HANDBOOK FOR YOUTH TRAINERS TO HELP THEM DELIVERING DIGITAL AND DISTANCE LEARNING USING CREATIVE TECHNIQUES

HANDBOOK ON CREATIVE MINDSET

CREATIVE MINDSET

MEET THE[1]
TEAM

SOLUTION: SOLIDARITÉ & INCLUSION

Paris/France

ASSOCIACAO CHECK-IN - COOPERACAO E DESENVOLVIMENTO

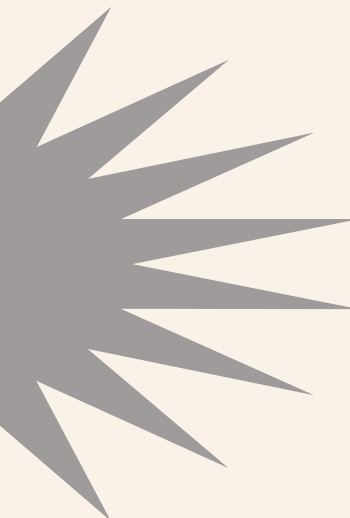Beja/Portugal

GLOBALNET SP. Z O.O.
Poznań/Poland

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook for Youth Trainers, Youth Workers, Young Leaders is one of the intellectual outputs of the project "Creativity Programme for Youth Trainers, Youth Workers, Young Leaders". The goal of this result is to define a HANDBOOK for YOUTH TRAINERS to help them delivering digital and distance learning using creative techniques and to boost youth creativity by design thinking and creative problem solving.

This document is training material and contains four main sections. The first section discusses the benefits of switching from face to face to online learning. The plethora of examples should help teachers to boost creativity among youth. The second section underlines the challenges of distance learning and methods to facilitate the distance learning. Therefore, teachers can find here teaching tips suitable for them and the group they are teaching. The third section will help to develop teachers' competencies in flipped learning, microlearning and non-linear learning. The fourth section will concentrate on inclusive and accessible learning.

DIGITAL DISTANCE LEARNING AND CREATIVITY

The new reality of the pandemic has led many teachers and trainers to teach online, and some of them had not previously explored it.

While this environment can be an occasion for innovation in education, it can be challenging to deliver effective and interactive online classes, especially when it comes to creativity. 2020 was an exceptional year. The deadly COVID-19 virus shook the globe and made everyone create instant changes to their way of life. Since the virus was discovered in December 2019 in China, the quantity of infected cases increased overnight and rapidly spread everywhere the world, and due to the alarming situation, the World Health Organization declared Covid 19 to be a global pandemic, warning the globe of its danger. Many precautions were taken to safeguard the health of the population: policies, guidelines, and restrictions to all sectors, including education.

Universities and schools all round the world were told by the governments of the countries to shut during the primary weeks and to cease face-to-face education for their students, requiring them to switch, overnight, to the distance learning pedagogies.

1.SWITCHING FROM FACE-TO-FACE TO ONLINE LEARNING — PEDAGOGICAL SKILLS

The call to simply "take your class online" sounds simple, but it can in fact be trickier. How could you suddenly convert the multitude of complex cognitive, affective, and behavioral interactions that face-to-face teaching and learning offers into an online class?

What you can do, instead, is design your course specifically for this new online medium, so that learners can continue to learn under these extraordinary circumstances. Some activities will not be possible, and others will develop more easily in an online medium (for example, students are sometimes more likely to communicate online).

Teaching online is not easier than teaching face-to-face. In many ways, it is much more time-consuming and complex. Online instructors must then become familiar with the technology and foster communication, collaboration, and interaction among distance learners. To implement teaching and assessment methods, they must develop online course facilitation skills and learn to use telecommunication tools.

Just as with offline instruction, designing learning outcomes and communicating them clearly to online learners is paramount. Specifically, it is important to define the instructional activities and assessment exercises that will help learners achieve these outcomes. Whenever possible, it is necessary to design activities that can be done online or offline, alone or with another person.

Create activities that integrate content, are learner-centered as much as possible, and have clearly defined directions and deadlines. Determine what students will learn from you, the content, the activities, and from other participants.

1.1.PROMOTING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Booklets are printed materials with four or more pages, containing details about a business, event, product, promotion, etc. They are also known as catalogs or pamphlets, and are usually created tOne of the most important aspects of any learning environment is community. For many students, classes are an occasion for socialization. In an online format, instructors must work to find creative ways to help develop real relationships with their students, and among the class.
o communicate a message to a wide variety of audiences.

Instructors need to keep things personal by addressing students by their names. It is crucial that no participant feels left out and can express himself freely and without feeling under pressure. Every course should have a place where introductions can occur. Students should be encouraged to share some details about their lives to help establish connections with other students.

The sense of presence will be enhanced if everyone shows their face via their webcam. Consider having students turn on video as a key element of participation, as it is easier to engage with the class if you can see them, and students are more likely to pay attention if they know they are being seen through the camera. Displaying the gallery can be helpful in this regard. However, be aware that some students may feel uncomfortable sharing their living and studying conditions.
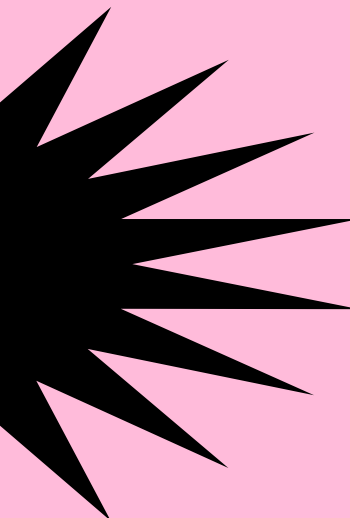
Remind your students those virtual backgrounds can help protect cybersecurity, improve equity, and reduce visual distractions.

Learning has a strong social-emotional component. Learners will need each other, and you, especially at this time. So, it is important to get to know them and help them get to know each other. Taking five minutes at the beginning of each online session for students to have fun and get to know each other through icebreaker activities can long way in building camaraderie

At the beginning of the course have pairs of learners call each other to get to know each other, and then introduce their partner in an online video conference with the class. If you use an LMS (Learning Management Systems), you can create a forum for non-academic topics and organize the class into small groups of 4 students. In each module, design an activity that requires student collaboration to complete. This camaraderie, collaboration, and sense of community will increase learner engagement and persistence throughout the course.

You can also consider encouraging students to stretch every 20-30 minutes for 30 seconds. It can be harder to focus attention on a screen than in a classroom, and both you, and they will benefit from a brief moment of physical activity. If you want students to participate in smaller discussion groups, you can also use Zoom's Breakout Rooms feature for discussions or group work via video. If you're used to doing "blackboard work" as part of a class session, Zoom gives you several options (like Write to Blackboard). Note that if you are used to multiple simultaneous boards, you may need to adjust to viewing one screen at a time.

1.2.ENSURING COMMUNICATION

When it comes to communication, it can be a real tool when teaching online. Send an introductory message the day the course opens and give your students some key points about what you expect from them. This way they can identify any assignments or assessments that they should be preparing for. Follow up with messages each week and remind the students frequently that they can reach out to you with questions and that you will be available for them.

Regular communication ensures that online teaching practice is rewarding. Taking into account the workload of the course, communicate frequently with the whole class, with online working groups, and with each participant. It is also crucial to design activities so that learners must also communicate with each other. Maintain online work schedules and chats on different days and times of the week and encourage in-depth online discussions in which students interact with each other about their ideas and perspectives, which are then key elements to the success of your classes. You can also identify an alternative communication channel independent of the course so that you can contact your students, and they can interact with each other (WhatsApp, SMS, phone numbers). Be sure that students are aware that you are checking in on the course and them regularly and do your best to respond to questions within twenty-four hours.

1.3.BOOSTING CREATIVITY

Being creative is not always natural. Sometimes learners need to know how to boost their creative potential to blossom in their daily life and find a place of choice for their imagination.

Why boost your creativity? Creativity is one of the most fulfilling tools of personal development: thanks to a creative and imaginative mind, one can overcome one's psychic hindrances, free one's thoughts and move more quickly towards happiness and fulfilment.

To free or even boost the creativity of the learners, there are different techniques that address each individual according to their personality type and their thinking mechanics.

Learners have to give themselves time to be creative. That is why to develop their creativity, they have to take time from their schedule and dedicate moments to creating. Whether it is during courses or workshops or even on social networks, it is wise to create a creative network that is both inspirational and collaborative.

As in many fields, the development of creativity can be hindered by a lack of self-confidence or negativity. This is why you must remind the learners that they have to adopt positive thinking to develop their creativity. They have to believe in themselves so that they can complete all of their projects and develop their creative sense.

Experts have shown that focusing on the final result of a creative project can completely block the person who is doing it. This is the reason that you need to incite the learners to take it one step at a time. It is, therefore, necessary to move forward progressively and to know how to recognize the small successes that mark the path to success.

Creativity is not an exclusive ability of a few, nor is it linked to specific artistic areas. We can find it in different contexts, acquiring very different forms, and, as teachers, we must help the learners to let their ideas, proposals, and initiatives emerge without fear of making mistakes. And we will also have to apply the story to ourselves, without fear.

This is why, it is important to ask students open-ended questions, giving them space to seek their answers, give their opinions, and be curious, so they will develop creative and critical thinking.

As a trainer, you can employ acti methodologies, promoting the s reliance of students with flexible personalized learning in which they construct their knowledge and decide their itinerary.

You can also help the learners to build a creative environment, a space in which their work is published in some way, either digitally or physically, such as in a blog or a poster.

You also need to encourage their imagination, an intrinsic and inseparable part of creativity, with varied and open-ended activities and resources, responding to different bits of intelligence and learning styles. It is important to support their risk-taking, presenting mistakes and failure as a necessary part of learning. Using new technologies can also help them develop their digital competence in an innovative way.

As a teacher, creativity will provide you with the ability to adapt and resolve unforeseen day-to-day situations, both inside and outside the educational context. Being creative means being decisive and imaginative, two qualities that will be useful and beneficial for both you and the learners. Their imagination has no limits, and neither does yours, give them free rein, without fear or prejudice, and you will see the results.

1.4. WHY CREATIVITY IS BE AN IMPORTANT ASPECT TO TEACH IN OUR SOCIETY?

One of the most topical aspects of personal development is creativity. In our societies, the progressive mechanization of work has been displacing the need for low-skilled labor. The workers who once performed hard and heavy tasks have been disappearing because machines, robots or technologies that could perform the same work faster and more efficiently have appeared. For this reason, companies are changing and tend to demand and promote other more qualified professional profiles.
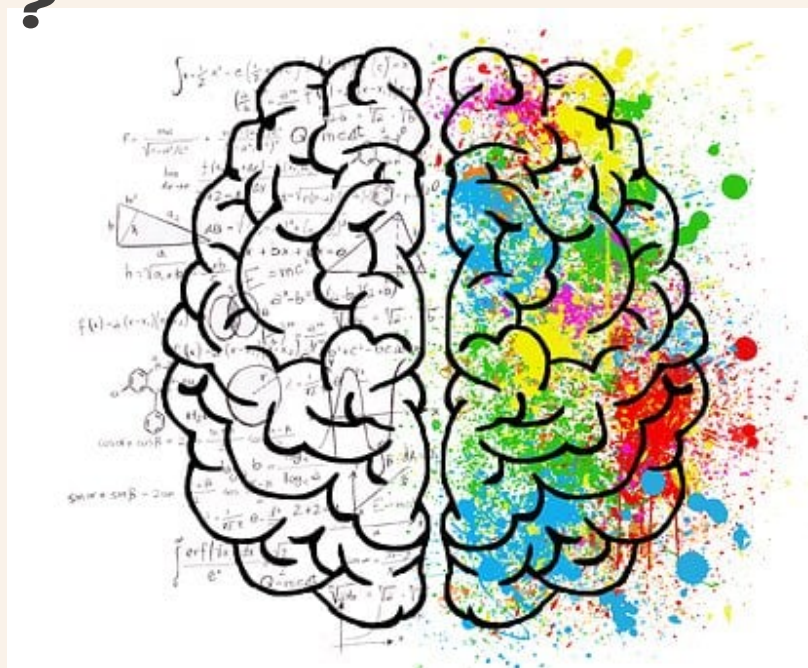
Source: Pixabay

.Creativity can begin with the teacher him/herself, by employing appropriate teaching techniques and strategies to involve and motivate learners in the learning activity inside and outside the classroom. The value of being creative lies in becoming a child again: as the world is always new to the child's eyes, so creativity makes us look with an ever-new look at the creation that surrounds us. This is why creativity can be the basis of a freeing experience, while also being a useful tool for professional practice and for the construction of one's own personality. Teachers can therefore be a real driving force for creative thinking.

Promoting creativity in the classroom does not have to be a complex process. The teacher can opt for a complete redesign of the physical space or can rethink learning times and plan moments of creative reflection with students. Creative thinking is an important part of learning, and teaching students that their creative voices matter is a big step. Creativity is connected with the personality of each learner and a sign of each person's unique and unrepeatable character. Stimulating creativity is then a key factor to exploit the potential of all learners and create a positive sharing experience between you and them.

1.5.Tips for the tutor

The teacher can help the participants to shape their creative spirit. In any case, it has to be done gradually. Below, here are fifteen tips to develop creativity that the teacher can use during online classes.

1.Spend time thinking and imagining: It seems an obvious point, but we should not overlook it. It is necessary to dedicate time to develop creative thinking, away from obligations, tasks, and sources of stress. It is not bad if, from time to time, we let the imagination fly, addressing issues that particularly interest the learners or others that concern them.

2. Write down new ideas: It is crucial not to let ideas slip away, no matter when they come to us. As soon as a new idea, whether good, bad, or mediocre, crosses the mind of the students, you should encourage them to write it down in a notebook or on their cell phone, or even record it on a voice memo.

3. Think beyond tradition and custom: Just because something is traditional does not mean it is good. Many people act routinely just out of laziness, not daring to evaluate reality from other perspectives. If the custom has ceased to be useful, why not try to change it with a little creativity? If tradition is just a form of immobility, it may be time to innovate.

4. Enhance curiosity: Curiosity is the basis of the creative mindset. If your students can have doubts about some aspects of reality, it will be easier for them to feel a genuine interest in what you propose to do. This curiosity will lead them to inform themselves and think for themselves, generating a positive dynamic that will ultimately enhance their creativity.

5. Give their thoughts time: The previous ideas and judgments about things may be more or less accurate, but they should not be disregarded. The ideas that some aspect of reality arouses in the mind of the students are good material that needs time to develop and come to fruition. Give their intuition the necessary freedom - with time it can crystallize into concrete ideas.

6.Encourage the learner to take some risks: The creative mind is not exempt from leaps into the void and turns in circles. It is normal in any creative process for this to happen, and it is also one of the ways our brain structures ideas. Making mistakes only means that the learners are closer to coming up with a good idea.

7. The state of flow: We enter the flow state of mind when we are so immersed and interested in the task at hand that we lose track of time and are one hundred percent motivated. Flow happens when we are passionate about what we do. Consequently, our creativity will have a much greater potential if we dedicate our efforts to what motivates us. Enjoy the process and flow will play in your favour.

8. Don't give up: If your students want to find inspiration and creativity, they have to take risks and keep in mind that they can only aspire to perfection if they dedicate many hours of effort and genuine interest in what they have set out to do. No one is born educated, they must walk their path. Creativity is a complex skill that they will develop over time, with patience and luck.

9. Forget social standards: To be creative, the last thing your students need is social constraints. Try to open their mind and let themselves explore their creativity. There is a lot to learn from other cultures and from people who do not fit into social standards. Creativity can emerge at the most unexpected moment.

10. Don't put limits on them: Let their imagination flow and have no limits. Maybe their first thought is not as good as they think, but it can serve as a guide to get to the point they want.

11. Read and learn from professionals: It is good that the students keep training themselves and learn habits that they can use in their day-to-day life to expand their creative side. Learn how the most original ideas we know so far have come about and attend courses where they offer tactics. Creativity is a skill that is learned and practiced.

12. Look for what motivates them: Encourage them to not try to look where they don't want to or where they know they won't feel comfortable. They should try to give free rein to their imagination in an environment where they feel qualified and can give the best of themselves.

13. Encourage them to surround themselves with passionate people: They can always boost their creativity if they meet people with initiative and innovation. They can learn from their knowledge, and it can also be key for them to develop new projects. The more they enjoy what they do, the better results they will get.

14. Open their minds to new challenges: Whether it is taking an online course on a discipline completely unrelated to their specialty or reading magazines in other areas, this interconnection with other ways of thinking and knowledge will stimulate their creative thinking. With more stimuli, more new ideas are generated.

15. Have a space for reflection and relaxation: As a general rule, being in a noisy place and feeling stressed can affect their concentration and, therefore, their creativity. Therefore, it is important to find a place where they can find their inner peace and can calmly think and shape their ideas. Otherwise, they will only focus on what worries them, blocking other thoughts.

1.6.OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGE OF TEACHING AN ONLINE CLASS

Due to the nature of e-learning, it is easy for students to overlook important details in an online class, especially if it is the first time that they are taking an online course or using specific software.

Students are learning how to navigate keys and use new online platforms, while also trying to take in the information of your course.

Therefore, it is important to keep things simple. If there is something that you can tell them about your expectations, do so up-front. However, remember that the quality of the teaching is paramount. Your role is the same as in a face-to-face classroom to guide, inform, direct, facilitate, coach, advise and empathize. The challenge now is to do this with technology and with minimal planning.

In the online courses, as in the classroom, you will focus on the following: setting expectations and ground rules; developing specific, achievable learning outcomes for each online unit of study; managing the process and pace of learning; providing differentiated instruction, allowing more advanced learners to progress while providing more coaching to those who are behind.

Strive to be consistent in the way that you present your material in your online classes. Students are trying to take in many new skills while adjusting to online learning and digesting their course material. Therefore, you serve your students by creating a very structured presentation over the term.

It is crucial to organize your class so that each aspect is in the same place each week. You can find videos that are memorable, perhaps sometimes funny or purely illustrative, simply to break up any monotony and to help students make mental notes of the main themes in your course. You can use fun backgrounds that are relevant to your course. Remember that there are many styles of learning.

While you cannot completely cater to each of these, you can incorporate these different styles throughout the course. This can help different students take roles, which helps to prevent only certain students from dominating the course and others from falling behind. A truly successful online course helps every student to achieve their goals.

You also need to remember to provide clear explanations on how to use these digital tools, or your learners may feel lost and confused. The advantage of having small classes is that everyone can participate in the discussions. You can create even smaller groups (2-3 people) for more intimate interaction and rotate these groups to expand interactions by using the "Breakout Rooms" option of Zoom or other tools.

Try this technique to encourage a richer dialogue: create open-ended discussion prompts, such as requiring students to provide examples or asking them to interpret a concept from a variety of perspectives. You could also set up student-facilitated discussion opportunities where students craft the discussion prompt and guide the ensuing dialogue.

1.7. ONLINE RESOURCES/TOOLS THAT CAN HELP BOOST CREATIVITY

Fortunately, current technology allows us to work on educational content at a distance in a simple way, which is an advantage, especially when we go through contingencies that force participants to stay at home.

Here are some options that will make it possible to give virtual classes, and some other applications that are recommended to carry out learning activities.

1. Kahoot (https://kahoot.com/): Learners love challenging each other and testing their skills. A great tool to do that is Kahoot, which also offers occasions for discussions and the exchange of ideas and questions. To use it, you should prepare the activity by clearly explaining to your students that they need to download the mobile app. It is very intuitive and fun for learners. Kahoot will allow students to play question and answer games in which they earn points according to their answers. Although it is generally used in real-time and in the classroom, it also has an option for students to play at different times and remotely.

2. Mentimeter (https://www.mentimeter.com): This great activity that comes from the web to encourage discussion is based on word clouds. They are particularly useful in the brainstorming phase when you ask your students to share thoughts evoked by work or an image. For this, you can use this site, which also allows you to give presentations and create short quizzes. It is particularly easy to use because after you create your activity, the website will generate an URL that you can share with your students on the chat of the teleconference tool you are using. It is important to boost the creativity of your students. Brainstorming, video meetings, and collaboration in real-time are all elements that will make your class dynamic and interactive.

3. Jamboard (https://jamboard.google.com/): This is an excellent tool (part of Google Workspace) to create a virtual mural. It can be done collaboratively, and it is an excellent option to give structure to ideas. It allows you to put post-it labels, draw and write. It is a digital, interactive whiteboard available both on a physical screen panel and on a tablet, mobile, and web applications. To boost engagement in online lessons, use gamification processes that will make the learner learn without realizing it.

4.   Storynator   (https://nliautaud.github.io/storynator/):   Storynator   is   an autonomous tool that aims to simplify writing, browsing, and editing a storyboard to stimulate collaboration, creative changes and structural experiments. This site provides a tool that allows you to create stories from a random generator. After writing a short story, this platform provides a synopsis, three characters, a narrative style and two themes to be addressed in the plot. To encourage creative writing, and imagination, the generated plots tend to be meaningless - students will have to give their interpretations.

5. National Novel Writing Month (https://ywp.nanowrimo.org/): This free program aims to write a novel within thirty days. It is offered as a challenge for adults and children, who can learn different techniques and strategies to create a story with development and different characters. The website is also suitable for use in the classroom, as part of language or English classes, as it is in English, and for families. The challenge is adapted according to the type of writer (adult or young), especially about the length of the texts, and is shaped like a set of tests that attracts the attention of students and motivates them with their progress. After overcoming the challenge, there is the possibility of printing the novel in PDF or the option of leaving it in the writer's personal space and editing it as many times as desired.

6. Pic Collage (https://piccollage.com/): Pic Collage is an application to switch to the digital version of Scrapbooking. It will create an image from your photos. You can put as many as you want and position them very simply with the touch functions of your phone. It is also possible to apply filters to age or saturate them, apply stickers or text, choose a background, and, of course, crop them automatically or manually in the pure tradition of scrapbooking. The application offers a lot of options to diversify the rendering while remaining very simple to use. You can then transform your creations into postcards and send them to your friends.

7. Wordwall (https://wordwall.net/): The site will allow you to create any gamification process such as a quiz, find the match, missing word, or anagram. What makes Wordwall an interesting tool is that the activities proposed are original and very fun. They also allow the learner to try different ways of memorizing vocabulary. The free version of the service gives access to 17 interaction models and the creation of 5 designs. The creations are then published on the site and can be reused by members of the community. Some PDF versions of the games are available to be printed or stored on another site.

8. GoConqr(https://www.goconqr.com/): This site provides a better digital learning experience that will help you create, discover and share relevant learning content. This is an excellent option to create mind maps and it allows us to generate them in a short time and in a very intuitive way. The mind maps are especially helpful in breaking down objectives to create a visual learning guide. The basic version is completely free.

9. Easily (https://www.easel.ly/): This tool is useful for making infographics, so you can ask your trainees to structure information through this tool that can be used for reading controls or synthesis of information. The site enables users to design graphics that simply and concisely convey ideas thanks to thousands of templates to choose from. The students can then experiment that when data ispresented in the right way, it can tell a powerful story when facts and figures are engaging through visuals.

10. Canva (canva.com): Canva is a tool that in a short time became one of the favourites of students and teachers alike, as it allows you to design presentations, posters, brochures, or leaflets of high quality in a very short time. With thousands of professional templates, images, and quality content at their disposal, students can get a head start on bringing their ideas and finding inspiration. Students can then customize a professional template, or design something more personal, like an invitation. Some designs and images may be paid.

11. Magic Pot (http://creatividad.aomatos.com/caldero_mgico.html): The magic pot is a story generator to work on creativity and imagination. We simply have to mark on the form if we want the generator to choose options randomly or if we want our students to choose from the given options the beginning, place, action, characters, object, and end of the story or tale. A PDF document is automatically generated with the options we have chosen for the students to write their own story linking these elements.

12. Storybird (https://storybird.com/): This is an application for creating illustrated online stories that can then be shared and/or printed. It enables you to boost your writing skills with more than 700cChallenges created by professional educators and expert authors. To start writing, simply choose an illustration model and a template. The application has different profiles for teachers, students, and pupils so that you can coordinate, for example, stories written collaboratively. In addition, Storybird functions as a social network through which you can follow other users, make comments and read their stories.

2.WHAT IS DISTANCE LEARNING?

First, what does distance learning mean?

It is defined as improved capabilities in knowledge and/or behaviors because of mediated experiences that are constrained by time and/or distance such that the learner doesn't share the same situation with what is being learned. Online learning environment is possible with the wide use of technology and its many tools that have given the opportunity to the teachers to have classrooms from anywhere.

Then to continue with teaching and learning, most institutions have adopted this method and therefore it has become the most effective solution and an honest alternative for schools, institutions and universities that cannot run face-to-face learning.

In these times of crisis, the planet has indeed observed exponential growth of online education as educators and students are required to remain at home.

Facilitating an engaging online course requires from educators developing strategies that enhance students' participation and build a sense of community.
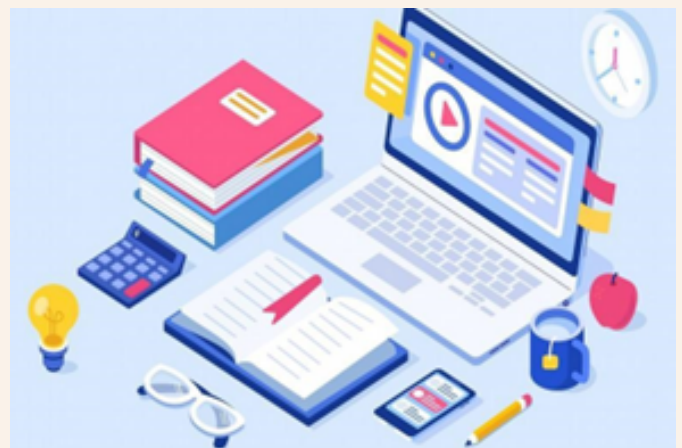
Figure 1: source https://www.culthera.it/2020/04/06/didattica-a-distanza/

2.1.CHALLENGES OF DISTANCE LEARNING

Although technological innovations have created diverse options for distance learning, the shift from the familiar traditional face-to-face learning environment poses challenges to the instructor as well as the learner due to its complex nature.

Some of the challenges include: limited network coverage and lack of technological tools among students. Indeed, online learning didn't produce a desirable outcome due to limited access to the internet in addition to technical and financial issues, which is particularly common in underdeveloped countries. Furthermore, students also highlighted that reaction time, lack of face-to-face interaction and absence of socialization were among the challenges of distance learning. It has become especially challenging for the teachers, who were trying not to waste weeks of lessons and to continue with the conventional school schedule.

This need for online education has also pushed both students and educators to maximize their ICT skills, which was not that simple. They must be supported to plan and facilitate distance learning and interact also with parents and caregivers.

Despite this, compared with traditional classroom learning, the environment of online learning presented learners with unique benefits. Some students think that digital learning offered better focus on learning without nuisance created by uninterested learners in traditional classroom environments or by external disturbances.

Through online learning, there are some assessment techniques that each trainer has to pay more attention to. There are many samples of traditional assessment tools which might be used, modified, and implemented within the context of online learning assessment.

They include, for instance, solving problems, thought-provoking discussion questions, essay exams, projects that need students to demonstrate proficiency in content knowledge and communicating effectively.

Source: melovess.com z Pixabay

2.2. METHODS TO FACILITATE DISTANCE LEARNING

2.3. THE DEBATE TECHNIQUE

There are many techniques and methods to facilitate and improve distance learning and to boost the engagement of students:
●Using Blogs,
a Google application where students can post writings, essays, pictures, videos, links and activities that teachers can easily check and give feedback. Especially the employment of videos might bring advantages in distance learning, because it is assumed that video content published on global video-sharing websites is a supply of valuable information and may be used to increase the effectiveness of the learning processes.

There are, therefore, advantages for teachers and students: teachers might see students' real and authent ability in online learning, and it hel avoid plagiarism and cheating.

And then, video lets students view actual objects and realistic senses, to see sequences in motion and listen to narrations.

Moreover, giving an online test, for instance via Google Form application to assess students' knowledge and comprehension, is another different technique perceived as one of the effective ways to avoid cheating in distance learning.

This test is assumed to be effective because the questions can be randomized.

●   Produce papers: students' writing can be published on blogs or journals and can be commented on by others.

●Voice thread: students might create PowerPoint slides with videos, photos as well as narration to make a presentation in a multimedia system.

●Digital storytelling: the intention is to upload videos and photos and then adding a voiceover to make short digital stories to explain and illustrate a specific topic. Telling stories to others is sort of a natural activity, involving psychological features, affective-emotional, communicative, symbolic, relational, and existential processes. Storywriting and storytelling, are thus the simplest ways of crossing themes and contents in a deep, personal, involving way and they are widely used in schools to foster meaningful and important learning paths.

Research conducted in Italy has shown that the Debate technique is also very effective in distance learning. It is a teaching methodology based on communicative exchange driven by rules.

The teacher offers a definition or a sentence in respect to which the students are first invited to explore the contours of the notion and then to take a position for or against it and to defend it. Debate in distance learning may be carried out by simulating in-person performance through webcam and oral interaction, as well as in writing. In the first case, the debaters must remodel the non-verbal public speaking techniques to adapt them to the reduced scope of the webcam.

The use of platforms like Kialo, Tricider and Proversi to propose written debates for the class or for public viewing was also effective.

Figure 3: source https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/course-design-ideas/fostering-student-learning-through-the-use-of-debates/

2.4.THE FLIPPED CLASSROOM

2.5.SHARED NOTICE BOARD

ThAnother technique to facilitate distance learning is that the Flipped Classroom, one of the foremost concepts of the Gallery of Educational Vanguards and it is about flipping over the lesson time, which becomes individual study at home, whereas classroom time is used for collaborative activities, experiences, discussion, and workshops.

The students play an active role in the process and the the teacher assumes the role of a facilitator or coach who organizes interactive and collaborative activities aimed at deepening existing or co-constructing new knowledge.
It is a learning methodology to use in a fluid and flexible approach, regardl of discipline or type of class.
In the digital and distance Flip Classroom, there are phases whi alternate synchronous and asynchronous, individual activities and collaborative activities. Separate rooms in videoconferencing tools allow groups of students to work together in various types of tasks in a collaborative manner to be shared later in the common room with the classmates and the teacher, encouraging teacher and peer feedback.
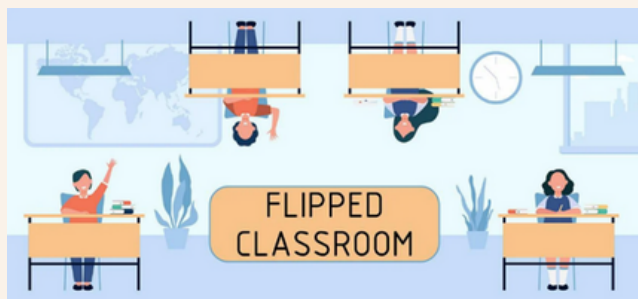
A very popular tool used by teachers throughout distance learning is the Shared Notice Board, which allows educators and learners to interact both synchronously and asynchronously, sharing images, videos, and files. This was very helpful throughout the pandemic, letting teachers and students continue to stay in touch and keep going with teaching/learning.
There are also a few things which seem obvious, however, they are fundamental: teachers and trainers need to be sensitive and authentic, because some students may struggle. Not every student may have a dedicated place to work, and they might feel uncomfortable showing themselves and their surroundings during live classes, therefore teachers ought to be kind and thoughtful in this respect.
Factors such as bullying or family problems should also be considered when establishing the rules for group lessons. Students may appreciate having the chance to leave the camera off or to show an avatar rather than their face.
It is also important to be flexible, which means that students are given the chance to express their understanding in a variety of means and that there is not one fixed way to accomplish the task in hand. They're given choices and options to show understanding. This provides students a sense of choice and management within the process.
Organization is another keyword for distance learning: having a schedule for the week and for the day helps a lot in how students may organize their own time in such a way that they do not stay behind and are able to follow the next lesson with no problems.

It is also suggested that educators take care of an in-depth relationship with students during online learning in order to stay informed about problems, doubts et cetera.

Figure 4: source
https://pixabay.com/photos/flipped-classroom-education-class-6499171/

2.6. TIP BOX

To boost students' engagement, educators must learn new different ways of learning that are suitable to the new digital environment. Using Blogs, Google tools, or Microsoft Office instruments help a lot during the distance learning. Also techniques such as the Debate technique and the Flipped classroom are in line with digital learning and help students to stay focused. Also letting the students write papers and articles could help them in terms of responsibility and independence.

It is also very important to emphasize that patience, flexibility and authenticity are fundamental values that every teacher must have.

It is also fundamental to stay in touch with the students, in order to be informed about any problems that may occur during distance learning.

However, some teachers were unable to use all learning models during COVID-19 pandemic, where creati and finding creative techniques facilitate distance learning a. required to take advantage of various learning models to cope with a difficult situation.

2.7. THE IMPORTANCE OF CREATIVITY IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Why focus on teaching creative mindset to young people and students?

While there are differences in how creativity is defined, common definitions suggest that creativity is the ability or propensity for developing ideas, artifacts or solutions that are novel and effective and although not fully understood, creativity is very valued across disciplines and industries.

It is a fluid, conceptual, interdisciplinary category that is socially and contextually situated.

It is viewed as essential to innovation within the networked or digital world and for twenty-first century skills. That is because most educational policy and curriculum documents internationally include creativity as a desired competency.

The 2018 position paper of the OECD (Directorate for Education and Skills), selected 2030 as the focal point for imagining an educational future. The paper identifies the requirement for a "shared vision" that centers on addressing students' needs in a "rapidly changing world" built on developing technology also as creative futures. Creativity, problem-solving and design thinking are pivotal to this so-called "future-proofing" of students. Also, technology companies have linked creativity to the future of learning and knowledge creation, a future during which virtual and digital spaces, driven by augmented reality and artificial intelligence, are intermingled with classrooms.

Developing creativity and using creative methods requires an extended series of processes: although many teachers have adequate educational qualifications as an educator, they need additional experience, skills and knowledge, and not all teachers managed distance learning well during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because many trainers have limitations within the use of data technology.

Therefore, it is important that teachers learn new tools and techniques to boost creativity in distance learning, because trainers, through their creativity, provide students with learning treatment within the style of changing instructional materials, behaviors, personality, discipline, and exemplary behavior. The more skilled and imaginative the teacher is, the better the results are.

2.8.BUT DO TECHNOLOGIES MITIGATE OR FACILITATE CREATIVITY?

Apparently, digital creativity is defined as the creativity manifested in all forms that are driven by digital technologies, that might have unique capacities to mitigate risk in classroom creativity, by allowing for the testing of new ideas. And the core question for educators and students is: what is creative work worth?

The concept of creativity in education is not limited to elementary or postsecondary learning. It happens any time an educator takes the standard curriculum and enhances it, evolves it, brings it to life, to help students understand the curriculum in a different, alternative, and specific way.

Several researchers have studied instructors approaching their curriculum in additional creative ways. Instructors cited various reasons for teaching with new methods, but the essence is that they require students to achieve in new ways.

So, throughout the years, many researchers encouraged trainers to seek out ways to engage students in additional creative ways, help them embrace the imagination that they used to have as children and bring in real-world problem-solving scenarios that students care deeply about.

In addition, creative people are in demand in today's world: they come up with new ideas and new ways of doing things; they are often willing to take more risks.

Creativity is usually related to critical thinking in discussion on skills. It is indeed a vital component of problem solving, higher cognitive abilities, social and emotional well-being, and academic and life success.

And for this reason it is important that students still receive opportunities to develop divergent thinking skills. Furthermore, creativity has received particular attention from researchers interested in gifted and talented education and while the extent to which creativity will be developed by all students in educational contexts is unclear, it is generally believed that creativity is not a skill reserved to a small minority of students only. Interestingly, creativity has been found to be a decent predictor of future achievement (in higher education).

During this situation of online and distance learning, it is essential to boost creative mindset for learners, also because they must be encouraged and stimulated, and therefore the only way to achieve that is to provide learning activities that extend the imagination, foster thinking outside the box, insist upon creative problem-solving and allow students to have their own opinions.

3. CREATIVITY IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Contemporary learning theory acknowledges human learning to be a complex, constructive process with learners building onto their own knowledge like a contractor building a house. Brain-based theory advocates the requirement for enriched environments (not necessarily physical environments) to encourage learning.

Research performed by neuroscientists has indicated that enriched environments boost the growth of dendrites, which relates to learning and engender student self-confidence, which results in creativity.

Giving students opportunities to be creative means allowing them to solve problems and communicate ideas in novel ways.

To encourage students to search out and solve problems in ways that facilitate original ideas, students need tools to communicate novel thinking to reinforce their learning. Inviting innovation from online students could be met with psychological roadblocks. Some students do not seem to be able or ready to think in a different way.

Students may begin the lesson with poor self-esteem concerning their creativity. They may have been told by teachers or significant others that they are not creative and when asked to demonstrate creativity, they may have to reconstruct their own definitions of creativity through hands-on activities, interviews, experimentation and play to work out their potential and personal innovativeness. A way to start an online course and engage the student is to request they assess their own creativity. Such assessment may help understand student perceptions of their creativity level in online classes.
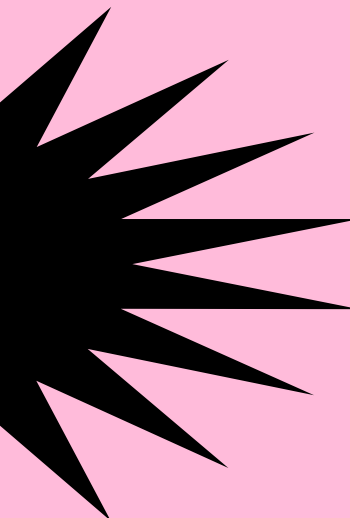

Figure6: source https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/think-outside-the-box-vector-10156766

3.1.TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES TO BOOST CREATIVITY IN DISTANCE LEARNING

Here are some tips for educators to encourage creativity within the virtual classroom to keep students engaged:

● Starting with virtual check-ins: use this technique with students at the beginning of each day. Students have been going through plenty of social and psychological issues since school went online, so a check-in before class will help them let off some steam. It would be also useful to try to do a quick shake-it-out session or something similar to help students prepare to focus. Check-ins technique will also allow students to feel seen and heard before they begin a lesson, which will hopefully help them feel more motivated to interact.

● Switching up lessons throughout the day: switching up the teachings might help students stay concentrated and focused. This might help to keep their attention. Trainers try to find ways to split longer lessons into smaller chunks and switch back and forth between topics as they go. Also, they might help themselves using polling function to determine whether students have comprehended each lesson.

● Assigning projects that take students outdoors (safely): another way of encouraging students' creativity is to assign projects that take them outdoors (of course, following the safety guidelines like maintaining social distancing and wearing face coverings).
Teachers may find ways to have various lesson plans outside, perhaps by asking students to observe their environment or complete a craft that includes elements of nature. Students will appreciate the chance to get out of their homes.

● Splitting students into discussion groups: students tend to get more creative after they take ownership of their learning and collaborate with each other. In this case, teachers could split students into discussion groups or pairs as often as possible, both during lessons and breaks. Educators should allow students to share with each other not only how they are doing but what they think about the educational material. The aim of this activity is to encourage students to collaborate as much as possible and if they have fewer people in a virtual room with them, they'll have to take more of a leadership role and interact more in the material they are learning.

●Finding ways to gamify lessons: one advantage of online learning is the ability to use technology to make learning seem like a game. Anytime teachers gamify their lessons, they they are ready to interact with students in creative thinking, which students usually appreciate and understand. One example may be to create a checklist of concepts and have students complete the checklist as they learn.
Teachers will get a break and the students will have fun playing a game that seems like fun but is also educational.
Teachers can also use apps and programs for engaging student competitions, for example: Kahoot gets the whole class battling it out in real time with quiz questions you created in advance. Just make sure no one gets left behind by the pace of the game.
Live Mathletics allows students to test their mathematics skills against peers from the same class, country, or even the other side of the world. They might even be lucky enough to win a spot on the global leader board!

●Creating content: those educators who enjoy creating content must consider sharing it on a YouTube channel or other educational social media site. Students can use it at any time for revision or better understanding.

●Planning virtual show-and-tell sessions: teachers may think about coming up with virtual show-and-tell sessions for the students. They will share what they want to share, for example collections at home or their favorite room of the house or maybe their creative pursuits like poetry, art, or a sport.

● Placing students within the role of teacher: teachers may divide a unit of study into different smaller educational units. Either as individuals or with partners or in groups, have students design visual learning materials to deliver the instruction. These will be slides, infographics, timelines, videos, etc.
Anytime students are creating visuals, they are engaging their creative thought processes. The added benefit of this activity is that when preparing their presentations, students can reinforce their learning.

● Creating situations with issues to be solved: it could be any type of scenario, perhaps within the field of economy, art, events etc. The aim is that the students must come up with as many different solutions as possible for what ails the organization. For every unique solution extra credit points may be given, or the student gets to skip a future assignment.

Michael Michalko, one of the most acclaimed creativity experts, developed different ways for enhancing student creativity that are applicable to the online environment:
● making your thoughts visible, therefore thinking in terms of visual or spatial forms instead of than mathematical or written lines of reasoning;
● thinking fluently, generate quantities of ideas rather than holding onto one;
● making novel mixtures, let ideas and thoughts to randomly combine together;
● looking in other worlds, lateral thinking that allows one idea from one world solve a problem for another
● awakening the cooperative spirit, sharing, and discussing ideas without thought of condemnation or judgment, have freedom to propose ideas, without risk.

3.2.
Tip Box

During distance learning, using creative techniques is fundamental to catch the attention of students that may struggle with the monotony of staying at home in their rooms.

As we saw before, there are many techniques that teachers can use to achieve this aim.

The important things are to introduce also physical activities during the lessons, to mitigate sitting in front of a computer screen all day, to encourage group workshops, in order to make the students interact each other and encourage social relations despite the distance, and to create a friendly and relaxed environment, by for example gamifying the lesson or switching it by placing the students in the role of the teacher, in order to create a greater sense of responsibility.

ENCOURAGE GROUP WORKSHOPS

3.3.USE AND SELECTION OF DIGITAL RESOURCES

The abundance of digital technologies is overwhelming, and it changes our lives completely, the way we communicate, behave, teach and learn.

There is a continuous interest and need to equip teachers and trainers with competencies to be able to deal with teaching process an prepare them to live and work in a digital society. The situation will not go in the direction of limiting digital life, on the contrary, it will go in the direction of making all aspects of our lives completely digital. It is crucial to equip teachers with digital competencies and make them able to teach these competencies to their students.

The DigCompEdu framework reflects on existing instruments for educators' digital competence and synthesizes these into a coherent model that allows educators at all levels of education to comprehensively assess and develop their pedagogical digital competence.[1]

Choosing appropriate digital resources for a teacher may be a challenge. Below there are listed some useful tips on how to choose and select, make use for teaching the digital resources:

evaluate the quality of digital resources based on basic criteria, such as e.g., place of publication, authorship, users' feedback,
select materials that are appealing, like videos, games
use collaborative platforms, such as Miro
use quizzes
create digital resources (e.g., presentations), integrate some animations, links, multimedia or interactive elements.
get familiar with different licenses attributed to digital resources, permissions and copyright rules that apply to the digital resources you use for teaching purposes (images, text, audio, and film).

[1] European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators

Figure 8: source https://raccoongang.com/blog/gamification-education-and-its-examples/

3.4. TIPS FOR TEACHERS ON HOW TO TEACH DIGITALLY

- use classroom technologies to support instruction, e.g., electronic whiteboards and mobile devices.
- structure the lesson so that different (teacher-led and learner-led) digital activities jointly reinforce the learning objective
- experiment with and develop new formats and pedagogical methods for instruction (e.g.
- flipped learning, blended learning).

- evaluate and revise the strategies you use
- use digital communication tools to communicate with learners
- monitor students' progress with digital tools and technologies
- implement collaborative learning activities in a digital environment, e.g., using blogs, wikis, and learning management systems.
- use digital technologies for peer assessment and peer-learning
- use digital technologies (e.g., blogs, diaries, planning tools) to allow learners to plan their learning.

- use digital technologies to allow learners to collect evidence and record progress, e.g., audio or video recordings, and photos.
- use digital technologies (e.g., ePortfolios, learners' blogs) to allow learners to record and showcase their work.

To teach digitally, teachers can select a variety of techniques and methodologies. Below there are some of them that may work well with youth learners. Youth as a group of learners need challenging resources, involving content and innovative techniques as well as a variety of tools and techniques.

3.5. FLIPPED LEARNING

"Flipped Learning is a pedagogical approach in which direct instruction moves from the group learning space to the individual learning space, and the resulting group space is transformed into a dynamic, interactive learning environment where the educator guides students as they apply concepts and engage creatively in the subject matter."[1]

Benefits of flipped learning for students:
- more ownership of their learning
- better results in tests
- more engagement and motivation

The Four Pillars of F-L-I-P™

F Flexible Environment

Flipped Learning allows for a variety of learning modes; educators often physically rearrange their learning spaces to accommodate a lesson or unit, to support either group work or independent study. They create flexible spaces in which students choose when and where they learn. Furthermore, educators who flip their classes are flexible in their expectations of student timelines for learning and in their assessments of student learning.

F.1	☐ I establish spaces and time frames that permit students to interact and reflect on their learning as needed.
F.2	☐ I continually observe and monitor students to make adjustments as appropriate.
F.3	☐ I provide students with different ways to learn content and demonstrate mastery.

L Learning Culture

In the traditional teacher-centered model, the teacher is the primary source of information. By contrast, the Flipped Learning model deliberately shifts instruction to a learner-centered approach, where in-class time is dedicated to exploring topics in greater depth and creating rich learning opportunities. As a result, students are actively involved in knowledge construction as they participate in and evaluate their learning in a manner that is personally meaningful.

| L.1 | ☐ I give students opportunities to engage in meaningful activities without the teacher being central. |
| L.2 | ☐ I scaffold these activities and make them accessible to all students through differentiation and feedback. |

I Intentional Content

Flipped Learning Educators continually think about how they can use the Flipped Learning model to help students develop conceptual understanding, as well as procedural fluency. They determine what they need to teach and what materials students should explore on their own. Educators use Intentional Content to maximize classroom time in order to adopt methods of student-centered, active learning strategies, depending on grade level and subject matter.

I.1	☐ I prioritize concepts used in direct instruction for learners to access on their own.
I.2	☐ I create and/or curate relevant content (typically videos) for my students.
I.3	☐ I differentiate to make content accessible and relevant to all students.

P Professional Educator

The role of a Professional Educator is even more important, and often more demanding, in a Flipped Classroom than in a traditional one. During class time, they continually observe their students, providing them with feedback relevant in the moment, and assessing their work. Professional Educators are reflective in their practice, connect with each other to improve their instruction, accept constructive criticism, and tolerate controlled chaos in their classrooms. While Professional Educators take on less visibly prominent roles in a flipped classroom, they remain the essential ingredient that enables Flipped Learning to occur.

P.1	☐ I make myself available to all students for individual, small group, and class feedback in real time as needed.
P.2	☐ I conduct ongoing formative assessments during class time through observation and by recording data to inform future instruction.
P.3	☐ I collaborate and reflect with other educators and take responsibility for transforming my practice.

[1] https://flippedlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/FLIP_handout_FNL_Web.pdf

3.6.MICROLEARNING

Microlearning is learning by small bites of knowledge. A teacher provides learners with small parts of knowledge by sending emails, texting or reminding them to log in to an e-learning platform and making small/short parts of knowledge. Short means that a learner has to devote between 2-5 min. Each short part is action-oriented and is designed to meet a specific learning outcome. Microlearning is a strategy that helps learners in knowledge retention and absorption. Being exposed to these shorts parts of knowledge the learner is more concentrated and able to devote their time to learning. It is also more focused on a specific outcome, more precise and goal oriented. Microlearning perfectly fits digital learning strategies and mobile learning with the use of smartphones, which is a necessity these days. Moreover, young generations of learners are attached to their smartphones and cannot imagine doing without them. Learners can learn and develop knowledge and skills anytime they want, anywhere they might be.

Microlearning can be text, video, infographic, or podcast, and the goal of microlearning is to get the information the learner needs and when they need it. Microlearning is therefore a learning format and reflex already part of everyday life, particularly suited to an on-demand learning mode.

Microlearning enhances knowledge retention because:
- it is spaced learning and repetition: Learners need regular reminders of their knowledge over time to retain it. Repetition ensures that the knowledge and content will remain in memory even after time.
- it is scenario-based challenges: it challenges learners to use new knowledge and see how they would react and apply it. It stimulates, allows for greater learner attention and therefore better retention of knowledge.
- it gives instant feedback: learners visualize in real-time their strengths and weaknesses in terms of knowledge, which allows them to immediately redo a module on which they would have failed for example.
- it uses gamification to trigger learners' motivation and engagement

Source: https://playxlpro.com/seven-things-your-learners-really-want-from-micro-learning/

3.7.STEPS TO PREPARE A TAILOR-MADE MICROLEARNING

1.Know your learners and their skills and access to mobile devices and familiarity with mobile technologies.

2. Define a goal of microlearning: what you want to teach and what students should learn at the end of the day. The objective should be achievable for them.

3. Make a plan, as it might be difficult to create many short, small doses of knowledge and content for your students. It can be a challenge for some teachers, but it is worth it. Laying down a framework to map how the modules interconnect helps keep ideas clear when developing microlearning modules and guarantees the fluidity and consistency of the course.

4. Define some indicators to track and assess the teaching and the achievement of your learners. The performance indicators make it possible to quickly assess whether the level of the training content is adapted to that of the learners if some modules underperform compared to others.

5. Choose the format of your microlearning, It can be video, images and infographics or illustrations that have a visual impact that helps create a strong impression on the learner. A text or a story, for example a mini podcast, can help remembering, and quizzes and other challenges allow them to put their knowledge into practice in a fun way.

6. Focus on what is essential in your content - it should be kept short and concise. Decide whether a sentence or an element of a module are really necessary.

7. Think again about adjusting the content to mobile phones.

8. Search for specially designed e-learning platforms that may offer a microlearning format.

9. Try to involve your learners in the process of creating learning content. Make us of peer learning.

10.Use gamification elements as a motivating factor that will increase the involvement of the learners, who gain points for tasks and see themselves in rankings

11. Finally, you should pilot your microlearning and test it on a small group of learners or other teachers and then introduce corrections and adjustments and use it with your learners. [1]
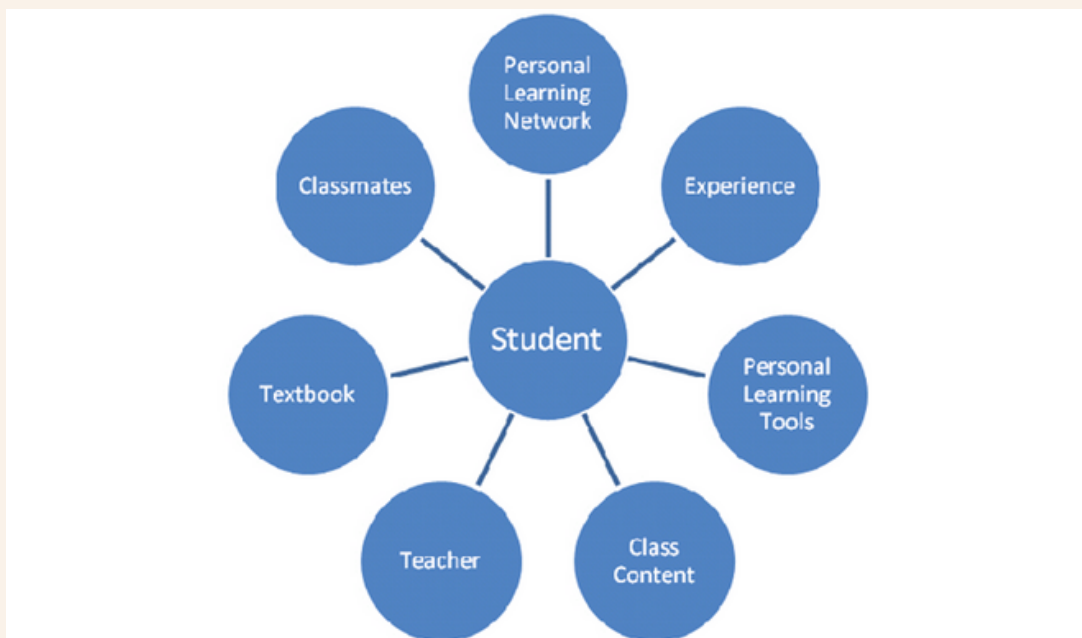
[1]   Source::
https://www.beedeez.com/fr/microlearning

Non-linear learning involves spontaneity, experience and reflection. It is learning that creates a more flexible, open and playful environment and therefore is more impactful, interesting, diverse and personal.

Learning that has been designed to ensure students can shape their learning through self-organization and self-organized criticality.

In a system in which learners are provided with a variety of options, they choose their own path, different learners can follow different paths, and the outcomes are emergent and cannot be foretold. (both definitions taken from https://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/non-linear-learning/20463).

In non-linear learning the student rece information from a large variety of sou The student must choose how to fi critique, and manage external information.

Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Non-linear-learning-the-student-receives-information-from-a-large-variety-of-sources_fig1_277246973

4. INCLUSIVE & ACCESSIBLE TEACHING

What is an inclusive teaching?

Inclusive teaching is teaching that considers all learners, it is addressed to all, regardless of their background, cultural issues, age, sex, race, gender or disability, and to give educational opportunities to them. It is teaching in a way which respects students' diversities, enables all students to actively participate and benefit, removes all barriers, and facilitates the learning process for all.

Some of the inclusive practices are:

- Peer Tutoring and Cooperative Learning

Peer tutoring is an instructional strategy that joins students in pairs or groups and allows them learn from each other, where more experienced students teach less experienced ones or those with less knowledge. It provokes engagements and contributes to building social networks that also help in the teaching/learning process. It also contributes to the better learning achievement and increased self-awareness of peer teachers. Peer tutoring is a way in which students support each other.

Cooperative learning, on the other hand, is working in groups and very often corresponds to project working. There are different types of cooperative learning, those with instructions from the teacher and without it. All students taking part in cooperative learning should be equally involved and share their ideas and opinions.

- Focus on Small Group Activities

Another type of cooperative learning is a Focus on Small group activities where students are divided into 5-6 participants groups and work together. This type of learning, according to research, improves achievements, contributes to making relationships and well-being. Students who do small group work generally learn more of the material and retain their knowledge longer than students who don't (Davis, 1993).

- Independent Practice (allows for individualized attention)

It is working without teacher's guidance or instructions. Students work on their own, perform tasks independently, and practise the previously learnt material. It contributes to the increase of self-esteem of students, and they become more aware of their strengths and limitations.

- Tiered Lessons

It is about using differentiated instructions allowing different pathways for students with different needs, profiles or readiness. Teachers may use this instruction in a mixed-level classroom where some students want to move forward, and some students need to repeat or need more time.

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL) [1]

Universal design for learning (UDL) is a teaching with the aim to accommodate the needs and abilities of all learners. It eliminates barriers in the learning process and improves the learning experience for all. By using UDL, we state that barriers to learning are in the design of the environment, not in the student. Universal Design for Learning is different in each place but there is always a focus on building expert learning for all. Its rules:

ü all students/learners know the goal of educational experience they participate in,
ü there are a variety of options for students provided intentionally by a teacher
ü all learners have the same access to all resources from the very beginning of the lesson

- Differentiated Instruction

It is adjusting instructions to meet individual needs. Teachers can differentiate many classroom elements based on student readiness, interest, or learning profile:
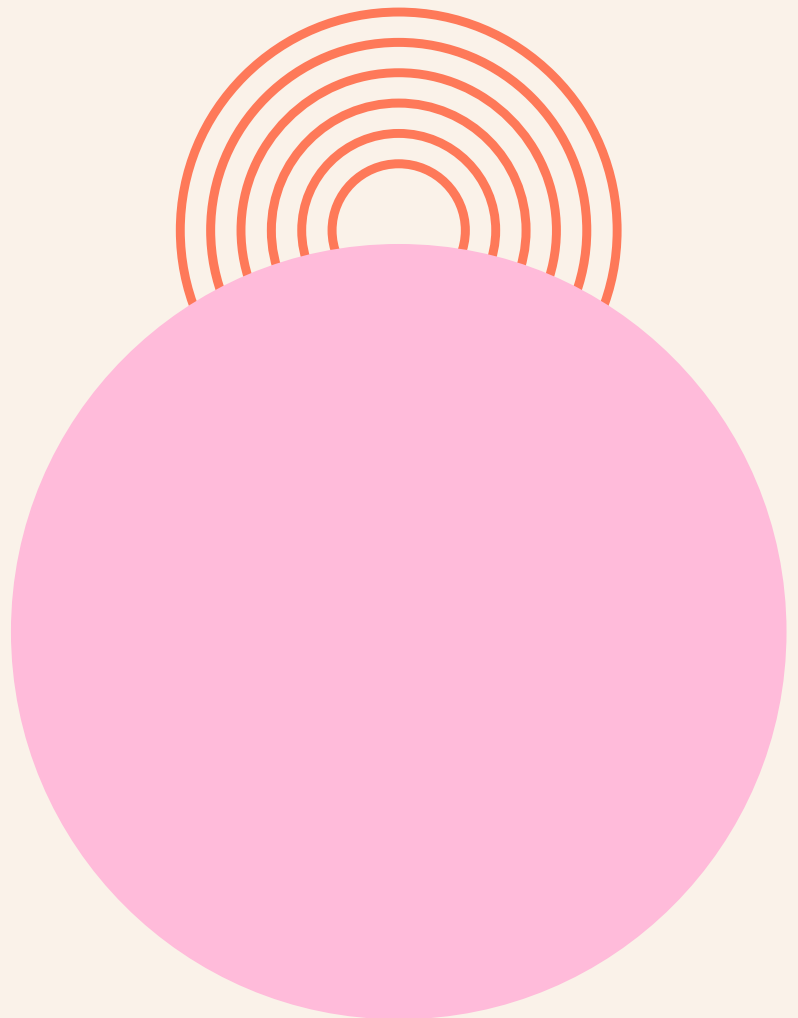
ü Content – using a variety of reading materials, at different levels, using spelling, explaining vocabulary, using visual aids for content.
ü Process – using tiered activities, using personal agendas, providing support for student
ü Products – encouraging students to create their own assignments, allowing them to work in small groups
ü Learning environment – ensuring that they work in a safe place without distractions, providing a variety of materials, helping students who have different needs, approaches and work differently.

[1]
https://www.understood.org/en/articles/understanding-universal-design-for-learning
https://www.theedadvocate.org/inclusive-education-definition-examples-and-classroom-strategies/
https://www.facultyfocus.com/articles/course-design-ideas/group-work-collaborative-activities/

4.1. Tips for teaching inclusively and making the teaching accessible for all students

- Make sure that all your students have access to the digital technologies that you use while teaching and communicating with them.

- Remember to use special digital technologies and strategies, e.g., assistive technologies designed for learners who need a special support (e.g. learners with physical or mental constraints; learners with learning disorders, visual or hearing impairments)

- Take into account and respond to potential accessibility issues when selecting, modifying or creating digital resources.

- Try to consider and provide alternative tools for learners with special needs.

- Take into account the individual learner and his or her special needs and use digital technologies to address these special needs (e.g., dyslexia, ADHD).

- Make teaching more individual, allow for different learning paths, levels and speeds.

- Use clear layouts and organization schemes to present content.

- Use descriptive wording for hyperlink text.

- PDF documents are not recommended; link to PDF if you really need it.

- When an image of photo is needed for your teaching content presentation, use text descriptions of content presented in the image.

INCLUSIVE TEACHING

- Use large, bold, fonts with plain backgrounds, provide a contrast, use contrast colours for those who are colour blind (check the colour contrast analyser).

- Put captions and subtitles when presenting videos and always transcribe audio content.

- Remember that some students work slower and cannot deal with multitasking, especially using the technology, therefore, introduce technology slowly and always monitor and check if everybody is following the teaching.

- Provide multiple ways for students – Universal Design for Learning
1. to learn - text, videos, recorded lessons, audio recordings, images
2. to communicate and collaborate – use tools that are accessible to individuals with a variety of disabilities
3. to demonstrate what they have learned use portfolios, presentations, single-topic discussions
4. to assess progress

- Avoid using acronyms or provide a spelling for acronyms

- Use precise language, not just familiar one or provide guidelines for language

- Keep your instructions clear and simple

- Try to adjust the content and examples to your group of learners and take cultural and background differences into consideration

- Think about a correct timing for task for your learners and allow an adequate time for activities

- Take into account different needs of your students and provide adequate opportunities to practice.

- Think about different types of feedback for your students [1]

[1]   https://www.washington.edu/doit/20-tips-teaching-accessible-online-course
European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators

INCLUSIVE TEACHING

4.2. ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Assistive technology is a technology that helps people with disabilities to perform activities that may be difficult for them, like reading, seeing, walking, hearing. It is an item, piece of equipment, software program, or product system that is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of persons with disabilities.

There are different assistive technologies:

- communication boards made of cardboard or fuzzy felt
- special-purpose computers
- prosthetics, mounting systems, and positioning devices
- special switches, keyboards, and pointing devices
- screen readers and communication programs
- accessible and inclusive or specialized learning materials and curriculum aids
- special software [1]

Additionally, some tools and software may be useful for teachers who want to make their content available for people who are colour blind - Colour Contrast Analyser. [2]

[1] https://www.atia.org/home/at-resources/what-is-at/
[2] https://www.visionaustralia.org/services/digital-access/resources/colour-contrast-analyser

4.3. TOOLS & SOFTWARE FOR VIRTUAL COLLABORATION

Because of Covid-19 teachers were exposed to a variery of tools and software to use while teaching remotely. The increase in the number of collaboration tools use was enormous, and they supported the teachers' work' in many ways. The most popular collaboration tools are:

- Zoom
- Microsoft TEAMS
- Facebook
- Google Workspace

And a variety of applications that can be combined to improve the teaching process.

- TODOIST,
- GOOGLE TASKS,
- FREEDOM,
- TOGGL

Project management tools:

- Trello,
- Basecamp,
- Smartsheet,
- Asana,
- Wrike

4.4. CREATIVITY ONLINE

Creativity techniques represent methods that promote creative thinking and its associated skills, such as idea generation, open-mindedness and problem-solving. Some of the techniques presented below are used by the design thinking method. Design thinking is an iterative process in which people seek to understand some challenges (often for final users), challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions, which they then prototype and test. The process can be used by teachers to work with students remotely or they may use some parts of it.
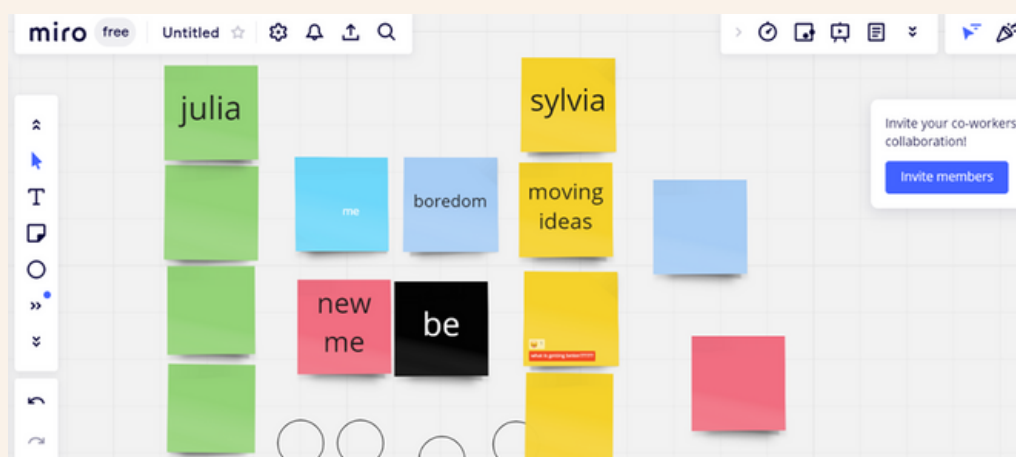
VIRTUAL BRAINSTORMING

Brainstorming is a method of idea generation that helps us unfold our creative potential. Virtual brainstorming simply means following this method using virtual tools like video conferencing and online whiteboards. Virtual brainstorming makes it possible for people working from different locations to solve the same problem. It can be very challenging for some groups of learners, but it may also bring a lot of fun. Brainstorming is a technique that unlocks your creativity, as participants of brainstorming session are not judged and they can explore their potential of ideas.

For virtual brainstorming you can use the following tools:
ü Google Docs,
ü Slack,
ü Miro
Miro is a fast, free, and simple-to-use online whiteboard, built to help you collaborate with others anytime, anywhere.


Souce: based on Miro www.miro.com

BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES TO USE VIRTUALLY

- BRAIN WRITING is a perfect technique to use online, where everybody can silently participate and explore their ideas. Miro can be a perfect tool for brain writing. A modification is a Brainwriting 6-3-5 that is a modified form of classic brainstorming that encourages equal participation from all team members, the general process is that all ideas are recorded by the individual who thought of them. They are then passed on to the next person, who uses them as a trigger for their own ideas

- SCAMPER. SCAMPER is a technique you can use to spark your creativity and help you with any challenge in your life. It is based on the assumption that everything is a modification of something that already exists. It is a checklist with idea-gathering questions. It was created by Bob Eberle in the early 70s. Basic Summary: SCAMPER = Substitute, Combine, Adapt, Modify, Put to different use, Eliminate, Reverse. Learners use a set of questions to help evolve an existing problem, project or solution into one that is more ideal.

Source: https://miro.com/guides/online-brainstorming/techniques-methods#1-mind-mapping
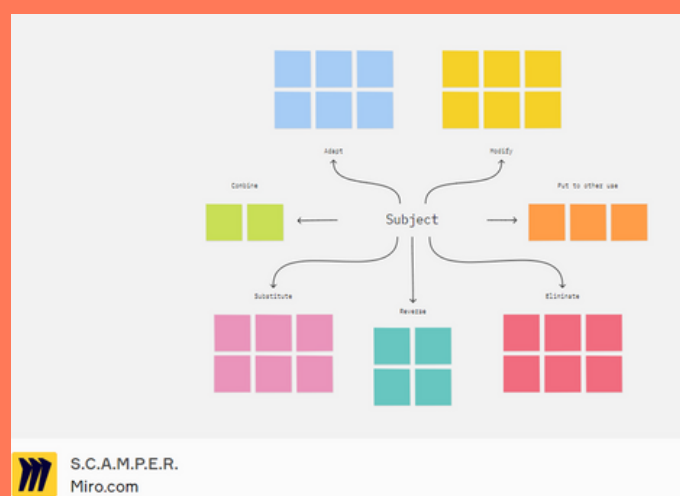
SCAMPER

You can solve a problem by asking your students: "How can we make this learning content accessible for all students?"

Following the SCAMPER recipe, here are a few questions you could ask:

S (Substitute): "What can we substitute in this learning content/materials?"
C (Combine): "How can we combine it with different content?"
A (Adapt): "What can we adapt from different solutions or copy?"
M (Magnify): "What should we especially focus on?"
P (Put to Other Uses): "Can we use it for different purposes?"
**E** (Eliminate): "What is not necessary, what can be limited, replaced?"
R (Rearrange): "How can we rearrange the material?"

- The HOW NOW WOW MATRIX

The How Now Wow matrix is a tool for brainstorming ideas and grouping them, following the two characteristics so that they are easy to implement (feasible) or original.

https://t2informatik.de/en/smartpedia/how-now-wow-matrix/

The How ideas are ideas that are innovative but not ready to implement. They require more knowledge. Now are ideas that are ready to implement, and Wow are creative ideas that are also easy to implement. The tool can be used for online teaching with Miro.

Source:
https://t2informatik.de/en/smartpedia/how-now-wow-matrix/
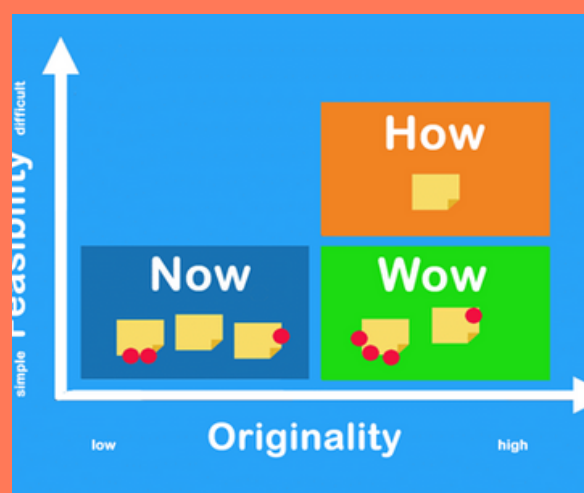
1.ICE BREAKER – learners always need ice-breakers even if they knew each other very well. It helps them to break the ice, start conversations and overcome shame. The aim of ice-breakers is to bond team members and facilitate collaborative work. Mentimeter is a perfect tool for online ice-breaking activity. A teacher can ask any question to students and then they can see their responses in a graphic form. It is a tool to visualize students' responses in real-time to create a fun and interactive experience. It helps with building interactive presentations with the easy-to-use online editor by adding questions, polls, quizzes, slides, images. https://www.mentimeter.com/

2. Another tool that can be used to ice break is the wheel of names. It is a random name picker in the classroom: pick which student will answer the next question. Wheel of Names is a good way to call on students because it takes the responsibility off the teacher. Students know that it is not the teacher who picks them, the wheel is. https://wheelofnames.com/

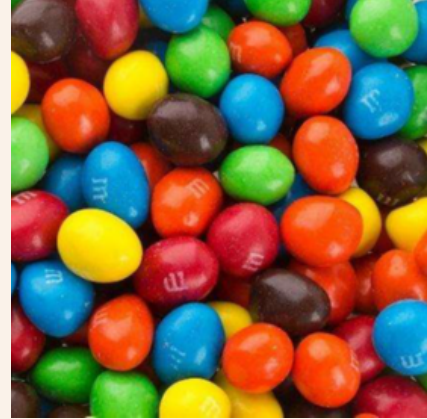Source : https://wheelofnames.com/

READY TO USE ACTIVITIES

Photo by Alice Dietrich on Unsplash

ICEBREAKER

Each participant takes one M&M. Each M&M refers to a different question:
1. Brown: what is your greatest hobby?
2. Red: what's your favorite subject at school?
3. Yellow: what is important to you in life?
4. Blue: what can make you angry?
5. Orange: what do you like to do in your spare time?
6. Green: what is your dream place for holidays?

FIND A NEW PRODUCT/REPURPOSE

Ask your students to use the objects that they have in their bags, in the room or on your desk, like staplers, folders, tape, pictures and paper, fruits, bottles to create a new product. Ask them to make a new product for a special use. You may also ask them them to invent a new use or a new need. It can be very creative and this activity is also great for groups. It will enhance not only creativity but also collaboration, team working, decision making or communication.

They can also only try to find another purpose of any product. After each individual or team has finished repurposing a product, they can compare their creations for uniqueness, ingenuity and practicality. This exercise is especially helpful for developing brainstorming skills. It can last only few minutes but you can also give them more time to design and develop a new product.

IF I WERE

This activity is a fun get-to-know-you icebreaker game to encourage creativity for small groups. Participants must be seated in a circle. The facilitator asks each person to say what he or she would be and why if they were a:
-Piece of fruit
-Historical figure
-Household object
-Cartoon character
-Novel character
-Music
-Cat

MAKE YOUR CHOICE

The facilitator informs participants that they have 86.400,00€ to spend anyway they wish. The only restriction is that they cannot bank any money and in case they do not use them, they lose it.

Then participants can discuss why and how they spent the money the way they did. Then the facilitator tells them that 86.400,00€ is the number of the seconds we have each day and that as often as possible they should consider spending their time on things that are the most important/valuable for them as they did with their money.

ICEBREAKER

The facilitator asks participants to place themselves on an imaginary map laid out in the room representing the country according to where they grew up. The facilitator will ask them to share one internal value, memory or anything they got from that place, and why it is important for them.

Sharing customs and values from their childhood can contribute to create more understanding and help form stronger bonds.

THE SHARED STORY

This activity will support your group to learn to think on their feet and will get more comfortable with one another. Participants should be seated in a circle.

As the facilitator, you should start a story. For instance "Once upon a time, a dog went to a store….". Then, following the order in which participants are seated, ask them to contribute to the story by adding a word or phrase until the story is concluded.

If the first story ends quickly and you have time left, feel free to start another.

Story starters idea:

- Once upon a time, there was a little girl who had a dream
- Once upon a time, there was a banker who went to a restaurant
- Once upon a time, there was a sad clown

Your imagination is the only limit to this activity!

CONCLUSION

Distance learning is a smart alternative when classroom learning is suspended, for example because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to acknowledge that distance learning cannot replace the need for onsite and face-to-face learning, however, it can complement existing traditional classroom-based learning models.

Distance learning has an impact on changes in individual learning readiness and the preparation of institutional facilities to blended learning.

The massive use of technologies and digital tools during the health emergency period has taught us that, it is "time to change course", to build a new idea of education and schooling, within which digital technology is now indispensable and can be a fundamental support in any training scenario (face-to-face, distance, integrated, hybrid or blended), for an increasingly digitally enhanced or augmented education.

What concerns boosting creativity, teaching to enhance creativity has a different focus for the online educator.

It is important to give students the knowledge, skills, and surroundings necessary for their own creativity to emerge.

"Imagination is more important than intelligence."
Albert Einstein

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Additional resources:
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2.   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmGgplQkrVw
3.   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ot_dKs_LRf0
4.   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avvsxquMH0g
5.   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iroPveV3dbk
6.   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avvsxquMH0g
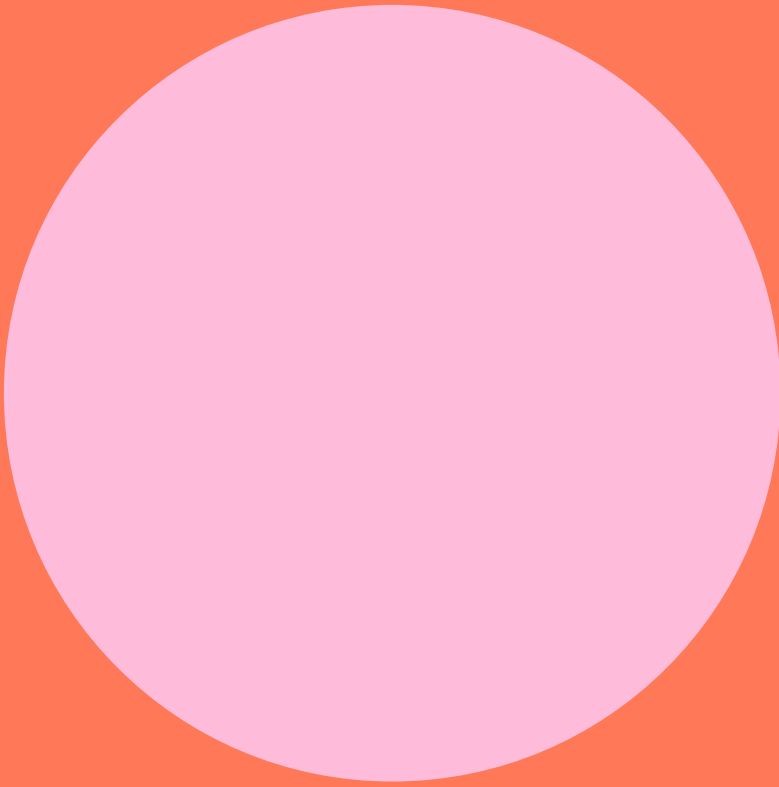
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