

Increasing Student Engagement Using Pear Deck

Jennifer Lawson, Hillside Middle School, Northville, MI
lawsonje@northvilleschools.org



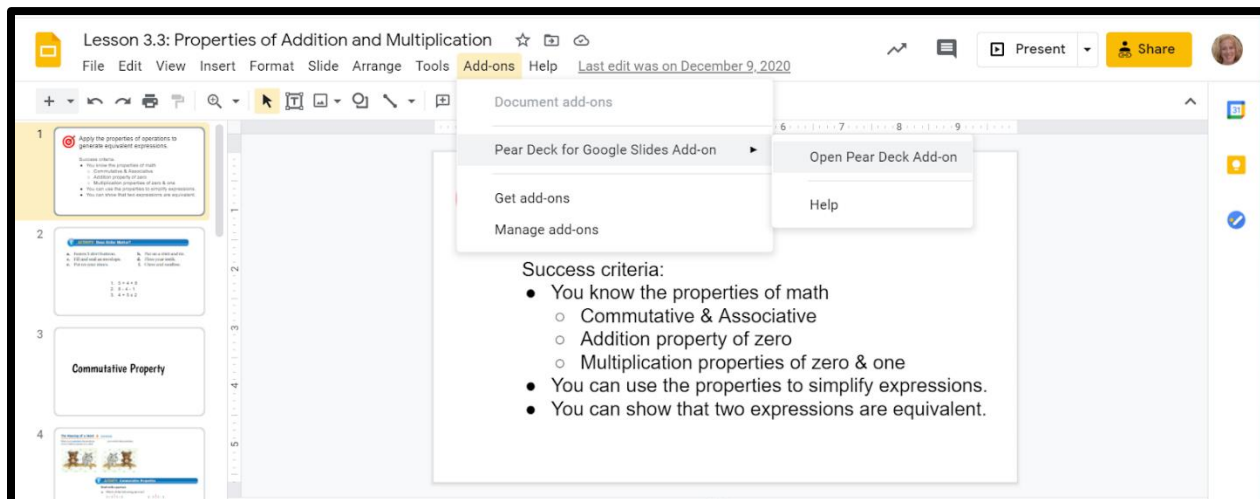
I have always prided myself on the engagement of students in my classroom. The room was abuzz with learning. We would laugh together, learn together, make mistakes together. It was our happy place, and it was wonderful! Then the pandemic hit, and everything changed. I went from a teacher who had 100% percent student engagement in my classroom to almost no engagement at all online. I chalked it up to the times and did the best I could as I never taught online before. I knew that life would be back to normal in a few months, so everything would be back to normal. Then it wasn't.

When the school year started, I was given the opportunity to teach a new class – Algebra 1. While I was not looking forward to learning a new curriculum during a pandemic, I was excited to teach the class. This would be the third year in a row I would have some of these students since I had changed grade levels each of the two previous years. I was going into the new year with students that I already knew. Even though we were starting the year virtually, I knew it would be okay.

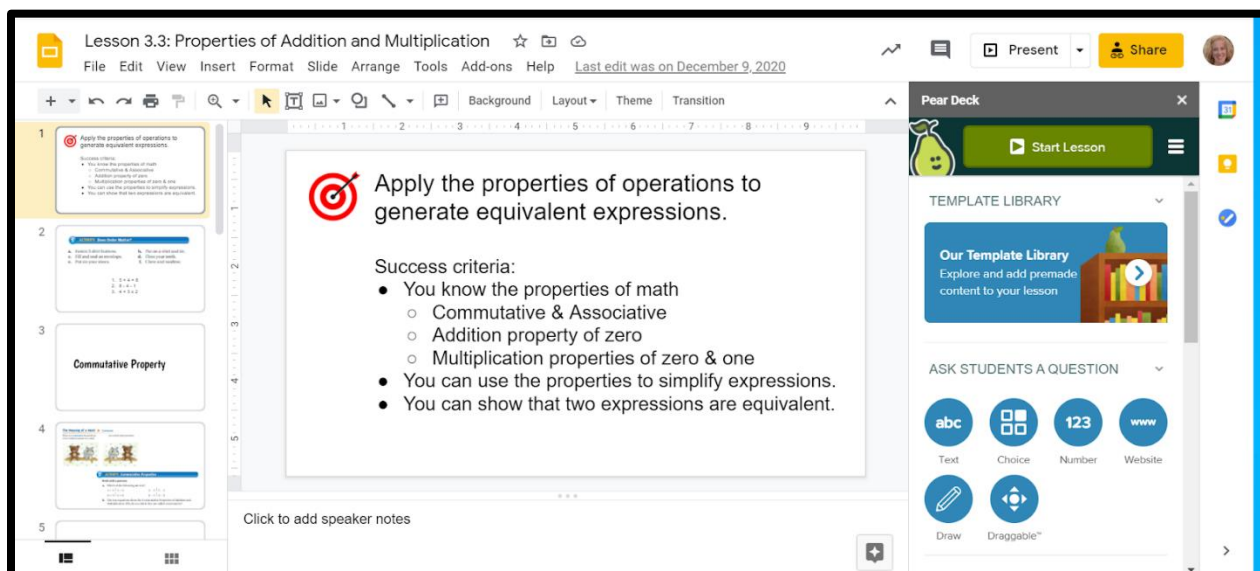
I thought the engagement issues I had at the end of last year would be in the past, as many families were just in survival mode then. I knew this school year would be different as we were now nine months into our “new normal.” I was wrong. My engagement online was still almost zero. I felt like I was talking to myself. My students didn't want to share their work, which was never an issue in the past. After a month, we went back face to face. Surely, my student engagement would be like it was pre-pandemic. I tried various activities, but nothing seemed to help. Then, I finally figured it out. When students work in groups, they are in their safe space. They can ask questions, work on solutions together, feel comfortable, and confident with their work. With all of the new safety protocols, the typical group work in math is gone. When their safety net is gone, students are less likely to take a risk, and I knew I needed to find a way to change that-- enter **PEAR DECK!**

Pear Deck is a Google Slide add-on that makes your Google Slides interactive! It was a game-changer for me! I went from almost no student engagement to 100% engagement. Pear Deck is a FREE add-on that can be downloaded from the Chrome Store. (There is a paid version with additional features. Currently, I use the paid version with additional features that was supplied by my district.)

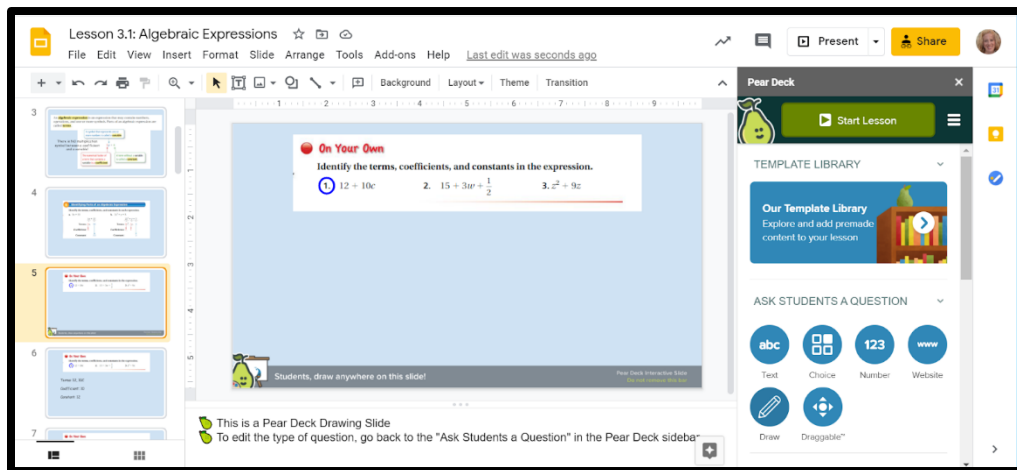
Once added to your Google account, you can create a Google Slide from scratch or use one already created. Once in Google Slide, go to “Add-ons” and open the Pear Deck Add-on. You will need to do this every time you create a Pear Deck Slide.



A new work window will appear on the right side of your slide.



From here, you can add interactive elements to your slides with just a click of a button. There are also templates that you can add, as well. Students can add text, draw a picture, pick from a multiple-choice question, or even use a “drag” feature to move items around the slide. To add these to your slides, simply click on the question feature you’d like to add. The slide will be automatically updated.

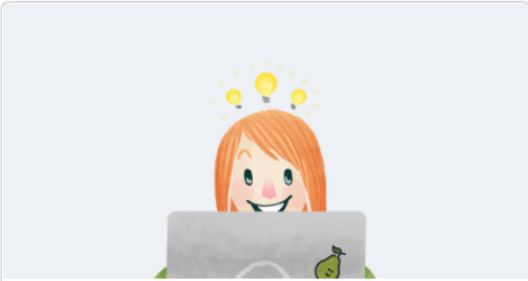


I like to use the “Draw” feature as students can draw on the screen or add a text box.

Once you have created your Pear Deck Lesson, you will need to choose “Start Lesson” to use the interactive features. If you choose “Present,” as with a typical Google Slides presentation, the interactivity will not work. From there, you can choose “Student Paced” or “Instructor Paced.”

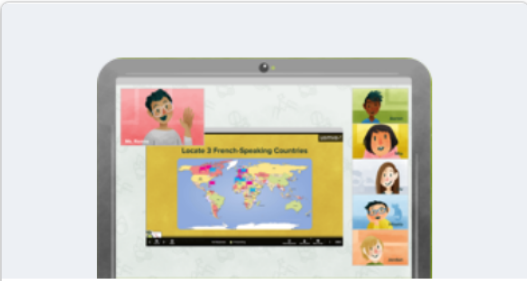
Choose Your Lesson Mode

You can always change this later.



Student-Paced Activity

Pear Deck **Student-Paced Mode** allows you to get all the power of Pear Deck engagement even when students are working through lessons at their own pace, asynchronously.



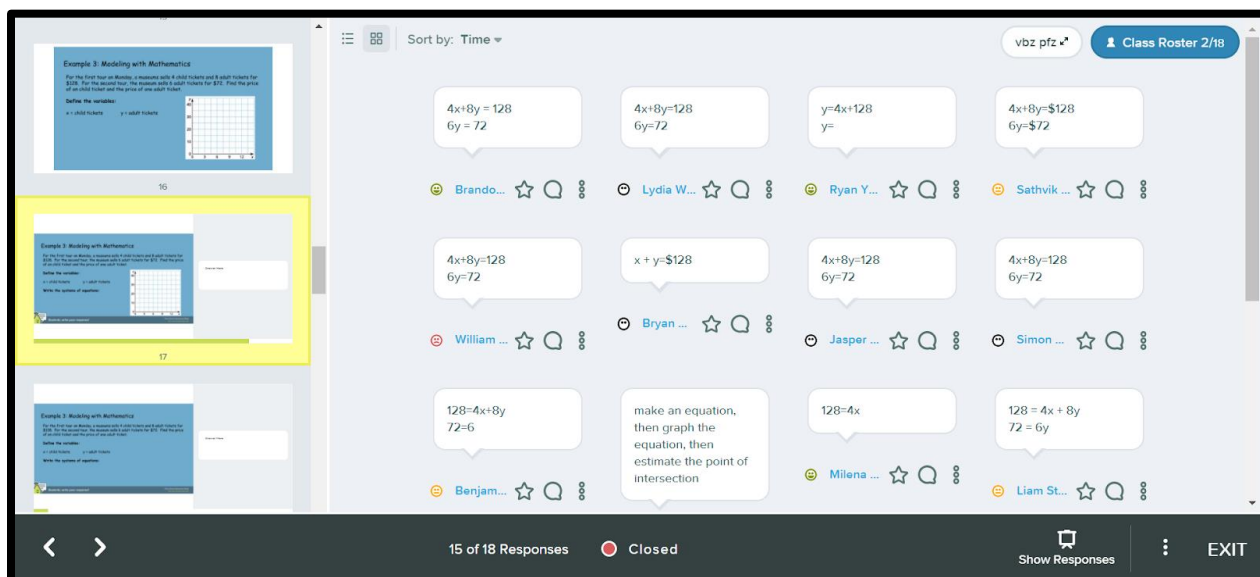
Instructor-Paced Activity

If you are connected with your students in **real-time** (virtually or otherwise), use this mode to guide them through the lesson and see their responses synchronously.

Once the lesson is started, students can access the Pear Deck presentation by going to joinpd.com and use the code provided, or you can give the students a link to join.



Once the lesson has started, you can see student work in real-time through the Teacher Dashboard. You can also leave feedback for the students by clicking on the text bubble. Only that individual can see what you have typed. If you click on “show responses,” all the student responses will be shown to the students. The best part is that when student work is shared to the class, it is all anonymous. You can see whose work it is, but the students can not. :)



When the lesson is over, you can save the session and send each student a copy of the presentation along with their work and your feedback. They will get a copy sent to their inbox and a copy in their Google Drive.

Since using Pear Deck, **virtually and face to face**, my student engagement is back at 100%. The students are comfortable sharing their work since it is all anonymous. Students can ask questions and share their work from their computer. I have been able to quickly give feedback and in a more timely manner. Pear Deck has changed my teaching for the better.

For more an in-depth look at Pear Deck and its features, I created a few Youtube videos:

[Pear Deck-How to add Pear Deck to your Google Account](#)

[Pear Deck-How to create a Pear Deck Lesson](#)

[Pear Deck-How to use student pace mode and give feedback](#)

[Pear Deck-How to automatically send student responses and feedback to students](#)

[Pear Deck-How to use teacher pace mode and give feedback](#)