

Sean

Hi my name is Sean Gorman and today i'm with two other teachers a primary teacher and and middle school teacher and we will be talking about our experiences during the remote learning time during covid19 about um specifically about the two platforms of google classroom and freshgrade and our experiences with them so um i'm just going to introduce i'll let you ladies introduce yourself maybe start with Amanda.

Amanda

hi i'm amanda um i teach grade 7 french immersion in victoria

Kenzie

I'm kenzie i teach grade one in victoria as well.

Sean

yeah i'm a grade five teacher here in victoria so we're kind of we do not have a high school voice in this conversation but uh we will talk about our experiences with Covid 19 and these platforms so just to start off uh i wanted to talk about what went well during this time for us I can start if you'd like um that i think what went well is that it was a difficult time for everyone and these platforms kind of allowed us to um hand out like give out material and resources to families to use to help create learning opportunities for everyone um some families that work better than others and some and how people kind of reacted to it it was a very new terrain for everyone so it kind of put a spotlight on these platforms

as uh kind of a starting point because  
beforehand without this technology of  
these platforms i think remote learning  
would have been a very different uh  
different looking thing  
but uh what was your experience?

Kenzie

kenzie in um in these platforms yeah i think it  
was like you said it kind of uh provided a  
time to like try things out and see  
what works and what doesn't um my  
class was already using freshgrade and  
throughout the year prior to Covid 19. um so  
they were pretty comfortable with it  
although we didn't use it for everything  
during distance learning um  
i felt thankful that my families were  
already like competent and understood  
what fresh grade looked like and how it  
worked um so that was good um i don't know  
what about you Amanda

Amanda

yeah i my kids already were pretty  
familiar with google classroom  
um i didn't like i've never used it a  
ton in my teaching practice just like  
i would sometimes post random things or  
like for group assignments for them to  
upload so um so i didn't use it like regularly  
but the kids knew it well enough to um to be  
able to pick up on it pretty quickly for  
distance learning and they knew how to  
use their g suite accounts and stuff and like  
yeah so that went pretty well and um  
i had a pretty positive response from  
families for the most part i think they  
were just happy to get anything  
so yeah totally and  
Sean

so in in my class's case we used actually google classroom quite regularly even in just regular times and to kind of what went wrong was we use this you know on a weekly basis for doing certain projects and they were feeling in class i was feeling confident that kids knew how to do it and felt uh kind of adept on using the platform and then it seemed when we went to home time when i was using this kind of scene platform maybe it was a little on a bigger scale because i was handing out more resources and more expectations it seemed that a lot of my kids just froze and i was a little upset by it honestly or like a little let down because we did so much in class i thought it could just kind of pick up where it was but then um thinking back on it i do realize that a they didn't have each other to ask questions they didn't have me to ask simple questions and three everything was turned upside down on its head and school kind of was maybe fading a little bit into the background especially with like with expectations of work and what and what they valued i guess

Kenzie

yeah for sure yeah i think it was just like a challenging time to um kind of have those like school expectations melded with home and so i i found that as well sean that like yeah the response wasn't what i had hoped for or the like content that I received back from families wasn't quite what i was hoping for or what i expected but just had to adjust those expectations a little bit and uh yeah it was pretty

pretty good

Amanda

yeah ii found that a lot of the kids i kind of realized how much they depend on teachers to like explain things to them because especially in French but like the instructions like we gave our kids learning menus and the instructions were in english purpose like purposefully because we knew that the kids would just like totally skim the french ones but they skimmed the english ones and they needed us to like explain to them

over zoom how to do most things they're just so dependent on us for explaining things because that's what we're there for so it's fair but that was one thing i struggled with like like i realized how kids don't read instructions so i had to kind of walk them through things and also because their parents like with individual assignments a lot of their parents don't speak french so a lot of them had to like reach out to me consistently just to explain certain things but um yeah yeah and i what i was thankful for google classroom a lot of stuff

Kenzie

i did was like uploading a lot of videos and i feel like you said just like that's face to face even though you can't respond because it's a video and we did have zoom calls and everything but i think another thing that went wrong for me is uh parents uh did not know to use the platform like i expected my kids to know but at the same time because they were so

young that parents almost needed to be illiterate sorry not a illiterate with the um with the platform to allow them to even use it and be successful at home especially with some of the because parents wanted were there to help out they were kind of acting as the teacher um and then finally just with this kind of overview is

Sean

what did you guys find anything that was surprising during um Covid-19 uh times at home i something which was positive i could take away from it was like on some assignments i tried to do kind of family activities to get them all together and i was actually very surprised on how um you know of course some families are not going to participate but the families that did participate um in whole family activities kind of got into it and kind of uses all home time so like google allowed them to classroom allowed them to upload stuff or they could upload it on freshgrade so the other kids could see and it kind of raised excitement across the board through all my students that was something that surprised me quite a bit actually

Amanda

yeah um one thing that surprised me was that students who typically um kind of not struggled like with school but struggled kind of behaviorally in class um did really well with distance learning i think it's because all the distractions were taken away

because these particular students are the ones who are kind of just squirrely and get kind of silly in class so then taking those distractions away um they ended up being like my best students during distance learning and my most active students so that was kind of a nice surprise um and then some of the students who were typically like my strongest most active students kind of it like it didn't really work for them so yeah that was that was surprising

Kenzie

i think something that i found is like because the students that i'm with are so young and me it's not necessarily a surprise it just having like my kids couldn't do anything unless their parents um did it with them because they didn't have they don't have the technological literacy to like log on and check freshgrade and do that so they really needed to be like supported by their families to to get to the activities and then most of my activities weren't technology-based they would be like hands-on to do with the family so ifound that to be like a hurdle and a bit of a surprise because families were so overwhelmed with the time it was hard for them to get through all of the activities that i provided and to like even log on to our platforms and see what was out there and for them to like jump over those hurdles of understanding the you know the technology

Sean

yeah and now you had like a very similar thing even though you know even just logging on to google

classroom or freshgrade when the parents did not do it before it was like very challenging and i don't know about you guys but i received so many emails right like oh i'm having trouble with this oh i'm having trouble with that and just trying to step them through that and sometimes it was it seemed like a very simple answer that they could get by just googling it or something so maybe if you could send something to them it could help but uh so um moving forward like so if um so what resources would have been helpful for you during this time so if if we could just have this magic wand and say during this time of covid if we had resources that we could access what would be like the most beneficial resources do you think that you could have um for google classroom

Amanda

i'm not sure like maybe this is a setting there but i wish we could see what the kids see like i wish the way we looked at it was the same as like we could see what the kids see because i know it looks different between students and teachers and sometimes i'd be trying to describe something to them or describe like trying to find a comment or certain things and it would be tricky because i'm not i wasn't always sure what the kids saw um so that would be nice to have like a setting where we could see what they see um if that doesn't exist already and for grading it would be great um to be able to like because you can make subjects in google

classroom so it'd be great to keep those grades in within the subjects rather than for the grade book just being chronological um i didn't grade for the past term but i know i will have to next year if we continue with this so anything to make that easier would be would be helpful because google i don't don't find google classroom particularly helpful for grading i know some high school teachers do but i haven't found it really helpful yet so i would like it if that improved a bit

Kenzie

okay i think um uh going off that i use freshgrade so um like freshgrade is a great um assessment platform but um it's for like providing content i was using google apps so my two were kind of not uh um together you know what i mean like it was kind of two separate parts so i kind of like moving forward it would be helpful if uh freshgrade kind of had more of like a uh was more of a platform like google classroom where you could provide content a little bit easier a little bit like more streamlined uh it's kind of clunky um so that would be helpful and i think like as for resources like we were kind of talking about like because i'm in such a young grade like maybe some professional development for us on like how to get more uh savvy with the technology but also for parents because if we're like for the younger grades especially

it's a lot on them  
to know how to use it and to understand  
um the technology that we're providing  
them so maybe some like  
sort of you know webinar or like yeah  
exactly

Sean

yeah summer summer boot camp for  
classroom type thing could be helpful  
because you know like we were  
overwhelmed trying to like provide like  
learning opportunities for the students  
and like on my mind the first thing on my  
mind wasn't how to teach parents how to use  
it which you know like  
that is the step that maybe i needed to  
take so anyways  
that's a really good point i really  
enjoyed uh i like same with you kenzie  
freshgrade I thought it was like an excellent  
assessment platform like i really enjoyed  
using it i think it has a lot of value  
um but it has some shortcomings like i  
couldn't i would i would love to do everything  
over freshgrade potentially  
but i also really like the idea of  
google how you can upload things  
individually to students  
amanda you were talking about how you  
know giving students out to work i mean  
giving students work you could you know  
make own copies for them or you could  
you know attach it to google docs or  
google slides like there's so many applications  
of it and it's because google is just  
like this world power where freshgrade is just  
a fairly small company  
yeah and isn't freshgrade like  
originally designed to be a learning  
portfolio so it's not really supposed to

be like every single thing  
the kids are doing it's more supposed to  
be like oh let's highlight this thing  
from this unit this thing from this unit  
it's not like to assign because we're a  
google whereas google classroom is more  
like you can just assign like basic work all  
the time or like it doesn't have to be  
like a portfolio it's more just a  
stream of work it's true and it kind of  
makes a portfolio in a way but it's not  
really meant to like it just kind of  
like keeps it  
there in the background um yeah it's it  
was interesting time especially  
being from victoria these are our two  
platforms i know that a lot of other  
districts use like Microsoft teams or  
you know these other platforms and if we  
were thrown into that like  
for i would need a whole course you know  
on talking to other teachers i could maybe  
teach a teacher how to use google  
classrooms but i could never under teach  
a another teacher how to use  
microsoft so i think it's very variant  
um the last question i want to ask you  
guys um  
finally uh so if remote teaching  
continues say September  
we're back into online um what  
uh what things do you need like what  
things do you need moving forward do you  
think to be successful?  
you know it's a little bit of a hard  
question but it's you know a reality  
that's coming upon us sooner closer and  
closer?

Amanda

i'd say like more clear expectations

um for reporting and just like for content um like how to how like what type of content to present because that was never clear at least at my school and i thought they did a good job of communicating stuff with us but they're like yeah the focus has to be literacy and numeracy but then we still have to give a letter or we still have to give a grade and a comment for every subject even though the focus was literacy and number so even for pe we still had to give like a comment and a final grade so that was kind of frustrating and then also it was like everything's optional and so a lot of the kids were unclear because they're like well some kids just did nothing because it was optional and then some kids were really stressed out and did everything so it'd be nice to have like clear expectations of what needs to be done i think like i'm hoping in september it like isn't going to be an option like i i hope that like kids will have to participate so or at least like some expectations

Sean

right like some you have you like it maybe you don't have to full but there is like clear expectations yeah and that's why i didn't grade this term too because it was like i was getting different things from different kids all the time so i'm like i'm not gonna grade it because like that grade's not going towards anything i'll give you feedback if you want it but it's

like there was no point in grading individual work because it would have taken forever to but yeah i was similar like we did do a um we had to give uh grades out but my main tool of assessment was just feedback right like yeah on every assignment what someone did I would put a load of us uh feedback to you back and you know what that's uh i think that's more beneficial than just giving a letter grade at the end of the unit like it actually allows them to to grow but um i agree with you there it'd be nice to have some expectations and also yeah like also yeah just having what what we're in charge of and what were it was kind of hard i feel like during after spring break when everything kind of went down i feel like everyone was just flailing just to figure it out so i understand why all these things kind of happened but now that we've had time to think about it and be prepared i think there needs to be kind of more teachers-like um outlines i would say of like what we're supposed to do how about you kenzie what do you think

Kenzie

um i definitely agree like with expectation it was hard again i'm like students being young like and putting that expectation on parents is a lot because a lot of them were working from home and finding it challenging balancing that like work home kid life so um yeah i guess just like having clear expectations for

them and then also uh something that i had a challenge with was um not having um permission from parents to use google um so i was trying to use freshgrade as a like a platform to provide content which like amanda mentioned earlier it's not meant for so i think making sure that i have all those permissions to use the google apps and and the google platform because that's much easier to like provide content that way and it would make my life much easier to have something to provide content using totally and there's so many other things to talk about too like the whole community aspect of your classroom

Sean

there's just all these other things that we need to think about as well that are super important moving forward but um anyways ladies thank you for coming and chatting your thoughts with me about google classroom and freshgrade i hope it kind of opened up some doors to think about coming for september but uh we'll see what happens um all right thanks for coming