

Quick Guide to Free & Cheap Technology to Engage with Students Online

Created in response to the COVID-19 school shutdowns, the table below provides a quick comparison of several popular online platforms; the elements included here will be helpful if multi-classroom leaders (MCLs) need to evaluate and select platforms to use with their team’s students. Please [share](#) your additional thoughts with us on these and other platforms.

Comparison: Popular Online Platforms to Engage Remotely with Students					
	Google Classroom/ Hangouts	Zoom	Edpuzzle	Canvas	Microsoft Teams
Features					
Teacher can see who is logged in and listening	✓	✓	✓	✓ (only who is logged in)	✓
Students can see live video of teacher	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Allows live communication/instruction only, or allows students to work at their own pace	Both	Live only	Own pace only	Both	Both
While teaching through livestream, teacher can share documents on the screen (for example, show a poem the class is analyzing)	✓	✓	✓	✓ (Canvas requires additional plug-ins/apps for features like this)	✓
While teaching through livestream, teachers can show their work to students—such as doing a math problem or editing a sentence	✓ (but would be easier with a drawing tablet than with a mouse)	✓ (but would be easier with a drawing tablet)	X	✓	✓
Teacher can show a short video for class to discuss	✓ (though videos can skip or lag depending on connection)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Students can message teacher for extra help	✓	✓	X	✓	✓
Teacher and individual student can have short face-to-face meeting online	✓ (but each small group or individual meeting requires creating a separate Google Hangout link)	✓ (within a large-class setting, offers easy-to-use breakout groups)	X	✓ (not within large-class setting)	✓
Will all of above work on a phone instead of computer?	✓	✓	✓	X (Canvas is mobile-compatible, but not with presentations, which is necessary for most functions in this table)	✓ (after free trial, mobile app requires a fee; includes all features except desktop sharing)
Access options if student lacks internet access	Dial-in number	Dial-in number	X	X	Dial-in number, for additional fee
Pricing	Free	Free	Free limited version All access but can only store 20 videos. Unlimited storage for \$9.50/month	Free limited version Two-week free trial with unlimited access for district; free version for teachers with limited options	Free
What other platforms does this work well with?	Use Google Drive to manage student work	Can be used with any other platform	Can be used with any other platform	Can use Google Hangouts/Zoom for live interaction	Canvas, Blackboard, Schoology, Brightspace, itsLearning