

A WINDOW INTO THE WORLD OF TECH TOOLS IN TEACHER ED

In this Finestra, one of our editors shares some tools useful for teacher education that can be used both in primary and secondary schools as well as with university pre-service teachers.

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an undergraduate degree from LaSalle University in Philadelphia, an MA from Northern Arizona University and a PhD from the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. Her main joy in life is practicing what she preaches. You can read more about her work here: <https://phzh.ch/personen/laura.loder>.

I was lucky when the pandemic hit in the sense that I had worked in e-learning in the late 90s in Arizona, USA, thus many of my pre-service and in-service teacher education courses at Zurich University of Teacher Education already had some interesting tools embedded into them – not because I didn't want to teach live, but because I got irritated at students not doing their work and coming up with excuses for "not having read the text". I wanted ways of making compulsory class content mandatory, visible to everyone so students could profit from one another. I wanted evidence, control-freak that I am, of students having done their work, and thus hopefully thereby learning. Like that, in-class work was deeper, more focused, and the really good students clearly pulled up the rest of the class. So when the pandemic hit, I just used these tools more intensely.

The tools I present here were used in TESOL courses – with topics covering foundations of teaching reading, writing, speaking, listening, grammar, and vocabulary to assessment for learning and using authentic materials in the classroom to primary school children in Switzerland.

SeeSaw

<https://web.seesaw.me/>

Probably the tool the students liked best to work with was SeeSaw - a learning platform where instructors can post assignments and learners can choose to do them as audio, video, drawing, text or upload, comment on one another's work and then post their completed activity to the platform for their classmates to see and also to a class blog (Table 1) in one click should they so desire. There are rubrics that can be used whereby curricular aims can be embedded and the SeeSaw Activity Library offers some good ideas that can be easily adapted. There is also a cell phone app for this tool.

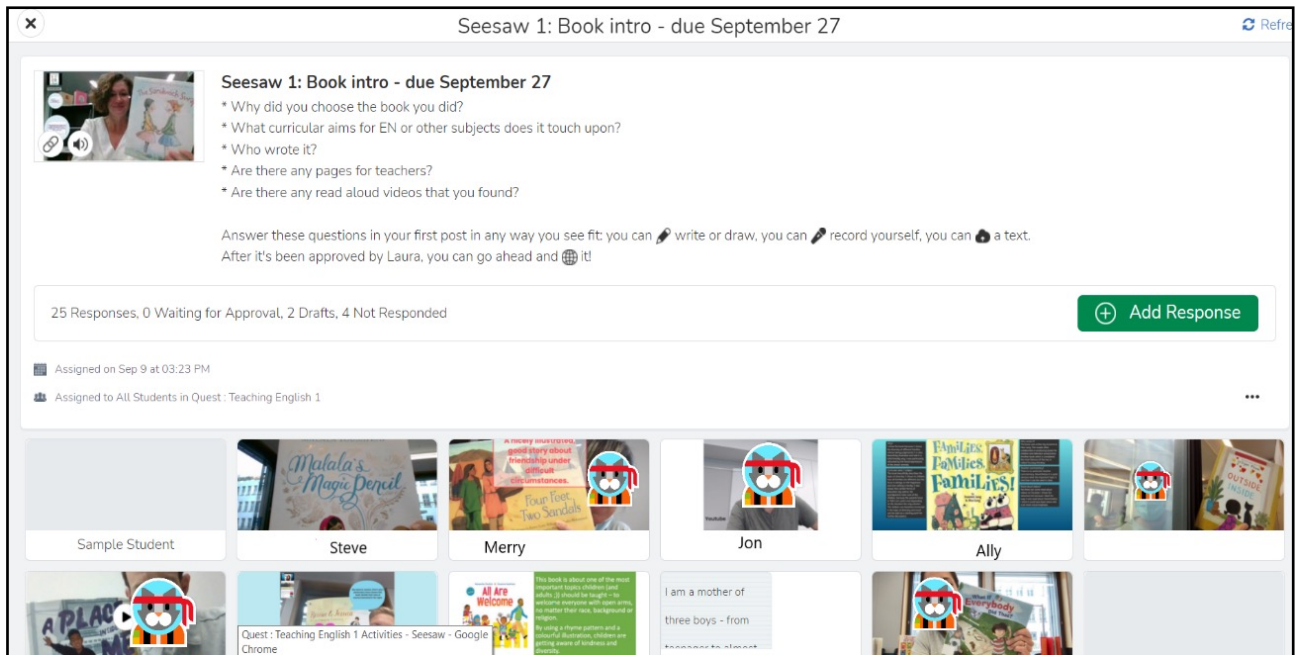


Figure 1

Teacher's view of the home screen - the task with who has done it (or not)

Figure 1 shows the teacher's view of the activity. In this example, the students had to choose a book with which to work throughout the semester so when our course topic was about "speaking", they had to develop speaking activities that:

- demonstrate connections to the assigned readings;
- show a quality of work and thinking that match the concepts discussed in class and followed up upon;
- demonstrate work appropriate for use at the primary level;
- are cited properly (Chicago or APA);
- include additional development (handouts / examples of what would be on the board, etc);
- use professional language, at the C1 level;
- use attractive, organized means of showing work.

These were the general criteria upon which each post was assessed and that could be used for comments. At the bottom of each activity, I can see who has done the work or not, and this I sometimes showed in class to motivate some of the slackers.

For each post the students wrote (so in the Fall of 2021 I had 80 students and 8 assignments), I commented on each and every post they wrote. Normally, I start the semester by commenting on everyone's work so they know I'm looking and then randomly comment on about half the class each week for the rest of the semester, but as I got in the flow of doing this, I could actually get the comments done within an hour each week. That said, there are also grading tools, as shown in Figure 2. I can see who has completed which assignment and how well, and if you click on "Skills View", you can see the student performance on all assignments categorized by rubric criterion. For these students, the rubric was generally:

- Used in-course content
- Used the readings
- C1 level of EN
- Submitted on time

Using the rubric tool, assessing their work is quickly done and SeeSaw offers various systems (I use the red, orange, green color codes for performance measures as our courses are pass/fail but you can choose percentages or points or other models).

Table 1

Some of my SeeSaw blogs

Students are NOT required to blog their posts, so what we see here is a small sampling of their work.

<https://blog.seesaw.me/phzh-quest/> -> posts on basic topics with application to a selected children's book

<https://blog.seesaw.me/english-fs21/> -> posts on more advanced topics in teaching English

<https://blog.seesaw.me/english-is-everywhere/> -> posts on using English from the world around us in the classroom

Selected Dates		Jan 12, 2021		Activities View		Skills View		
		SCD	CDM					
		Homework! Due Apr...	Strategic Competenc...	Differentiated Taskl...	Consolidation - Due...	Performance Assess...	Analyze a text - Due...	Glossary - Due Marc...
		32/37	32/37	31/37	32/37	32/37	32/37	30/37
AB	Alexandr	7/7	3★	3★	3★	3★	2★	3★
CL	Corina	7/7	3★	3★	3★	3★	3★	3★

Figure 2
Scoring system - Activities or Skills view

Throughout the semester, students were expected to read one another's work in different ways. For many weeks, they were assigned one buddy and sometimes they had to use the criteria and be extremely critical of their buddy's work; other times they had to give "two stars and a wish" feedback and other times they had to expand the post by adding a site or reading into the comments. Later in the semester, they were simply expected to read at least 5 other students' work and either report in class or write a comment.

In end-of-semester evaluations, when asked how they felt about working on SeeSaw, the most common comment was: "Though it was a bit technically difficult to get into (I guess if kindergarten in kids in the US are using it, I should be able to, too, but it was tough), I loved the fact that I didn't always have to write a text – I could record myself or draw and this was liberating. I also really appreciated seeing other students' work and getting masses of ideas and I am glad the blog will be there for future reference."

EdPuzzle
<https://edpuzzle.com/>

Edpuzzle is a platform with which to make video lessons. It's relatively simple: You upload or connect an online video, embed multiple-choice or open questions or audio or written comments. During the pandemic, I recorded lectures with Loom and uploaded them onto EdPuzzle. As shown in Figure 3, there is also a nice overview of who has done the work, how long it took them, and open answers can be graded with a rubric. Students cannot comment on each other's work, but the teacher can send comments to individual students. Sometimes I asked the students to send in a follow-up link or idea and it is easy to copy-paste the whole class's individual answers into one document with one Control-C, Control-V as you can see everyone's answers to the question on one screen and this sort of consolidation was appreciated by the students.

The beauty of this simple tool is that there are some fantastic settings where if students are working on your course, then decide to just let the video play and go and open another tab, the video stops! Perhaps there are ways around this (e.g. cell phones). Furthermore, the settings can be set so that students can not jump ahead in the video or skip questions. These were points some students did not find funny, but from a learning perspective, it wasn't so bad. Another criticism was that students often wanted my videos and powerpoints to download for future reference. This is another point I am not convinced of – I don't want my students to cram for their final exams, I want them to digest and work with the content when they are with me – to take notes, to ask questions, and not just get through it.

Assignment	Start date	Due date	Turned in
EN in Other Subjects	March 1st	July 31st	23 of 26
TESOL_France_Creative	Feb. 16th	July 31st	22 of 26
Differentiation	Jan. 20th	July 31st	23 of 26

Figure 3
Edpuzzle assignments screen

Final Words

There are many more tools I have dappled with over the past few years that I use frequently that are also useful in primary and secondary classrooms:

GoFormative - <https://www.formative.com/> is a quizzing tool where each question can be tagged with a curricular aim and is constantly being developed with more and more functionality. By now it can almost be used as a stand-alone platform.

EduFlow - <https://www.eduflow.com/> is a platform where students can submit assignments much like SeeSaw but where are fantastic automatic procedures for peer feedback (e.g. “To complete the assignment, each learner must give feedback according to a specific rubric to two other learners”) and the tool automates the assignments of buddies.

GooseChase - <https://www.goosechase.com/> is an online scavenger hunt tool where students can meet up, work in groups and perform activities based on a book or topic. They can act, write, send in a gaps, etc... and you can force them to “talk content” by having them send in a film clip of themselves defining a term such as “gist”. As they go on this scavenger hunt, they can see the other groups’ work and there is a time set to complete the activities so there is a bit of pressure to perform!

Finally, everyone knows **Padlet**, but I’d like to showcase my students’ work last year here: https://padlet.com/laura_buechel/goals - Students had to develop materials based on a book that reflected on of UNESCO’s Sustainable Development Goals and Padlet offers a very simple way of letting students share their brilliance! Keep in mind when implementing such activities if you want the learners to participate, you have to be present! I have noticed as well that conversations in class often stem from students having looked at each other’s work, such as “Oh, I once tried that activity in a practicum!” thus there is a lot more engagement when the can see each other’s work.