion to attract students' interests, motivation and participation. This will allow teachers to nurture students' critical thinking and creativity," she added.

Cikgu Hajah Sorianasalwa binti Haji Mornie of Pusat Tingkatan Enam Meragang also shared tips on how teachers can be more creative. "Teachers can record a video of them explaining their lesson items and have students watch at their own pace and time. So, during online classes, teachers can focus more on maximising their time doing interactive activities with the students," Cikgu Sorianasalwa said.

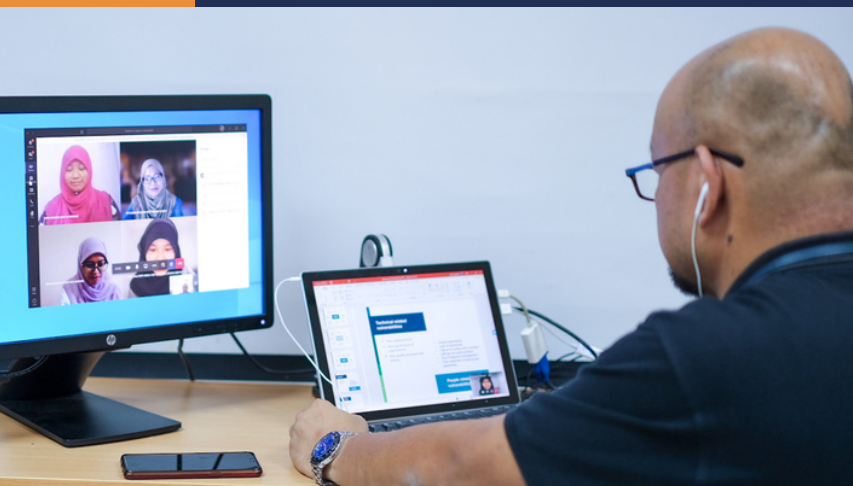
She added, "Teachers are also encouraged to give their students some autonomy on how their e-learning class should go. Take turns with them on the decision making. For example, if they prefer to use audio lessons, this week, teachers can negotiate to have them do a writing task by the weekend. Likewise, if you decide to give them a surprise online mini-test this week, then let them decide on what online learning platform they wish to use the week after."

### Fun and Engaging E-Learning Platforms

Apart from using available and free online platforms such as Microsoft applications, some teachers and students have also been leveraging other relevant e-learning tools of their choice. This allows them to prepare lessons in creative ways to provide students with a fun and engaging distance learning experience.

Preschool teacher of Sekolah Rendah Haji Mohd Salleh Sungai Hanching, Cikgu Elme Noorernny binti Haji Amran shared, "As a Mathematics teacher, my favourite online applications are Seesaw and Splashlearn, where students can easily access the worksheets uploaded and teachers can check their work and give direct feedback in the applications. Marks will also be recorded in the applications and are accessible to parents so they can check their children's progress. I will also provide the parents with step-by-step instructions using PowerPoint slides.

"Splashlearn also allows children to enjoy their tasks as they are based on online games that are suitable for students who need verbal instructions," Cikgu Elme added.



A teacher conducting an online learning session

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*Nur Ar Mardhiah binti Haji Mohd Akin, a mother of a Year 1 student, shared, "I think it is great that they could learn and have fun at the same time. As we all know, COVID-19 pandemic has restricted children from going outside. So, since his teachers have introduced such creative lessons, my son has been eager to complete the activities."*

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Year 6 teachers from Sekolah Rendah Kapok, Cikgu Rosni binti Othman and Cikgu Arni binti Haji Metali, prefer to use WhatsApp as their e-learning platform. Both teachers found it to be more convenient and affordable for their students, as it is "an everyday communication tool widely used by parents and students," added Cikgu Rosni.

As an English teacher, Cikgu Arni encouraged independent learning among her students. "On top of that, I provided my students with links that could help to understand better. If they come across unfamiliar English words, I encourage them to use an online dictionary and do more research such as browsing the internet for images or YouTube for videos. In this way, they can discover and gain more knowledge," added Cikgu Arni.

Another e-learning platform - Wordwall - is also used by Cikgu Rosni for her students to do Mental Computation and Time Table tests. "Wordwall is an engaging and fun platform for my students to practice Mathematics. I can set their online activities as a game or a quiz," she said.

A teacher of Sekolah Menengah Sayyidina Abu Bakar Cikgu Hajah Harita binti Haji Hassan shared that apart from WhatsApp, she has also been using Google Form, YouTube, Tik Tok, Word Mint and Liveworksheets. "These online applications certainly encourage active student participation," said Cikgu Harita.

Fun and engaging e-learning platforms are not only important to attract pre-school, primary and secondary students, but also graduates. Universiti Brunei Darussalam student Dayang Nur Haziqah binti Jaba is now keen to attend her online classes as a game-based e-learning tool such as Kahoot is often used at the end of her virtual lecture to help recap what she and her classmates have learnt.

"My other favourite e-learning platforms are Zoom App and Microsoft Teams. They have many useful features such as video recordings, screen-sharing, and live chat which are all easy to use," Dayang Nur Haziqah added.

## Learning Beyond Virtual Classroom

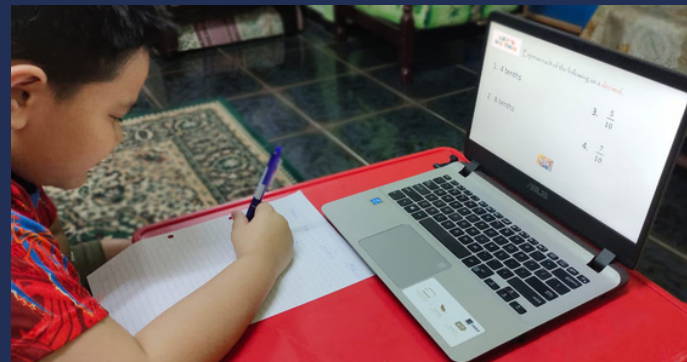
In developing students' digital, collaborative and independent creative learning, Cikgu Anastasia Naidoo, a preschool English teacher from Sekolah Rendah Kapok, provided lessons with content related to real-life context. She said, "For example, students will be looking at occupations around them and describe what they would like to become when they are older. This is a video assignment and pupils are encouraged to use props."

For Nur Ar Mardhiah binti Haji Mohd Akin, a mother of a Year 1 student, her son has to submit one creative project weekly. Such projects included making a clock using recycled materials, creating a video introducing a favourite toy and a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) water movement experiment.

She said, "I think it is great that they could learn and have fun at the same time. As we all know, COVID-19 pandemic has restricted children from going outside. So, since his teachers have introduced such creative lessons, my son has been eager to complete the activities. Alhamdulillah, I can also see an improvement in his understanding on, for example, the topic of water, after he did the DIY water movement experiment at home."

Secondary school students from Sekolah Menengah Sayyidina Abu Bakar have also been conducting practical tasks at home on their own. Cikgu Hajah Harita said, "The students will make videos of demonstrations which require a thorough planning process. In this way, students can explore their creativity, for example by using animations or illustrations, to improve their explanation of the tasks given."

In making the leap to distance learning, teachers strive in providing creative lessons via the use of up-to-date and relevant online tools and platforms. Teachers also often encourage independent digital learning by providing suitable practical tasks for students to do on their own, extending their distance learning experience beyond the virtual classroom. With such innovative efforts, students' distance learning experiences have become more accessible, interactive and engaging than ever before.



A pupil doing his school work during an online class