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We wish to be there to console, to praise, to challenge, to suggest, to do all the things teachers normally do. In the meantime, we look at the little squares and smile and say with a cheerful voice: “Good morning, children! Does anybody want to share a story?”

Here I am, staring at the screen with 16 little squares, each depicting a child’s head. Some of them are looking sleepy, a few focus fiercely on the keyboard, others smile broadly at their teacher and their classmates, and one has his camera pointing at the ceiling.

My heart goes out to them. I know they are missing their friends. They long for physical contact with children their own age. Some of them still aren’t that verbal, but like to participate in play. But there is no social play now. They all have different capabilities on the computer. Also, their devices are all different. Their surroundings are different too – some sit in the kitchen, some are cooped up in their bedroom, a few share working space with their parents. Several have siblings running around in the background. Every now and then, we can hear the little one crying and my student, who should be paying attention to my wise words, is running off to console his little brother. It is all so, so different from everyday school.

How do I teach how to line up the ruler with the zero at the beginning of the line? How can I make sure that our Seed Journals are filled out properly and our budding scientists are measuring and recording the growth of their plants adequately? In school, I could sneak in a germinating seed to the one student whose little bean is not doing its job. Here? We rely on parents, who themselves are frustrated with the circumstances and are trying to do their work, while supervising their children.

Tempers are mounting and we all wish to be back in our safe havens, the comfort of familiarity. Except, that is not going to happen so soon. We wish to be there to console, to praise, to challenge, to suggest, to do all the things teachers normally do. In the meantime, we look at the little squares and smile and say with a cheerful voice: “Good morning, children! Does anybody want to share a story?”

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