

Article Continued: Keeping Seasonal Volunteers Connected with their Students While they are Away

Prezi

For those that are unfamiliar with Prezi, it can best be described as an on-line, user-friendly communications tool, similar to Microsoft PowerPoint. You can create presentations, or Prezis, for your adult learners to view on their own or with a tutor while they discuss the material over the phone. Each Prezi is stored online and can be accessed from anywhere, no software downloads required. While simple to use, Prezi has several must-use features. This website allows you to embed images, videos, diagrams and even YouTube videos straight into a presentation. There is also a zoom feature which has many uses. For example, a tutor may want to zoom in on an unknown word and place its definition underneath so that a student better understands the text. The zoom function can help visual learners see a diagram of hard-to-grasp concepts. For more uses of Prezi, check out [Thoughts on Using Prezi as a Teaching Tool](#).

Social Media

Social media platforms can also play a role in distance learning for your tutors and students. Using social media in teaching can create comfort in an informal learning environment. While not all adult learners own a computer, a growing number do and those that don't have can often obtain access to the internet through their local library.

Another benefit of working with social media is that most of these platforms can be accessed from a Smartphone, which have their own capability to assist teaching adult learners. Now that Smartphones are becoming ubiquitous in our society, more adult learners now own one. These devices can be used in education through the use of apps, such as those that have been highlighted by past issues. One simple yet effective method of using Smartphones that doesn't require downloading apps is to practice reading and writing with your adult learners by making conversation through a phone's texting feature.

If your adult learners don't have access to a cell phone, you can direct them to the FCC's [Lifeline](#) program which works with carriers to provide free and subsidized cell phones to low income individuals. While this process has been limited to traditional telephone services, there are plans to begin subsidizing broadband services in late 2013.

Twitter

Twitter is a real-time information network that allows users to post "Tweets" and share information with your followers. It can be used to engage adult learners in conversation to practice reading and writing. Especially for ESOL students, the 140 character limit for tweets can provide some comfort to students who normally are weary of writing complex sentences. If a lesson calls for it, slang, abbreviations, and idioms, can also be used with great success in this platform. It's also perfect for introducing students to new vocabulary, through a "word of the

day” activity. Along with these uses, tutors can also post links to resources that students may find helpful.

[Facebook](#)

Facebook provides a great tool for tutors and teachers to engage students by setting up a Facebook group for learners. These groups can be made private, and can be used to keep students updated along with providing resources to them without the tutors having to mail materials to a student. A benefit of Facebook is that users receive notifications any time something has been posted in a group. This is especially beneficial for distance learning, where weekly video calls may suffice. These groups can also be used for discussions and/or writing assignments that tutors may give their adult learners. Recently, Facebook has partnered with the messaging and internet call service known as [Skype](#) to provide one-to-one video chatting that tutors and students can use to provide a slightly more personal touch to distance learning. This program can also be downloaded to use without having to create a Facebook account.

[Google+](#)

Google+ is likely to be one of the best social media platforms in supporting education. With this platform, you can create a Community for your students, which is basically the equivalent to a Facebook group in both form and function. Unlike Facebook, Google+ has [Hangouts](#). A Hangout is a video chat that may include up to 9 different users at a time. Within these Hangouts, tutors can access [YouTube](#) to watch instructional videos with their students, broadcast what they see on their desktops through the Screenshare program to incorporate technologies such as Prezi into their lessons, and even access [Google Drive](#) (formerly Google Documents). The latter is especially useful to explain corrections in the editing process. If nothing else, the fact that students and tutors can see each other’s faces reestablishes the personal connection that is often lost through distance learning.