

Fleming and Roden: With gratitude to our teachers during this difficult time

We want to begin by expressing enormous gratitude to our dedicated, tireless Wyoming teachers. Over the past two weeks you have been asked to essentially re-create the education wheel with limited guidance or frameworks within which to make decisions and plan. Many of you have children at home and spouses who work, and you are caring for family and community members. On top of all of that, you have each been asked to prioritize and design what and how to teach our children and then ensured that parents and students know when and how to access learning, and with what materials.

We want you to know that we are grateful for whatever you are able to teach our children over the coming months. Remember to take care of yourselves! Please let us know if there are immediate or ongoing ways in which WY Lit might support you.

Several Wyoming general education and special education teachers expressed interest in seeing how teachers from Wyoming and from across the country are thinking about daily or weekly lesson planning; how teachers are selecting standards, creative ways to deliver instruction and for students to demonstrate competency, and strategies for progress monitoring and reporting. As a result, we recently created a Facebook Group called *Shared Distance Learning Plans, K-12: Together We Create*. On this page, K-12 teachers have the ability to post their plans or ideas by grade for grades K-6 and by grade and subject for grades 7-12. Keep an eye on the WY Lit website where we will share a framework for interventionists and special education teachers to use to plan online instruction and progress monitoring. We will also share videos about how to use some of our favorite technology tools for online intervention.

We want to take a moment to reiterate the importance of audiobooks. We were fascinated to learn that brain imaging techniques show that the same parts of the brain “light up” whether a person is reading or listening to a book. Audiobooks are particularly important for struggling readers because we don’t want them to miss out on exposure to rich, complex texts, vocabulary and background knowledge while their reading skills are being honed. If, for example, you force a 3rd grade struggling reader to read a 1st grade book for pleasure or to practice comprehension strategies, they are not likely to be very engaged. Plus, it is embarrassing to them when everyone else is reading chapter books.

Our favorite audiobook library is called **Learning Ally**. We have a strong preference for Learning Ally because it has over 80,000 *human-read* books, including textbooks. Learning Ally engages professional voice actors to read their books so the “ear-reading” experience is quite enjoyable. Learning Ally has offered their library free through August to any district in which there are schools that already have a subscription. Essentially, any student who receives any level of reading support is very likely to be eligible for school and home access to this incredible library. We love that there is no learning curve with Learning Ally, and that it can easily be accessed at home as well as at school. In our experience, this is not the case with all district audio resources.

Another important source of audiobooks is called **Bookshare**. Bookshare has over 800,000 titles but they are read by computer-generated voices. In our experience, this makes the books less enjoyable to listen to. Computer-generated voices may not be a big deal for a high school or college student listening to a textbook, but it can be hard to convince a K-8 student to listen to a computer-generated voice – even a decent one – for pleasure.

Storyline Online has an incredible library of children’s books read by actors, and **Audible**, the fabulous but pricey audiobook library, has opened their Stories library for free. **Kids Read to Kids** is another audiobook source as is **Project Gutenberg**, the oldest digital library, which we turn to for the classics.

We also wanted to share some free tools we find useful in our virtual teaching.

Current favorite virtual whiteboards

For small group and 1:1 intervention

AWW Board: We like the ability to upload, share and have students write on worksheets.

For Math

IDROO: We like the ability to choose plain paper or graph paper and the ability to create math problems with complex formulas.

Zoom:

We encourage you to mix up some martinis and play "a round" with these Zoom privacy features to avoid Zoom Bombing. Zoom is such a great tool. Managing privacy settings is really very straightforward.

One point for being able to:

- (1) Generate new meeting ID numbers for each new session
- (2) Create "waiting rooms" to approve requests to join – remind students they must use their real names (My Account (top right)/Settings/Meetings(scroll down) /Waiting Room Options
- (3) Lock meetings when they start (Participants(bottom of screen)/Lock)
- (4) Disable private chat (Settings/Chat/Private Chat)
- (5) Turn off screen sharing

Double points for being able to:

- (6) Enable "remove uninvited participant" or "put participant on hold" (Manage Participants-bottom of window)
- (7) Set up two-factor authentication
- (8) Enable "Chime Upon Entry"
- (9) Enable "Mute All"

Cheers to you, teachers, for leading education during this difficult time.

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