

# Ideas in Action

## Innovative practices and strategies to take beyond the COVID era



### Creating interactive online lessons with Nearpod

When Overton High School polled students about their experience learning online, they found that many students were tired of too many PowerPoint presentations – it was hard to stay engaged staring at a computer screen the whole day. Teachers, on the other hand, were working hard to adapt to a new environment, while struggling to know whether students were interacting with and learning from their virtual lessons. “High schoolers especially are prone to keeping their cameras off,” one teacher shared. “At first it felt like I was talking to thin air.” The challenge became finding a tool to meet the needs of students—**facilitating engaging lessons online**—and teachers—**providing a clear picture of student interaction and understanding**.

Enter Nearpod: **an online tool that helps teachers create interactive lesson presentations**, which one Overton teacher shared with her colleagues during a professional development session. Nearpod allows teachers to seamlessly integrate lessons they have created in other programs such as PowerPoint—or access Nearpod's bank of pre-made lessons to use or customize—and easily insert fun and engaging activities into their lessons, such as quiz games, polls, discussion questions, drawing activities, and more. It wasn't long before enough Overton teachers were finding success with Nearpod that the school's principal invested in a school-wide license, opening up teachers and students to even more of the tool's features.

“Nearpod has added a new level of interactivity to my lessons...I will never go back to teaching without it.

- Overton High School English Teacher”



### Engagement Has Skyrocketed

*Nearpod has been a game-changer for several Overton teachers. They report student engagement skyrocketed, and **in some cases was higher than in-person learning pre-COVID**. Students are having more fun in class with games and polls inserted into their lessons, and have been able to have robust conversations with their classmates despite not being in the same room. Engagement is also boosted by Nearpod's student-pace feature, which allows students to access lessons outside of the normal classroom period on their own time and at their own speed.*

*This is especially great for high school students who may have jobs or younger siblings to look after during the day.*

*Nearpod has allowed teachers to communicate easily with students during virtual learning, letting them view students' screens while they annotate a page of writing, or type in written responses. Not only does this help teachers **monitor participation and provide feedback in the moment**—otherwise a big challenge with online teaching—but it **provides crucial checks for understanding** both throughout the lesson and at the end with Nearpod's summary of each lesson's interaction.*



## Engaging educational experiences are critical to student success

*NPEF created the Thriving Schools to shine a light on the conditions that must be present in schools for students to thrive. The framework is centered around the academic achievement and growth we want for students, but also how they develop agency—we want them to be inspired and motivated, to be socially and civically engaged, and to be happy and confident learners.*

*One of the framework's six conditions is engaging educational experiences: the ways in which teachers support students in building content knowledge and life skills in a way that is relevant to students' lives and supports each students' individual needs.*

*Nearpod supports engaging educational experiences by making learning fun and exciting—by filling lessons with games and activities that spark discussion, critical thinking, creativity, and friendly competition—and teachers report that Nearpod's excellent visual content and interactivity has been especially helpful for Overton's population of English Learners. Nearpod also facilitates the meaningful daily interactions that build crucial student-teacher and student-student relationships. For example, a feature of Nearpod allows students to share contributions to class discussions anonymously, easing the anxiety more shy students often feel in whole-group conversation. This feature helps teachers build one-on-one relationships and trust with students who might not want to speak up in class. These types of moments allow teachers to meet students exactly where they are for that day—while still being able to gauge the effectiveness of the lesson.*

**The feature that keeps student responses anonymous, except to the teacher, eliminates a lot of student anxiety around participating in class.**

**- Overton High School  
English Teacher**

## Keeping the Momentum

"I will never go back to teaching without it," one teacher reports about Nearpod. The tool's accessibility for students, ability to quickly monitor student understanding for teachers, and the overall compatibility with many other lesson planning tools has shown **it can have a long life once in-person learning fully returns.**

Even if classrooms do not maintain the current 1:1 ratio of technology for students, Nearpod has a full-class presentation mode that maintains its interactivity and fun for students despite access to a computer. Students can also access their Nearpod lessons on a phone or complete them in student-pace mode at home or at the library, **making learning even more accessible.**

Another reason for Nearpod's potential for longevity is its compatibility with other programs. It quickly converts PowerPoint presentations, embeds YouTube links, and works easily with Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams, allowing teachers to access the benefits of Nearpod without making major changes to their lesson prep. Additionally, the ability for teachers to monitor student participation, insert activities to check for understanding, and review student work **makes Nearpod a real time-saver for teachers.**

From the wide range of technologies explored during the Covid era, Nearpod stands out for its high level of interactivity and ease of use for students and teachers.

To learn more about NPEF and the Thriving Schools Framework, visit [www.nashvillepef.org](http://www.nashvillepef.org)