



# Manitoba Association of Multi-age Educators

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in affiliation with



## THE NEW NORMAL: DISTANCE LEARNING DURING COVID-19

Lisa McAvoy  
Editor

I can be sure no one would have ever imagined that we would be in a situation like we are right now. With schools closed due to COVID-19 educators everywhere are trying to figure out how to do their jobs from home and teach their students from a distance. For many this has meant learning how to use all kinds of new technology such as Seesaw, Flipgrid, and Microsoft Teams, and having to get even more creative to find new ways to provide learning. We are facing huge hurdles such as fair and equal access to technology, maintaining connections to students and families, and how to assess students' online learning...just to name a few. Sometimes it has felt like no one is on the same page and plans and rules are changing daily.

I for one have been challenged like never before and at times have felt very overwhelmed...but teachers are resilient! I am lucky to have had great support and inspiration from fellow educators not only from my own school, but across the division and around the province and even the country. By connecting to other educators on Facebook, Instagram, and Microsoft Teams I have been able to share in the struggles and successes of others and receive inspiration and resources to help navigate this new normal, hopefully for not too much longer.

Therefore it was only natural that distance learning would be a topic in this edition of the MAME newsletter. I hope you will find something that will resonate with you or an idea you can use with your students.

Be safe and remember to take care of yourself too.

## Distance Learning in an Early Years Classroom

Kara Loney

With May already here, it is crazy to think about how I thought this month would be going. With the ebb and flow in a multiage 1/2/3 classroom, I knew there would be changes and obstacles--- but this? Distance learning was definitely not in my Plan A... or B, or C... you get the picture. But, here we are, just over one month in. I think all educators can agree that there is no "right way", or any resource that can fully guide you through this—especially in an early-years classroom where we rely *heavily* on face to face interactions. Here are some struggles I have faced throughout this time, and some ways that may help you cope.

### Technology

Laptops, iPads, computers, OH MY! There are so many options that different schools are using—Google classroom, Microsoft Teams, etc... My tried and true has been Seesaw. This is not a new resource by any means, but I find it super user-friendly for our younger kiddos. First off, the ability to log in without a username or password—yes please!! On there, I highly recommend using the "Announcement" tab to upload some morning meetings (teacher turned vlogger). It feels weird and awkward but it's been a really nice way to connect with the kids. I also learned Seesaw has a whole bunch of shortcuts so you can use visuals for instructions. What?! If you have been living under a rock, like myself, search up "Seesaw shortcuts" and thank me later.

However, all that being said, technology has also been the complete bane of my existence. I work in a community that technology isn't the most accessible or present in homes. So online learning has been a HUGE struggle because a lot of my students aren't able to access internet. Not to mention, some of them are 6 years old and it's tough. This is one of my "let go" things. Some are able to get online; some are not. As their teacher, I have to try and differentiate just like I

would in the classroom. All we can do is our best, and some things just are not in our control. So for the teachers with the same struggle, I see you and I feel you.

### Connectivity

Intertwined with technology is connectivity. I miss the hugs, laughter, conversations and just being together in our classroom. So how do we keep that feeling alive during an isolating time? Like many teachers, I do this by phone calls and video chats. I really like Google Hangout because you can just send a link, no log in or password needed (I like the easiest route possible).

Technology raining on your parade again?! No worries! I participated in a community car parade where all staff decked out their cars and drove around, honking and waving. I was totally skeptical about this, not going to lie. Would people come out to watch for us? Would we annoy the neighbourhood? After doing it, I would recommend all schools doing it. It was so amazing seeing the smiling faces. It meant a lot to the kids, as well as community members. A definite morale booster for sure!

### But is it all enough?

How many times have you caught yourself thinking about some variation of "enough"? Am I doing enough? Are the kids learning enough? It will drive you absolutely crazy. But guess what? KIDS ARE RESILIENT. We wouldn't choose this profession if we didn't care and worry about our kids; but they will be okay. Check out the ABC Sunshine Coast article <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-04-17/will-missing-school-due-to-covid-19-matter-for-school-students/12154266> for further reassurance.

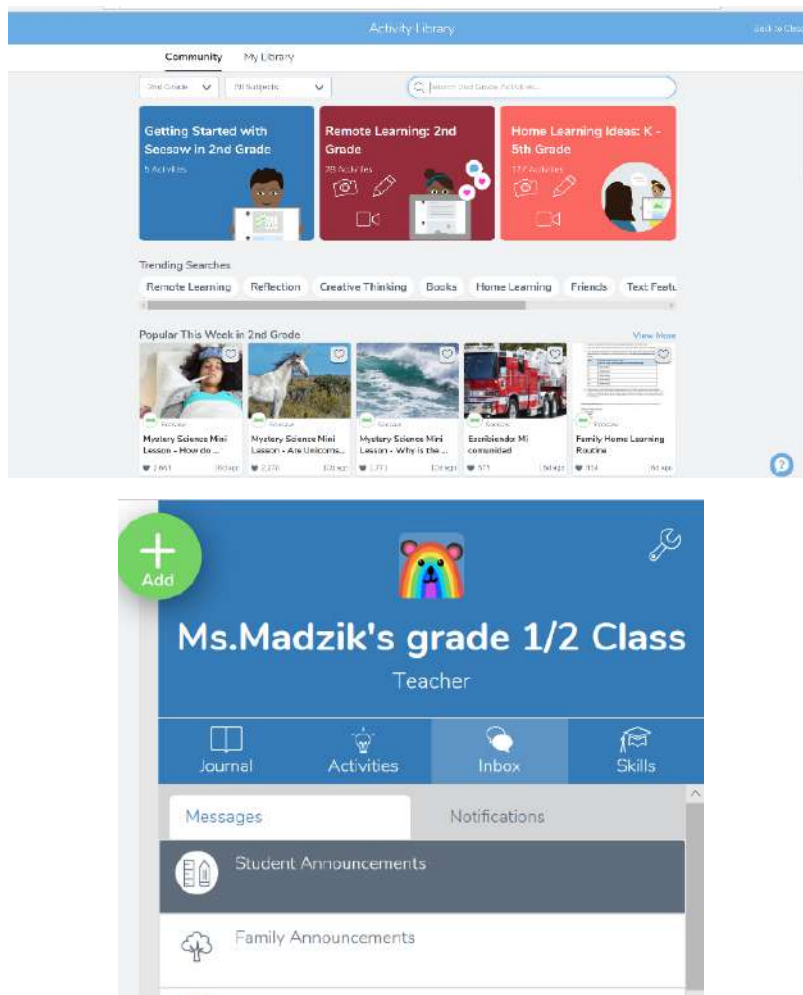
So whatever your struggle is with distant learning, just know that you aren't alone. There is no guide, or manual; all we can do is breathe in and breathe out and keep on going. If you are like me, that reminder is much needed on the hard days.

## Teaching from Home

### Caitlyn Madzik

Within days, we went from being in a classroom full of children, to being in our homes sitting behind a computer screen wondering how we are going to teach all of our students from a distance. I began to explore websites that would engage all my students as well as ensuring it was user friendly for them and their families. I started to look more into a website called SeeSaw.

SeeSaw was very simple to navigate and had all the options I wanted. The ability to take pictures, add videos, sound clips all within a few clicks. I decided to use SeeSaw as my new learning platform. SeeSaw has a library of activities that you can browse from that connects to what you are learning with your students. From math pages to videos on how to draw Mo Willems characters. You can easily create your own activities and the interactive drawing and writing features make it easy to respond to those activities and makes it helpful for families who may not have a printer. I have a folder for just our Phys. Ed. teacher as well as my students' music teacher. Any activities that the specialist have assigned to my students can go straight into their specific folders. SeeSaw has provided an engaging and interactive learning platform for myself, my students and their families. As much as this website/app is great, I cannot wait to be back in my classroom full of students!



## Little Green Thumbs

Stephanie Romanson

As my school headed towards implementing Project Based Learning (PBL) across all grade levels, I was very excited to learn that after many years of applying my classroom was one of the lucky recipients of the Little Green Thumbs grant. My goal for the 2019-2020 school year was to work with the students on a project that was engaging, had real-world application, provided an opportunity for cross-curricular learning, and helped to develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills such as communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity.

After a two-day training session and a plethora of resources, I was all set to begin an indoor garden and vermicomposting with my students. My students came up with the guiding question for our project: Can we grow enough food in an indoor garden to feed our class? Once we had our main focus in mind, the students further divided themselves into inquiry teams with a sub-focus they were most interested in that helped us as a collective answer our guiding question.

After we had our vermicomposting bins set up, we planted vegetable and herb seeds. As the garden began to grow, students worked collaboratively to water, monitor for pests, record daily/weekly changes, harvest, and troubleshoot when issues arose (i.e., spider mites). Students enjoyed eating the harvest (especially our cucumbers) and sharing the surplus with our office staff who were able to enjoy a salad with homemade dressing that featured the dill we grew! Unfortunately, due to school closures our project was cut short. As we were keeping our guiding question in focus, we were planning on having a "salad-bration" with everything that was grown.

In addition to the hands on learning the garden provided us with and the small group inquiry projects the students chose to focus on, as a class we compared the cost of purchasing vs. growing, learned about where our food comes from depending on the current season, and had a visit with a farmer and agriculture specialist lined up (sadly this had to be canceled due to school closures).



With the help of the Little Green Thumbs gardening grant, we were able to create an indoor garden that provided students with the opportunity to grow and eat healthy food and work together to care for the garden and our worms, all while learning about nutrition, community collaboration, conservation and sustainable practices. My students were engaged, felt their learning had a purpose, and loved the hands-on aspects the garden provided.

Everything that we needed to start growing was included in the Little Green Thumbs garden-in-a-box kits, including garden boxes, seeds, soil, grow lights and hanging equipment, as well as a vermicomposting kit. In addition to the supplies we also received amazing support from the Little Green Thumbs team. I highly recommend applying for this grant!



### **Special Project Grants**

Is there a special project that your school would like to undertake or participate in?

MAME members can apply for funding of up to \$1000 for Special Projects.

Visit [www.multiagemanitoba.org](http://www.multiagemanitoba.org) to complete your application.



## LDA Conference Jan 17-20, 2020

Shannon Young

This year's Learning Disabilities Association Conference was held at The World Center Marriot in Orlando, Florida. This year's conference was titled "Building Connections: Making Equity Accessible"

I was pleasantly surprised at the size of this conference. Not overwhelming, like FETC with over 10 thousand people. Small break out sessions, with LOTS of session choices. Sessions were only 1-2 hours depending on what you chose. I have to say, there were a few sessions I wished were all day! They were amazing! Most of the sessions I attended were really informative. One of my favourite sessions was "Motivational Interviewing".

Motivational interviewing is a concept that reduces the amount of struggle in class by letting go of the little things that don't *really* matter. Teachers must figure out what *their own* bottom line is before fighting the students over theirs. For example... does it *really* matter what pen or pencil they are writing with? By giving up power on these little things, students feel like they have some power in the class ( when really, they don't.)

Another great session was a literacy-based session by Katie Garner. She uses "magic tricks" to teach phonics. She "tricks" the brain into thinking it knows a secret, which marks it for memory. Check out her website:

[www.thesecretstories.com](http://www.thesecretstories.com) for free phonic poster downloads.



I would highly recommend this conference to anyone- it has enough sessions that will accommodate every classroom. Next year's conference will be held in New Orleans, February 18-21, 2021

## Highbury Sustainability Project

With the assistance of MAME's Special Project Grant, Highbury School was able to begin our multi-age Sustainability initiative to create produce bags for each family of our school community. The 2019-2020 school year was Highbury's Sustainability Committee inaugural year and our proposed plan was for students grade three to eight to come together and cut, sew, and finish a produce bag made from cotton. After, our committee would educate our community on an individual's ability to make a difference and how our actions impact the Earth through a whole school assembly and printed information for each bag. Unfortunately, then school started to look a little different and has since impacted our ability to follow through with our plan... like All great educators sometimes we need to be patient and realize that ours plans do not go accordingly.

Highbury Sustainability Committee is excited for the 2020-2021 school year to have an opportunity to take our already purchased supplies and spread out our timeline to cut, sew, and finish our bags for our community for next Earth day. Our new normal is allowing our committee a little extra gift, the gift of additional time, something that we as educators rarely get. We hope that this unprecedented time is giving our students opportunities to connect with nature and empathize with it in order to greater understand its importance in moving to a sustainable future.

Thank you, MAME, for allowing us the grant to provide an enriching opportunity to further our student's learning and education.



"Hi, I'm Luke, and I'm from the sustainability club. I will be telling you about why it's important to stay sustainable. I think you should stay sustainable because it will help the earth stay away from climate change and keep the earth healthy. But you should also keep healthy and sustainable cause right now we need to keep healthy and safe. So that's why I think that we should be more sustainable thank you for reading." – Grade 6 Student, Highbury

"I think having and being a part of the sustainability club is a very important thing because you get to have fun, make small projects, and do presentations, all while helping the environment." – Grade 7 Student, Highbury

## Virtual Team Building

Jessica Small

You are probably like me, struggling to continue to build a sense of community in this weird time of distance education. I have spent the last number of weeks trying to find some activities that would work with my students, grade 7/8, pouring over weird articles that are targeted at adults with suggestions like, "share something from your work desk" or "share a picture of your family" or even worse suggesting online games such as the House Party app that just do not work for us. Here are some of my suggestions that I have tried over the last few weeks (some have been better than others), and perhaps one may work for you:

1. **Kahoot** – Kahoot still works from distance. Did you know that you can set a "challenge mode" that allows for you give an extended time frame for students to complete a game? They follow the game as normal, enter a game pin but can complete it when works it works for them. What a great way to review material or just send something fun out like Disney movies?
2. **Two Truths and a Lie**- I decided to open my first virtual meeting with this as our game, requiring no technology and just had volunteers offer to be the person sharing. I struggled a little with everyone wanting to guess at the same time but with the chat function in most online meeting platforms and mute buttons (your new best friend!) we survived.
3. **Never Have I Ever**- one of my students wanted to play this... and I was a little reluctant but apparently lots of people are playing this on TikTok. So, I jumped on the band wagon and made some school appropriate questions having my students start with all ten fingers on their hand up, dropping one finger for each time they

had in fact done something. Most of my students decide not to use camera options while in our meetings, so it was anonymous, and we shared at the end of a round who was left "standing". Here are some suggestions, never have I ever: *broken a bone, traveled by plane, cut my own hair, binge watched an entire season of a show in one day, climbed a tree, won a championship or tournament, stole money while playing Monopoly, ridden an animal, read a Harry Potter book...*

4. **20 Questions**- my class is currently exploring Interactions within Ecosystems and Africa, Asia, and Australia. Before a class meeting, I had asked students to choose a country or capital city that from a map assignment and be prepared to answer basic yes or no questions (is it near an ocean? Is it inland? Does it start with...? Is it in the Northern part of...? etc.) Again, managing the order of questions was a little challenging but it worked out well and was a great way to practice our vocabulary. I flipped this for our science vocabulary and played more of a taboo style where each person chose a word giving up to 20 hints for the others to guess the word.
5. **Gif War**- this has been by far my students' favourite game, using the chat function in Microsoft Teams by students have access to Gif powered by Giphy. We played this similar to Apples to Apples- giving a category and students chose Gifs that fit. After, each student would vote with a thumbs up emoji who had the best Gif and that person gained a point. Categories included: *when you see a spider, your reaction when we go back to school, how you are feeling right now, when you read a good book, when you get lots of homework. We had a lot of fun with this and it made many students laugh.*



6. **Pictionary** – In Microsoft teams, I shared the whiteboard app allowing my students access to draw and everyone to see. We started with academic based categories, i.e. Science vocabulary and I challenged my students in teams to try and guess what a chosen student was drawing. The largest challenge was that anyone can draw in this function and it worked much better in smaller team meetings.

In this strange time, I hope we can continue to share ideas to support students. **Please follow MAME on Instagram (multiagemb) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/mbmame/>) for relevant articles and ideas.** We would love to hear what you are doing in your classroom, comment on our feed with other ideas to support the greater multi-age community.

### Boom Cards Lisa McAvoy

Like many teachers working from home right now I have been spending hours online researching resources and activities to use with my students. I teach Kindergarten so the challenge is to find activities that students can complete with minimal adult support. I have a classroom of non-readers so instructions need to be visual or auditory.

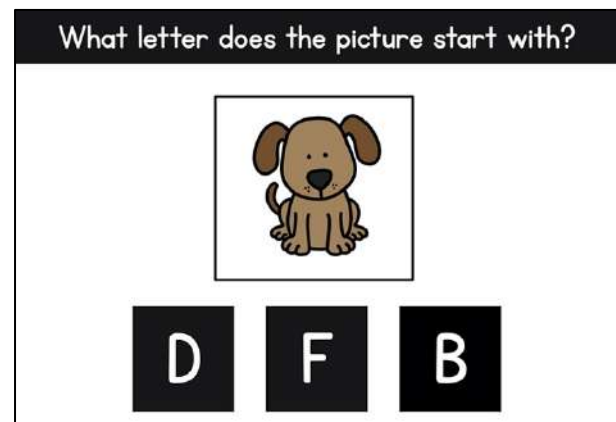
Also like many teachers I am big user of Teachers Pay Teachers. One resource I had seen on TPT was something called Boom Cards. I had never paid much attention to it before but with the school closure Boom Learning was offering a premium account for FREE! I love anything that is free.

What are Boom Cards?

"Boom Cards are self-grading exercises that are gamified for students and provide the data teachers want" -[www.boomlearning.com](http://www.boomlearning.com)



In the simplest terms Boom Cards are slides or task cards that contain questions. Students can answer these questions by selecting multiple choice answers or moving objects. Students submit their answers and receive instant feedback either with an audible ding and a green circle or a "whoops" sound and a red circle. You can access Boom Cards through their website [www.boomlearning.com](http://www.boomlearning.com) or by downloading the Boom Cards app. First, teachers need to create an account then send usernames and passwords to your students. There is also a "fast play" option.



Fast play does not collect individual student data so you can't track student performance.

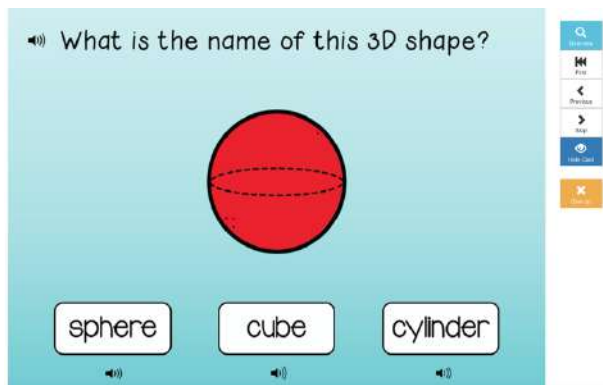
Boom Card "decks" are teacher created. You can find many free decks as well as paid through the store on Boom Learning or through Teachers Pay Teachers. There are Boom Decks available in all kinds of subject areas including: Math, ELA,

Science, French, Speech Therapy etc. and for grade levels K-12. There are hundreds of decks available and you can preview decks before downloading or purchasing them.



This card is from a deck created by French with the Hobbs <https://wow.boomlearning.com/deck/french-greetings-and-introductions-qjTKegnquGnkvC27>

You can even create your own decks using the Boom Learning Studio or by creating templates in PowerPoint. You can include custom backgrounds, fonts, and images and even record audio...the sky is really the limit. They have an excellent help section on their website and a Youtube channel with tons of videos to show you how to get started. The picture below is of a Boom Card I made myself.



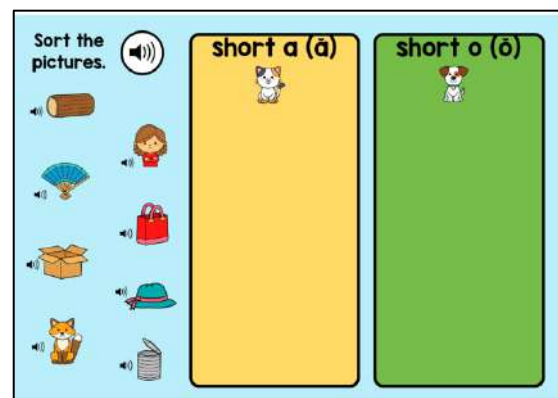
What I love most about Boom Cards is that even young students can use them independently and they are self-correcting and with certain accounts teachers can see a report to track student performance.



This picture shows part of a student report indicating which decks have been completed and the students score.

Right now Boom Learning is offering their ultimate account for Free until the end of June 2020. This allows you to create multiple classrooms and set up individual profiles for each of your students. You can assign decks to your whole class or just certain students.

The free account is only until the end of June but I am considering purchasing an account when we return to school. I think Boom Cards would make an excellent option for math or literacy centre activities. Check out this link <https://wow.boomlearning.com/#pricing> for more details on their different membership plans. Their starter plan gives free access to Boom Cards using their "Fast Play" feature. It only allows you to create 5 self-made decks and you can't create individual profiles or for all your students and track performance but it is still a fun and engaging activity at no cost.



Card from the deck Short A & O Vowel Comparison by Learning at the Primary Pond <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Store/Learning-At-The-Primary-Pond-Alison>

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### Submit an Article to Our Newsletter

This newsletter is created by our membership for our membership and we would love to hear from more of our members. Is there something exciting happening in your classroom or school? Do you have a teaching experience or thoughts on multi-age education that you would like to share? Please do! You can email your submissions including images any time to [lisa.mcavoy@lrsd.net](mailto:lisa.mcavoy@lrsd.net)

### The MAME Library

MAME has been accumulating resources that are relevant to multi-age educators. These materials are available for loan to our members. To view a list of titles, go to our website, [www.multiagemanitoba.org](http://www.multiagemanitoba.org) and click on the Lending Library tab. To borrow MAME resources, please contact Charlene Sacher at: [charlene.sacher@gmail.com](mailto:charlene.sacher@gmail.com)

### DID YOU KNOW?

Your MAME group has professional development funds available for our members to use. Simply go to our website and apply under PD Funding. You are eligible for up to \$300.00 to attend professional development opportunities.

Visit [www.multiagemanitoba.org](http://www.multiagemanitoba.org) to complete your application.