

## Back to the classroom?

Fundamentals to remain agile in Covid times



... and be ready to manage teaching, school life & parent comms



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# Dealing with uncertainty

It's been uplifting to see what schools like yours have achieved during the recent school closures. However, there's still a long journey ahead of us.

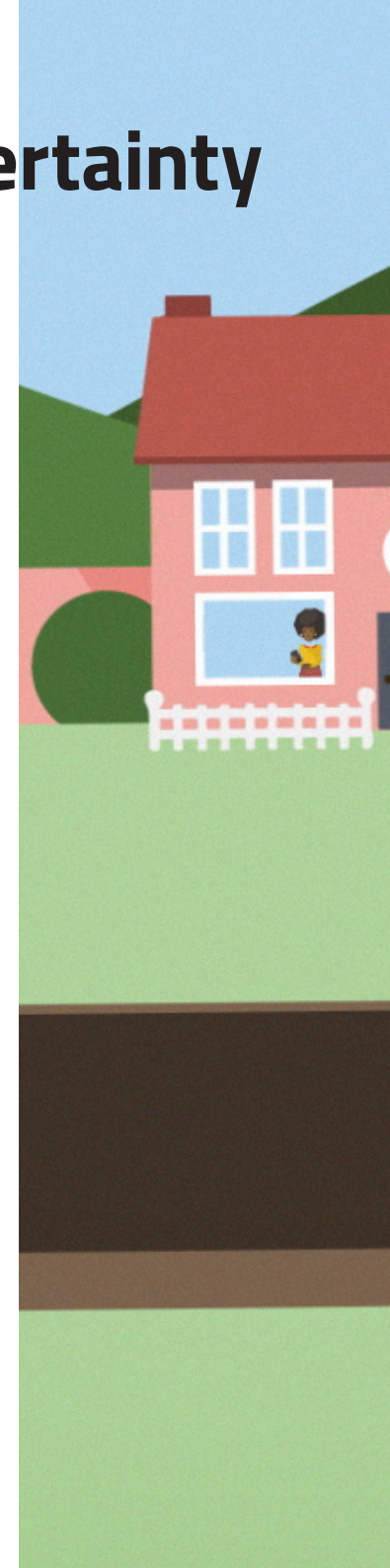
For a return to the classroom, there is little point in assuming that everything will go back to normal. Teachers, students and parents will all have a different understanding of what technology can offer them, but will also be aware that they could return to a more remote way of teaching.

In this guide, we've identified some key fundamentals around teaching & parent engagement to keep in mind so you are ready to flex up or down as required. Think of them as your anchoring points that will hold true no matter what phase you're in: back in the classroom, hybrid learning or full virtual schooling.

We've also included practical tips and best practices from leading educational experts to help you across 4 key areas:

- Rethinking teaching & learning
- Engaging parents in the learning conversation
- Celebrating school life
- Tracking & measuring engagement

Happy reading and [let us know what you think!](#) Our team of learning experts is there to help you and do check out our 2 other guides specifically addressing [hybrid learning](#) and [virtual schooling](#).



# The fundamentals to remain agile

## Getting started

Agree your essential digital tools for teaching and learning. This will help teachers know what to prioritise as they prepare. As the academic year begins, upload basic tasks and resources to ensure students have clear expectations for learning. Bonus: Create a space for teachers to curate and share best practice.

To support schools through the next few months we've suggested some key fundamentals to keep in mind for learning continuity. They can be easily scaled up or down to support whatever phase your school is in. By following these, you'll have the right support for the balancing act ahead of you.

## Rethinking teaching & learning

1. Set home learning online
2. Prepare basic class resources online
3. Use software to record short lessons

Curriculum sequence, essential content, assessment methods—nearly all of it seems up for question as most of us prepare for some form of distance or blended learning. The role of digital tools is at the forefront. What tools and routines can you use that won't become obsolete or difficult to maintain as your context shifts?



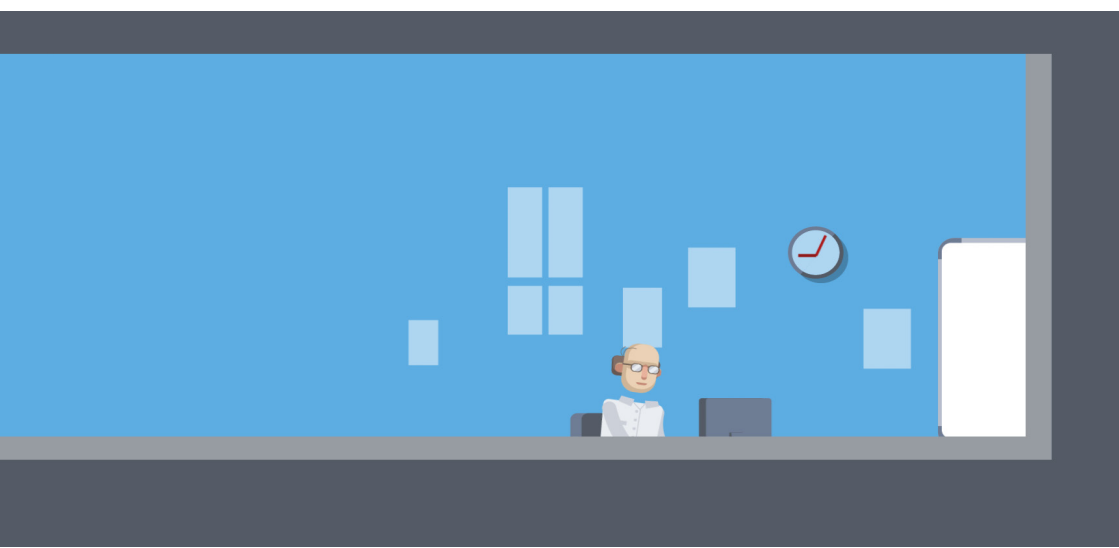
## Engaging parents in the learning conversation

1. Give parents a reason to go online
2. Provide online "office" support hours
3. Get started with continuous reporting

The role of parents in learning has fundamentally changed. Parent access to your school's digital platforms is more critical than ever as they meet an expanded set of duties. The key for schools is striking the right balance of on-demand resources and live interaction. How do schools make the necessary information available to parents while saving staff time for the interactions that count? We've got a few ideas in this guide!

## Getting started

Record and share a series of short introduction videos to your essential digital platforms. Take a moment to explain how to log in, what parents should expect to find there and who to contact with questions. Parents can then access these videos as and when needed. Just be sure they are in an easily accessible location.



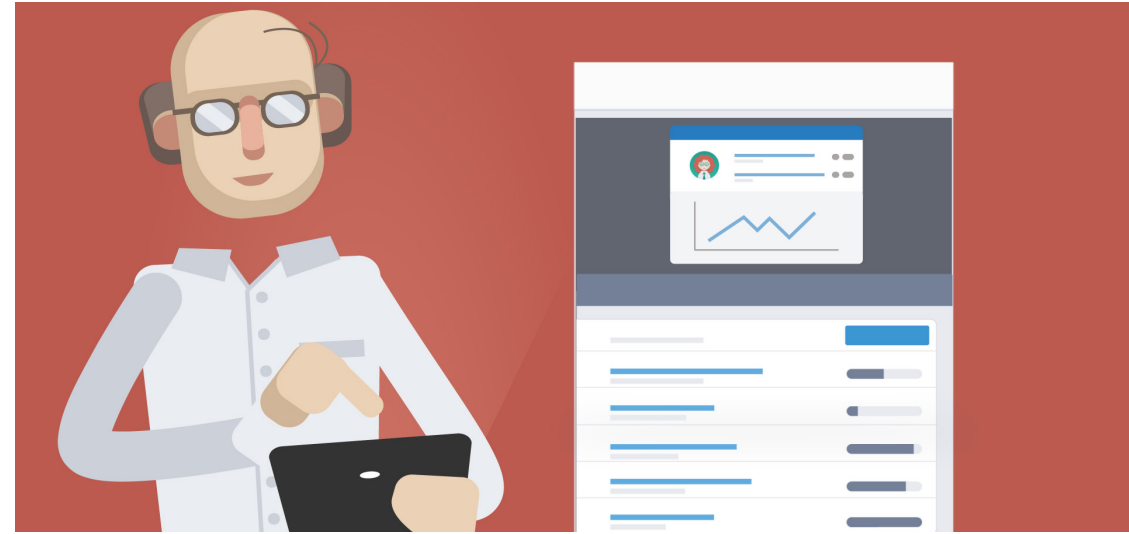
## Getting started

Get a team together who will steer and manage the celebration this year! It will be easier to share the responsibility if you can get people from across the school community involved. A broader team will also enrich the ways in which you celebrate school life.

## Celebrating school life

1. Curate digital evidence of school life regularly
2. Use eportfolios to share achievements with the whole school community
3. Encourage collaboration through forums

Learning is social. Children of all ages are also at various critical stages in their social development. With elements of distance learning behind and ahead of us, fostering a school community remains one of the trickiest to address. Some in-person community events may be possible during the school year, but we recommend a focus on building a digital community that will serve as a backbone no matter how you're working and learning in the coming months.



## Tracking & measuring engagement

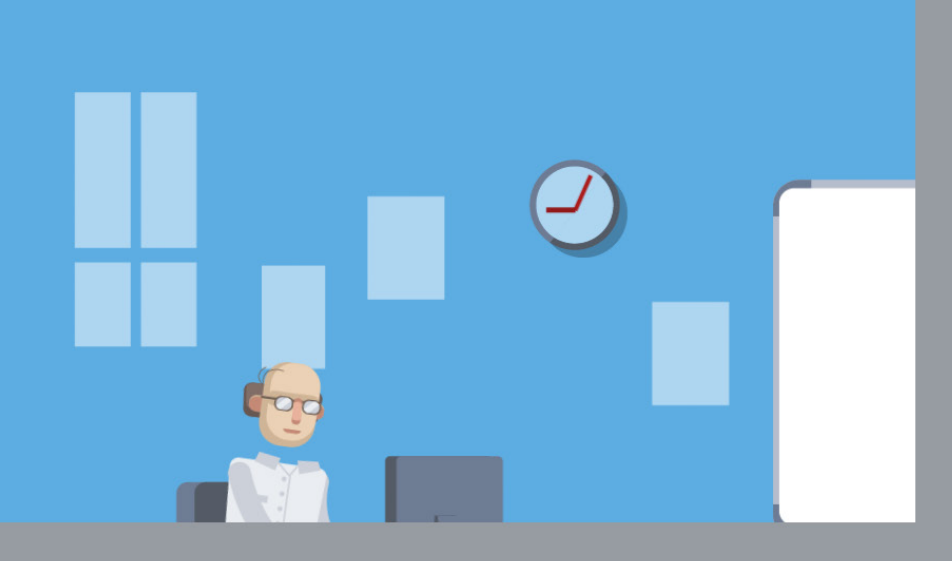
1. Use student interviews, surveys & engagement data to check what's working
2. Carry out online surveys with the whole school community
3. Keep an eye on engagement data to check what's working

How will you walk the halls of your school this year? Review marking practices? Monitor student wellbeing? Schools will need evidence gathering methods and metrics that can adapt to the range of in-class and distance learning we're facing in the coming school year. To start, the focus ought to be access to data. School's priorities will quickly shift to questions of engagement with learning resources and then quality in turn.

## Getting started

Think about your goals for the coming year and what could be acceptable evidence of success. Then, consider how quantitative data (e.g. numbers of students completing homework on time) can be paired with qualitative data (e.g. a short student interview on homework) to give you a more robust picture.





## Rethinking teaching & learning

During the recent school closures everyone will have discovered new ways of working and there may well be valuable lessons to take forward to the classroom. Here are some best practices and practical tips to ensure you can transition quickly to hybrid or virtual schooling should you need to.

### Best practice: Practice submission of digital work

By setting home learning online, teachers, students and their parents are prepared to access learning resources should there need to be a quick move to hybrid or full distance learning. Students should at least practice submitting some work digitally if in school. Teachers will also gain the immediate benefit of home learning being easily accessible for absent students and those who might lose track of home learning.

### Practical Tip

Make sure that you are continuing to use technology for administrative processes wherever possible. Don't let the skills you have learnt become rusty through lack of use, you never know when you might need them again.

### Best practice: Place all resources online

This is also about preparation; families and students will know where to go for class resources and expectations in the case of a change to learning. The resources might be basic if school is fully in person - a syllabus, generic home learning resources, a biweekly class blog. Should all teaching and learning go online - students and parents will know where to go.

### Practical Tip

Teachers looking to go even further may consider how they could make use of digital curriculum in the classroom too. The inclusion of live or pre-recorded content experts delivering lessons can free teachers up to do more targeted intervention.



## Practical Tip

Teachers will have learnt new set of skills over the last few months. When schools open, this will be a great opportunity for staff to get together and learn from each other. Look at how you might best use INSET to share best practice.

## Best practice: Record all lessons

On a basic level, this is about teachers feeling comfortable in the case that there is a change. Recording should just be of key lessons to avoid overcomplicating it. However, teachers will immediately benefit from having recorded resources for absent students and for later review. In the long run, developing this bank of resources will create new opportunities for independent learning in the classroom.

## Educational experts view...



In the future virtual teaching could still take place in the classroom with a rota of attendance. The knowledge expert wouldn't need to be physically present and could come from anywhere in the world. The role of the teacher present would adapt to be more of a pastoral expert to meet the emotional needs of each child.

**Craig Kemp, Education Consultant**

The infrastructure of schools is likely to change forever. Classroom redesign will need to allow an element of flexibility in the way children learn and access learning. It will need to take into account a fusion of learning styles and more personalised approaches.



**Simon Luxford-Moore, Head of eLearning, ESMS**

## Take a closer look



Alex Handy, Head of Digital, wanted to find a way to improve learning & teaching but at the same time reduce the workload. He shares how they overcame this challenge in a classroom setting by supporting each student using audio feedback. See how simple it is to do in [this video](#).

## Engaging parents in the learning conversation

Although schools may be reopening, the experience for parents is likely to be very different. How can your school ensure you have the right tools for them to engage with their child's learning? Our team of experts have put forward some suggestions.

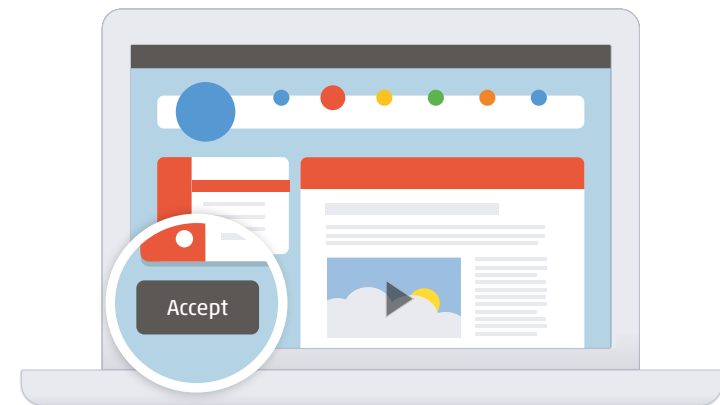
### Best practice: Train parents in using your school's digital resources

Provided that most school digital resources can be centralised in a few key places, schools will need to find a way to encourage parents to access those systems well in advance of it being critical. Making some of the "school as usual" resources available on those platforms (e.g. weekly photos, behaviour points, reports, required forms) will entice parents and ensure they are prepared.

If you've already got regular digital resource uptake, the growth question is: how might your school work towards continuous reporting? This is quite an undertaking on a number of fronts, but you may consider small, incremental steps.

### Practical Tip

Practice makes perfect! Your parents will have started to get used to using your digital platforms and resources. Take the opportunity to roll their use out more broadly and make it easy for parents to stay engaged in their child's school experience.



## Best practice: Hosting online parent evenings

Even if school is back at full capacity, hosting parent meetings online when possible helps to minimise the number of visitors to the school campus when not critical.

## Practical Tip

Video conferencing allows schools to still host IEP meetings and other critical gatherings while normalising digital meeting platforms for the whole school community.

## Educational experts view...



To keep parents in the loop, we found that it is beneficial to share reporting data every two weeks. This helped them to be aware of learning progress and any ongoing issues.

**Ronan McLaverty-Head, Head of Religion and Philosophy,  
The King's School**

## Take a closer look



In this thought provoking webinar, leading Australian schools detail the way they approach continuous reporting and explain why it matters now more so than ever.

[Watch to see how they engaged parents and the impact it had on student outcomes.](#)



## Celebrating school life

During lockdown schools around the world shared some innovative ways of building a school community online. Although it may not seem as important when you're back in the classroom, there are some basic ways in which your school can set itself up to ensure students, teachers and parents stay connected.

### Best practice: Sharing achievements

Some parents will be understandably nervous about their children returning to school. You can help these parents by continuing to share regular news and updates with them via your online portal - the more they can see that the school is managing the situation effectively, the more reassured they will be.

### Practical Tip

Try something simple like posting a few photos of learning each week or something more complex like a newsletter. The goal is that the school has some resemblance in digital life including celebration.

## Take a closer look



Wolverhampton Junior school encouraged [photography competitions](#) - "Being creative is a great way to stay busy and sharing that can really inspire others".

## Tracking & measuring success

Many schools are considering what consistent data points they could gather throughout the year regardless of whether students are in or out of the school buildings. With a view to making the most of existing data and managing staff workload, schools can develop a picture that helps them drive decision making.

### Practical Tip

It may well have been possible to see which teachers have embraced a more digital approach to their teaching, but supporting those who have struggled may have been difficult. Consider regular, light-touch training for teachers who need more support.

### Best practice: Measuring the consistency of your digital learning

School leadership can use the data collected to monitor the consistency of the learning & teaching approach across all departments. It will help them to identify which departments are still following the key fundamentals to ensure they are prepared in the likelihood of any sudden school closure.

### Educational experts view...



Firefly was a key platform during our at home learning experiences. At a glance, we were able to see access trends for parents and students that showed parents were keen to access resources and information in preparation for the following day. We are keen to see extensions to the ways engagement and learning data is displayed in Firefly to allow for more granular analysis.

**Amanda Rablin, e-learning coordinator at St Peters Lutheran College.**



Parent engagement & Learning continuity platform

Find out more  
[fireflylearning.com](https://fireflylearning.com)

[@fireflyteam](https://twitter.com/fireflyteam)

Want a free demo of Firefly?  
Head straight to [fireflylearning.com/try-firefly](https://fireflylearning.com/try-firefly)