This year, my school system turned to Microsoft 365 capabilities and Teams for live sessions. Using the ClassLink launchpad, students and teachers could sign into various apps with a single login. I relied on Microsoft forms, Flipgrid, Nearpod, Kahoot, Quizlet, Gimkit, and Quizizz to keep my students engaged. I adapted to Microsoft and took advantage of the school system’s premium-plus Nearpod subscription.

Since some of my students were attending class from home while others were physically in the classroom, I decided to add Spiral (spiral.ac) and DeckToys (deck.toys) to my technology tool kit to try to effectively address this unique hybrid set up.

**Spiral**
I discovered that Spiral, which has just become part of Discovery Education (discoveryeducation.com), is a wonderful free tool for everyday formative activities. The platform does not require integration with an LMS and students log in with a simple code. There are no apps to install and no downloading is required. Teachers can launch an activity or post one to be completed asynchronously. Student answers can also appear live, or you can provide feedback offline.

Within Spiral I chose to use Quickfire Lite (see Figure 1) because it doesn’t require any pre-made activities. I created classes on my dashboard so that my students would always have the same login code. Google classroom teachers can import both student data and classes.

As shown in Figure 2, Spiral includes three types of formative activities: Discuss, Team up, and Clip.

Quickfire Lite allows you to verbally ask questions of both the students at home and those in the classroom. They are able to respond in writing, and you are able to provide immediate, live feedback.

On my dashboard, student responses appeared in real time. If I shared my screen, I could also choose to hide student names. I could either click on the star for correct responses or click “fix” which allows the student to submit another response. While there were some periods of dead time while students were fixing errors, my virtual students would use this time to ask me questions and I noticed that my classroom students turned to each other for help.

Quickfire Lite makes it possible for all students to participate, engage in

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**Figure 1. Quickfire Lite and Quickfire**
the activity synchronously, and guarantee on-the-spot feedback. I especially like having the flexibility to adjust my speech in the same ways that I would in a traditional classroom, rephrasing a question, for example.

Finally, Quickfire Lite allows you to collect data on each student and automatically stores it for you. The platform generates three types of reports: by student, by question, and as an overall grade table, as shown in Figure 3.

At the end of each activity, students can see their score and student responses are stored for you, as illustrated in Figure 4. With the data collected on all students and the ability to click to see the history of their responses, this versatile tool gave me the insight I needed to create appropriate follow-up activities or to go back and reteach.

Finally, Quickfire Lite even allows us to share lessons with one another!

**DeckToys**

I love gamification and I love discovering tools that help me gamify French. This year, DeckToys became my trusty sidekick. While the free version only allows the creation of two classrooms and three private decks, I made it work. However, I will be investing the $96 this school year to expand my use of this excellent tool.

Imagine being able to create a game board with an immersive reader for your existing lessons by simply dragging and dropping. DeckToys allows you to create differentiated learning paths and a variety of activities, sync all students to your lesson or let them work at their own pace, and track their progress in real time! This is the magic of DeckToys.

In just minutes you can gamify your existing lessons from PDFs, documents, slides, or imported Quizlet sets. Students only need a link to access the Deck eliminating the need to download apps, and DeckToys works on any type of device. Best of all, students can complete games synchronously or asynchronously.
My students were playing the game Among Us so I adapted the gamification elements of that game into my board games. In Among Us, players complete tasks individually, come together to discuss, and vote on who might be the imposter.

I also created a variety of activities and then embedded hidden cultural clues that would pop up when those activities were completed. Students then posted the clues they found into Padlet and collaborated to solve the cultural mystery. I rewarded them with Among Us stickers!

I imported two Quizlet sets to practice the past tense and made my game board using Among Us characters. Students could choose which pathway to complete first and then choose in what order to complete the activities.

You can add a variety of activities to your game board as illustrated in Figure 6. I selected the Quizlet set and chose game activity and with a click, it was automatically generated. Then I selected the terms to include for each activity. I embedded my cultural clues under the advanced setting tab so they would only be revealed upon the successful completion of that activity. As with video games, DeckToys also has a feature that allows students to challenge each other for a bit of friendly competition.

The customization possible with this tool is truly exceptional. As shown in Figure 7, you control the colors, background designs and icons. The ability to award points, the live leaderboard, live progress, power ups, and many other options make DeckToys a unique and useful tool.

In fact, DeckToys has so many features that I didn’t have time to use them all last year. This year I plan to try out the digital escape room, interactive video, and perhaps put my students on teams. I think that DeckToys is well worth the investment.

As always, it is wise to experiment with just one or two new tools at a time to see how they support your needs. This year, I plan to use more Spiral features and will explore DeckToys more in depth.

I believe that the pandemic showed the world how resilient and dedicated we educators are. We relied on technology in many new ways and made it work for us. May the upcoming year be a bit less technologically challenging!