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ONLINE LEARNING WITH THE MAIN LITERACY PROGRAMME

Educational Therapists from our Resources Team share their experiences with online teaching and learning and how they supported our frontline staff! - PART 2

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On top of the anxiety and concern, I actually felt a tinge of excitement when the possibility of converting lessons to online was announced the very first time. Online learning is not something new, but before COVID-19, a concept undervalued especially in this digitalized world. Nevertheless, what makes the whole experience even more interesting is being able to assess how students with SpLD respond to an online medium.

Even in a physical classroom, we as Educational Therapists are constantly switching up our teaching practices to best benefit our unique students, so it was an intriguing idea that online may actually be more favourable for some. Alas, from my own observations and many other feedback shared, this proved to be true for certain profiles of students – young students and those with ADHD for instance. True, there have been some hair-pulling incidents, like students insisting on switching off their camera during class (rude!) or students walking away (hi, I was speaking to you...), there were also many funny ones, like a student tuning in from under her blanket because everywhere else was uncondusive (felt like we were in a tent!) or a student's younger sister joining in the class (so cute!).

Albeit the challenges that I face almost every lesson (technical, student motivation, etc), I accept them readily as they push me to think on my feet and to also explore different ways of digitalizing the lesson. Sharing with my fellow colleagues is also a great help since we are all in the same boat. It's a temporary measure, but I am grateful for the experience and am eager to further explore this new frontier of online learning for SpLD.

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Online teaching is a breath of fresh air for someone who has been teaching in the DAS for 8 years. It is something new and challenging and I found it refreshing for a start. That said, it is not easy. We have to start from scratch in creating online resources within a span of a few days while managing a full load of students.

In addition, when working from home began, it was another obstacle as now there is no boundary between time for work and time for family. Any time spent on one, meant compromising the time for the other and most of the time, it was work for me. The struggle is endless, but we have all managed to pull through these tough times with the help and support for one another. It really helps to boost your morale when you have a positive support system and colleagues to fall back on when you are down. Grateful to still be able to work stress-free during this difficult time.

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"True wisdom comes to each of us when we realise how little we understand about life, ourselves, and the world around us."
Socrates

Rewind to Term 1, 2020.... When the management first alerted us to prepare for online teaching, my heart sank and my lips froze. As I regained my senses, my good ole defence mechanism came to my rescue. It consoled me, "Aww!!!! Come on, we're not going to do it, it's not going to happen" and before I knew it, it became a huge reality!!!

Forward to present...I'm here, I'm coping and I'm in the process of being reborn! It happened the minute I stepped into the future. My mindset went through a warp as I embarked on this new mode of teaching. Much as we would have liked to have been more prepared, I met the challenge with gusto and vigour. Life is full of surprises and I am thankful for all the gifts and challenges it has to offer. My heartfelt gratitude to our EA Hani for all her timely help and Soofrina and her team for all the wonderful sharing of EdTech stuff.

Experiences from my online teaching has made me realize that this phenomenon (to me) called 'Online teaching' is just like any other thing in life. Everything new or novel becomes the 'normal' after a while. The initial hoarse throat, neck ache, sore eyes and fatigue just flew out of the window after a couple of days. It dawned on me that our students were having a hard time coping with HBL and DAS lessons and that made me understand them better. As lessons progressed, their rebelliousness, anger, mood swings disappeared. Other than laptop problems and working doubly hard to build LPs, I am blessed to have a good relationship with my students. Active students were displaying sustained attention, some just had a love for typing so responses were quick and quiet students were chatting comfortably. I have plenty to learn and I am raring to go during the June holidays. Where there's a will, there's a way. I guess I am a survivor. An imaginary cartoon comes to my mind with the caption "When Dinosaurs Meet Long Distance Teaching". That thought brings a smile to my face.