



Webinar Series

How Do We Adapt? *Tips for Keeping Youth Engaged During the Pandemic*

In April 2021, Wesley Reibeling (he/him), Project Management Officer with Egale Canada, led a live tutorial of various technologies you can use to keep youth engaged online. Here is a summary of key points from his presentation.

[Click here to view the presentation](#)

What We've Gained:

Instead of focusing on the limitations posed by online learning, we should think about how we have unlimited ways to connect, to engage, work together and create community online.

What we've gained by going online:

- Vibrant online sociocultural communities
- Youth can mediate conversation and communication while participating in virtual teams and pursuing common goals
- Online spaces give youth opportunities to engage and practice virtual collaboration with their peers, while enhancing skills of leadership, trust-building, and establishing common ground when creating together

How Can We Think About the Future and Potential Hybrid Models for Programming?

- Create intentional space for listening to the needs and concerns of adolescents and youth to build a feasible future



Tips for Online Programming

Personality:

- Don't be afraid to be honest. In the words of Ms. Frizzle "Take Chances, Make Mistakes, and Get Messy. Show your true colours!"
- While interacting, ensure a casual environment for everyone to feel at home. Let yourself be goofy, real and not rigid. This true honesty and authentic self can make the youth feel more comfortable

Clarity:

- Give clear expectations, guidelines, safety rules, and instructions
- Provide a clear central hub for all updates and links so youth don't get confused
- Be repetitive with guidelines and rules

Trust: Most important part of team building

- Let people come into the space from where they are at. Ensure to ask folks their accessibility needs and promote participation through many different outlets (this may look different for many people).
- Create intentional space online to foster belonging and respectful interactions
- Take time to listen to your youth, even if this means opening online spaces early, or having separate time to help with relationship building
- Give as much energy and excitement as you have to your youth
- Praise youth and give them your gratitude for being there, showing up and participating each session

*"A 2016 meta-analysis by Bart de Jong studied the relationship between the levels of trust within a team and its overall performance and concluded that the degree to which team members trust each other does make a difference. The results of the study indicated that **people work best in high-trust environments where they feel a sense of belonging within a team and are invested in the success of the team as a result.**"*

<https://blog.buckets.co/the-importance-of-trust-in-teamwork-3e28d8b939c>

Safety and Access

- **Ensuring youth feel comfortable in their physical environment**
- **Offer interaction and participation options.** For example, if youth don't want to go on camera, ask them, if they feel comfortable and safe, to go on camera at the beginning and at the end of sessions, as a "check in" and "check out". Can help foster community and enhance the space throughout their time in the program. If they still don't want to go on camera/speak, make sure you still have lots of ways to engage, such as polls, questionnaires, games, whiteboards and other forms of engagement that don't require being on camera. Small group work in break-out rooms requires trust and collaboration. A push for on camera interaction in breakout rooms is helpful, but not required.
- **Options for low bandwidth and phone participants.**
 - e.g., sending out notes, agendas before session, finding programs that can work on different technology and platforms
 - Finding programs that youth can work with

- **Accessibility** – easy to use and learn software
- **Security**
- **Ensure a "quick escape" button** from websites and logins for safety to quickly navigate away from host platforms and resources
- **Ask for permission.** Allowing for self-disclosure each time. This relates to consent of social media, marketing, advertising and reports.
- **Language support**
 - There are many new and exciting collaborative platforms, ask for tutorials!
 - Some come with a cost (look into and email the makers of these platforms for non-for profit and educational discounts)
- **Translation and AI.** Include ASL and accessible links, and transcription if in scope.

Safety and Access

Tips

- **Co-leading a session** so the session doesn't need to stop while the other co-lead can break off into a breakout room
- **Having an active listener**, or someone who can be at the ready with a trauma-informed skillset if youth are in a place where they need to speak to someone
- **Have "cheerleaders" present** in breakout rooms/groups to keep youth motivated and on-track
- **Facilitation packages:** Give all facilitators a booklet with all needed information to help in case there are technical difficulties, if things aren't going right, if there is an argument, emergency numbers and how to facilitate group work

On-Line Facilitation Tips

- **Communication**
 - Content-heavy pieces are better placed at the beginning than at the end as youth tend to drift off and get digital fatigue during digital learning
- **Know Your Tech**
 - If you find yourself in the position of rapidly needing to switch to online venues for your meeting or event, chances are you are doing so while simultaneously needing to learn the technology for the first time. Set aside some time to familiarize yourself with the platform of your choice. Set aside time to get your staff and especially your youth familiar with the platform. Incorporate this training into the sessions through icebreakers, brainstorming and games.
- **Set the Stage**
 - Because your interaction will be mediated by a screen, it is important to take some steps ahead of time to make sure that everyone has a proper setup. Give a few minutes at the start of each session to ensure everyone's tech is working good and to work through technical difficulties. In large group sessions, it helps to have a dedicated technical lead.



- **Start Simple**
 - If your group is new to meeting virtually, focus on the basic tools first and gradually introduce more sophisticated functionalities
- **Offer Help**
 - As you're welcoming attendees and reviewing tech features, it's also a good idea to let participants know how they can ask for help if they have any questions about what is being shared or if they need to troubleshoot glitches
- **Honour the Moment**
 - The pandemic is a fast-evolving situation that continues to bring a lot of uncertainty about the future. Rather than carrying on with business as usual, take a moment to acknowledge the ambiguity of this unique moment and to acknowledge people's emotional state during the crisis.
 - This is an important step to normalize the emotions that participants may be feeling both individually and as a group, and is one way to help relieve tension and facilitate better group outcomes

On-Line Facilitation Tips

- **Re-Evaluate Your Goals**
 - For many, the COVID-19 pandemic is a time of personal and professional shifts and is likely a time of high stress
- **Define Expectations**
 - Before a session begins in earnest, take a moment to review your agenda and say a few words about expectations for the session
- **Manage Energy**
 - An important way to limit distractions is to mix things up on a regular basis. Rather than relying on the same facilitation format, make sure you introduce variety in the way information is shared and how participants are asked for feedback.
 - Remember that gathering online can be really tiring – some say even more tiring than meeting in person
 - Be aware of session flow and workload. Digital engagement can be tiresome. Ensure numerous breaks, interactive activities and time for debrief
 - To keep energy levels high, offer breaks on a regular basis and try not to run meetings for longer than 2 hours at a time. Breaks could be taken as a group (e.g. by taking a few moments to stretch together) or by allowing individuals to walk away for a short time before returning to their screens.
 - Switch it up! Having the same events/course of action every day is not very conducive to engagement .
- **Invite Participation**
 - Online meetings it can be easy to fall into one-way conversation, especially if we're new at handling group dynamics online
 - Make sure to create plenty of opportunity for connection and validation
 - Create an atmosphere where participants feel welcome to share feedback
- **Take Stock**
 - There are several ways you can further evaluate the success of your online meeting. During the session, you could set up a collaborative Google Doc where everyone can type in notes at the same time, or where a designated note-taker gathers insights as the session progresses. Let a youth lead a session, work on creating fresh ways to make digital learning exciting and new!

Collaborative Technologies

Kahoot!

- Kahoot! is a game-based learning platform, used as educational technology in schools and other educational institutions. Its learning games, "kahoots", are user-generated multiple-choice quizzes that can be accessed via a web browser or the Kahoot app.



Wheel of Names

- Online randomized name/category picker, can customize and add images – this is great if you need youth who are having trouble engaging and you need to randomize who will lead or present

TriviaMaker

- Create and host online game-show-style trivia games
- Hundreds of pre-made games to choose from

Gather

- Gather combines video-calling with a 2D map, letting you walk around and talk to the other people right next to you – like in a video game! Creation tools also let you make your own custom, interactive spaces.

HouseParty

- HouseParty is a social networking service that enables group video chatting through mobile and desktop apps. Users receive a notification when friends are online and available to group video chat.

Backyard

- Where friends play and talk. Backyard merges flawless video, voice & text chat with everyone's favorite games, all in one place.

Bunch

- Bunch is the first group video chat app for multiplayer games. It allows you to party up with friends over video and jump into your favorite multiplayer games together.

Minecraft

- World-building sandbox game



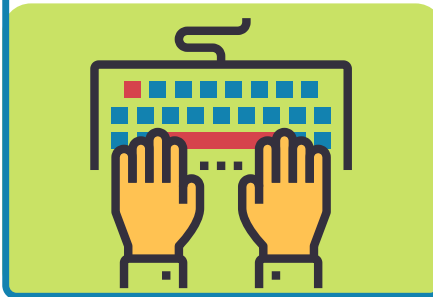
Collaborative Technologies

Discord

- Discord is an instant messaging and digital distribution platform designed for creating communities. Users communicate with voice calls, video calls, text messaging, media and files in private chats or as part of communities called "servers."
- "Slack of the gaming world"

Scratch

- Scratch is a free programming language and online community where you can create your own interactive stories, games, and animations



StreamYard

- StreamYard is a live streaming studio in your browser. Interview guests, share your screen, and much more. Stream directly to Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, and other platforms.
- Front-facing; e.g. can have youth make a live video podcast, or show daily activities etc.

Miro and Mural

- Online digital whiteboard technologies
- For ideation and brainstorm, research and design
- Could be used for project management, strategic planning, creating presentations
- Remote meetings, hackathons, games
- Integrations with Google and Microsoft Office
- Free for up to 10 users

Miro

- Easy to learn and use
- Very interactive and engaging
- Gives access to 1000s of boards you can build on yourself
- Doesn't allow anonymity, but can change name anytime
- Can create icebreaker games, assign tasks and due dates, comment on items

Mural

- Youth can choose to be anonymous – randomly generates an avatar



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