

Going the Distance: Online Learning Ideas

 creativelanguageclass.com/online-learning-ideas

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The talk about *Online* or *Distance Learning* is buzzing through schools and communities around the world. If you're anxious about the change OR already there and need suggestions, this post is for you! It takes a change of mindset, but there are some great perks to it, too!

- 1.) Some learners (who are quiet in class) really thrive with a little extra time to process and less "on the spot" speaking.
- 2.) Learners can work at their own pace. They can pause a video, rewatch it, or move on when they are ready.
- 3.) They can choose to learn when they are at their best (morning or night, in small or big doses).
- 4.) Planning becomes more about helping students learn – *not* keeping them busy or filling 50 minutes of class time.

Taking curriculum and coming up with something to put online so quickly *feels daunting*, but **I see it as an opportunity.**

Instead of getting through traditionally challenging months with exhausted students...you get to continue the learning at a new pace with more freedom to *try new things*. Most students, parents, and teachers have never done distance learning. No one expects it to look just like it would in a classroom; change is expected. So there's the opportunity... you can try something different.

Option 1: Teach the **same material** with a ***different method***.

Teach your thematic unit, have proficiency targets, assess skills with a proficiency rubric...but let learners work through more of it on their own. Instead of you being their main source of language input... put your authentic resources to work. I started playing with Google Classroom and here's a snapshot of what you could do to PLAN and ORGANIZE learning.

Objective: I can...

INTERPRETIVE TASK

Read this (article, listicle, wikipedia article, website, infographic, etc) and do this (find vocabulary, react to it, summarize it, etc)

Listen to this (commercial, interview, song, a video of you talking, etc) and do this (find vocabulary, react to it, summarize it, etc)

example on Google Classroom

*Tip: Don't be afraid to use the target language!
Students can use google translate to help them if they need it!*

The screenshot shows a Google Classroom post from a class named "Creative Language Class". The post is dated 10:41 AM (Edited 10:44 AM) and contains the following text:

Hola a todos!

Meta de hoy (miércoles, el 11 de marzo)
Puedo dar mi opinión sobre distintos hogares del mundo.

Actividad:
Hay 3 videos para ver hoy. Después de verlos, describe y da tu opinion de los hogares.
(Pista: Usa "dando tu opinion del hogar" para ver un ejemplo)

*Si tiene alguna pregunta... déjala como comentario abajo.

The post includes three video thumbnails and one image:

- "Las impresionantes islas fl." - YouTube video 13 minutes
- "La Casa Batlló de Gaudí e..." - YouTube video 2 minutes
- "Un castillo en venta en C..." - YouTube video 1 minute
- "dando tu opinion sobre u..." - Image

At the bottom, there is a comment input field with the placeholder text "Add class comment..." and a send button.

INTERPERSONAL FOLLOW-UP

Option 1: you post an open-ended question and let students type up and post their response. They can also read and respond to other classmates for the interpersonal interaction.

Option 2: Meet with students virtually and discuss follow-up questions.

Start with questions that tie to interpretive task. Students can show they understand by:

(hand gestures:
You describe two things... they show thumbs up or down, choose option 1 or 2, then you can "call on" a student to explain their response)

example on Google Classroom



Questions for your conversation:

*Hold up 1, 2, or 3 to respond to a few of my questions: Video 1: Chozza / Video 2: Casa Batlló / Video 3: Castle
Which was the most interesting home? Which was the most luxurious home? Which one was located in Spain? Etc.*

Final wrap up: What was the best home and why? (open-ended)

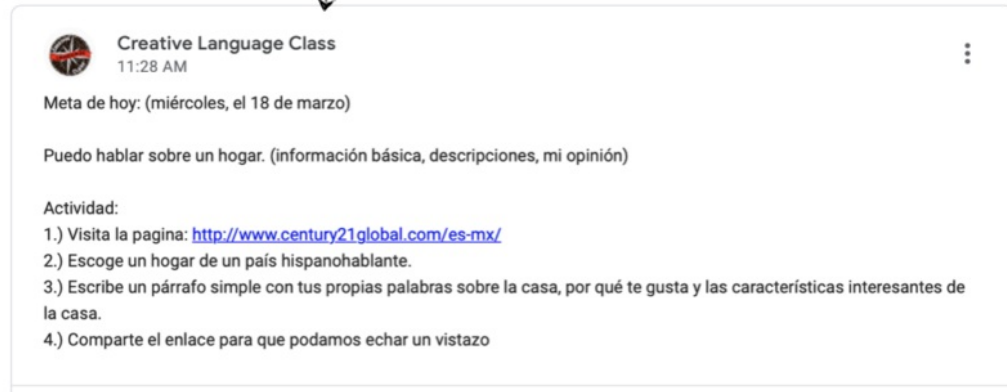
* This holds them accountable for what you asked them to read/listen to. Face-to-face chats don't need to happen every day, but it's nice to still give learners opportunities to interact with each other in the target language.

**You may need to cycle thru a few days of interpretive + interpersonal BEFORE moving on to a presentational task.

CHECK FOR LEARNING: PRESENTATIONAL TASK

They show they can do the objective by: (video, audio recording, writing, reflection, etc) on (google classroom, etc)

example on Google Classroom



Option 2: Set them free with "20% Time" projects

The big idea is letting learners have a say in what they are learning. During the time away from school, students aren't going to want to be doing random worksheets or rote memorization. There are a million other things students will get into with their new free time. Learning will be competing with TikTok, video games, Netflix, group texts and naps. This is *serious competition*.

Giving students choice and voice with a little structure to keep them focused will get you more buy in, period. Think about planning a "choose your own adventure" type of project that has them reading, writing, DOING/EXPERIENCING something they are passionate about, watching interesting videos, and sharing!

Example:



Create an URBAN GARDEN

WATCH

videos in target language from target culture



Recommend 1 or 2 and challenge them to find some on their own. Summarize and share back!

PLANT

Using household items (cans, egg cartons, cups)



Look up 10 words in the TL that you would need to talk about this project. (example: seed, dirt, flower, pepper, plant)

READ

About the benefits of green space and see other city gardens around the world



PHOTO + CAPTION

Your garden's progress!



Día 1:
Acabo de plantar 12 semillas.
Tengo 6 girasoles, 3 tomates, y 3 herbas.



Día 8:
Veo algo...
POR FIN!

What if you had options for music/dance, health/science, sports/wellness? Surely this would give learners a chance to learn more about the target culture, recycle vocabulary and structures from the content (yours and other subject areas) and practice language in a new and meaningful way.

Embrace the challenges and changes and GROW with the flow!

(It could be worse... we could be doing make-up days all summer! There's perspective for you!)