# Adapting for the Next Normal

Unfortunately, it took a pandemic for most of us to experience firsthand the struggles involved transforming teaching from face-to-face classroom instruction to remote learning. We've observed how hard it is for students to maintain focus when they aren't directly supervised and have a "surfing tool" in front of them. We found remote learning adds an extra layer of planning complexity since elementary students often need frequent breaks, require their instruction to be broken down into smaller segments with quick checks for understanding built in, need to be provided lots of opportunities for feedback and praise, and may have to share their electronic devices with other siblings or family members. Another common problem with remote or distance learning is that students don't feel connected and therefore are not as invested in their learning. (Not to mention, lots of screen time is not particularly healthy for students or teachers.)

It is important to look for ways to keep the class feeling like a class. Through our own struggles implementing remote writing workshops, we've come up with some suggestions for use of our software, as well as some additional tips and tools that may help you, if you have to re-implement remote learning this upcoming school year.

## RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM WITHIN THE WRITE TOOLS WRITING SOFTWARE
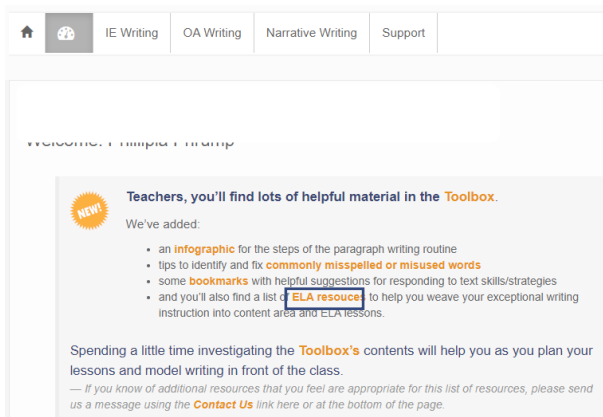
The document titled, *ELA Resources*, can be found on the DASHBOARD or under the TEACHER RESOURCES heading of the TOOLBOX in the software. Within the resources, you'll be able to locate: content for student writing samples, "reading" content as text and other media sources, ELA unit or lesson plan ideas, specific skill development (vocabulary, etc.), revision and editing tools, sources to publish work, and assessment tools. Links within the resources will take you to specific material you can use as you plan your lessons.

GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS

The Write Tools Writing Software provides forms in two formats. One set of forms come in simple

pdf format that can be printed on or inserted as a background page in a product to draw/write on. The other set of forms, found under the Student Forms button,

are more interactive and can be typed on. These forms work best on a personal computer that has Adobe Reader installed. These forms can also be used on tablets and typed in, but
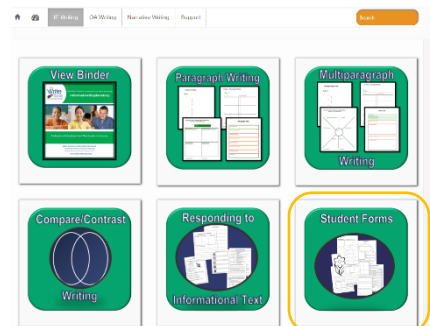
you'll have to use the comments feature, or draw on the text, and don't have all the flexibility offered on the personal computer's version of Adobe.

CREATE YOUR OWN WRITING ROUTINE ASSIGNMENT TEMPLATE

Another tactic you can use for remote writing instruction, is to use the Independent Practice section for the genre of writing your students are working on to create an assignment template. Type your own prompt under the Read and Analyze Prompt toggle and, if necessary, include a link to the text(s) students have to read, and then use the dropdown selection of the Save Work button to either download a document in Microsoft Word format that students can use as a template for their Writing Assignment, or upload the Word document to Google Drive or Microsoft OneDrive to include with instructions for student assignments.
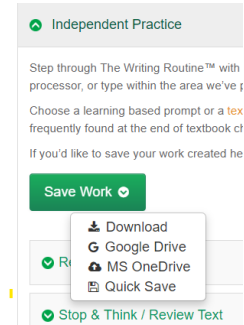
Better yet, if your students have their own copy of the software, they can just copy and paste your prompt under the Read and Analyze Prompt toggle, Quick Save their work, and continue working within the software. This approach allows them access to helpful tips/popups and the contents of the Toolbox.

DIVIDE AND CONQUER

This works particularly well for schools that have adopted The Write Tools strategies for schoolwide use. Each member of a grade-level team can take one genre or aspect of writing and develop detailed lesson plans for that unit. This includes finding sources for students to analyze, developing material to model, and practicing with the software, so that the instructor can model use of the software in front of students, whether that task is live or via a video tutorial. By sharing resources and instruction, each grade level has many more samples to work with and utilize.
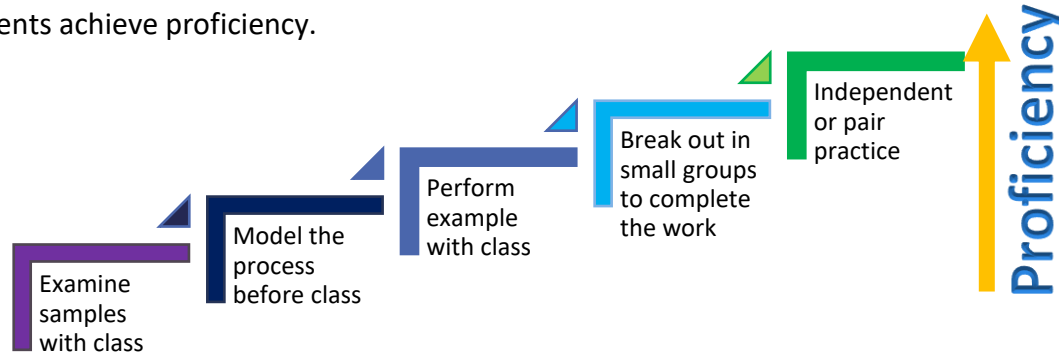
USE YOUR TIME WISELY

Now is not the time to introduce a new app or fun product, if it won't be something you'll be using almost daily throughout the year. You likely haven't built the time into your daily class schedule to introduce and then troubleshoot all the possible issues your students may having working from home on different devices.

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INTRODUCE NEW SKILLS WITH SCAFFOLDING

As you introduce new skills, consider the *scaffolding approach* The Write Tools uses to help your students achieve proficiency.

Examine samples with class

Model the process before class

Perform example with class

Break out in small groups to complete the work

Independent or pair practice

Proficiency

ADDITONAL TIPS/TOOLS

CREATE SCREENCASTS TO PRESENT INSTRUCTION AND MODEL WORK

Screencastify allows for 5-minute videos under their free account option.

For Windows 10 machines, you can record using the Windows Game Bar (Press Win+G to open the Game Bar). The link to the PC Magazine article below provides more details on how to record your videos and even add voice.

https://www.pcmag.com/how-to/how-to-capture-video-clips-in-windows-10

For Macbooks using the Mojave operating system or later, Shift-Command-5, will allow you to screen record, or you can screen record using *Quick Time Player*. The following apple support link provides you with instructions on how to use either of those products.

https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT208721

FIND AND USE ALREADY PREPARED VIDEOS THAT PROVIDE THE NECESSARY INSTRUCTION/EXPLANATION(S)

Searching through YouTube libraries and Vimeo for subject matter/topics can provide you with numerous choices and can keep you from reinventing instructional material.

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EMPLOY PRODUCTS/SOFTWARE THAT ALLOW:

o you to *instruct and meet with the class* synchronously
o class members to *break out and work together in small groups*
o you to *meet with individuals one-on-one*.

Google Meet (chat), Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Big Blue Button, and Jitsi, all currently offer free services to help you meet/interact with your class, groups, or individual students.


PROVIDE *REWARDS AND GIVE REGULAR FEEDBACK* TO STUDENTS.

[Google Forms](#) and [Microsoft Forms](#) allow you to quickly create checks for understanding with either multiple choice, true/false, or short answer responses, as well as, checklists to help students manage their work.

Microsoft's Flipgrid is a great resource to simulate ordinary classroom interaction online. Educators can post prompts or discussion questions and students can respond with short video answers.

UTILIZE *SOFTWARE* TO HELP WITH *CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT* -schedule meetings, alert students of upcoming deadlines, post assignments, and provide for students turning in work.
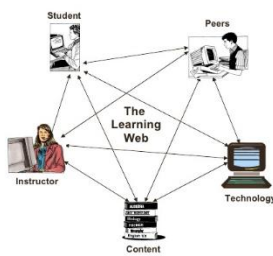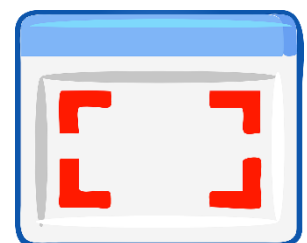
Products like *Google Classroom, Edmodo, Schoology, and Canvas* provide a great way to centralize all the assignments and manage classroom work. Most of these products allow you to connect with Google Drive, Microsoft OneDrive, Google Calendar, or Microsoft Outlook's Calendar depending upon the platform your school uses, and offer a means for managing your class.

SCREEN CAPTURE

Sometimes you need to just capture images from your device (computer/tablet/phone) to include your instructions, rather than create a screen recording. Links with instructions on how to do that are listed by device below.

➢ Mac: https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT201361

- Windows: https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/help/13776/windows-10-use-snipping-tool-to-capture-screenshots
- Android Phone or Tablet: https://www.greenbot.com/article/2825064/how-to-take-a-screenshot-on-your-android-phone.html
- iPhone: https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT200289
- iPad: https://support.apple.com/en-us/HT210781
- Chromebook: https://www.theverge.com/2020/1/14/21065295/chromebook-screenshots-how-to-take-keyboard-keys