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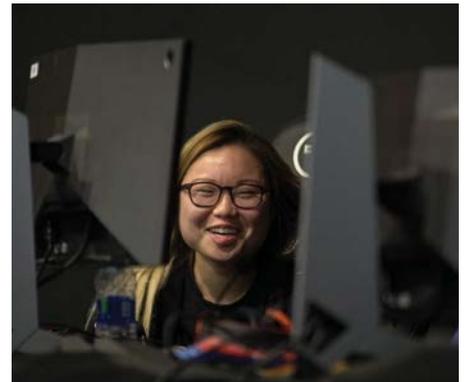
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If we ever hope to break cycles of generational poverty by ending the achievement gap in U.S. education, we must first close the opportunity gap that some students still face, says Tequilla Brownie, executive vice president with nonprofit consulting firm The New Teacher Project (TNTP).

“Some students simply aren’t given an opportunity to engage in the type of rigorous academic work that will prepare them for lifelong success,” says Brownie, who works with educators and communities nationwide to solve the issue.

In identifying the major factors behind what TNTP calls “the opportunity myth,” the organization’s research also sheds light on strategies educators can use to ensure that students of color and those from low-income backgrounds reach their full potential. Brownie is a former educator in Tennessee’s Memphis City Schools (now merged into Shelby County Schools), and has spoken at DA’s CAO Summits.

How to close education’s ‘opportunity gap’

Some students do too much work that’s way below grade level

What are some of the root causes of the opportunity gap?

First, it’s when students are not given access to grade-appropriate assignments. Yes, some students are behind grade level, but we’ve found that some are never given a chance to do grade-level work. Our research shows that when given a chance to do grade-level work, students succeed at a greater rate than what people might have expected.

The second is strong instruction; it’s whether students or teachers are doing the cognitive lifting. Imagine being in a classroom where the teacher asks a question and before the students can grapple with it, the teacher writes the answer on the board.

It sounds like the gap results from some educators having lower expectations.

When we ask teachers if they believe in college-ready standards, the majority say “yes.” But there’s a disconnect. Teachers don’t expect students to be able to do the work.

When we survey students, the majority—over 70%—have a career path in mind. They have goals, and they know they need education beyond high school. They know there’s a path for them, but schools are not leaning into that.

Is it fair to say that some students are disproportionately affected?

We have to acknowledge, as a country, which students are getting access to grade-appropriate assignments. Too

often, not enough students are, and overwhelmingly that number comprises students of color, students from low-income families, students who have mild to moderate learning disabilities, and English language learners—irrespective of their previous performance.

This is on all of us—every adult in the chain. We need to be making different choices with the time and resources that we have.

So how do district leaders start to close the opportunity gap?

You need to know, with evidence, that your teachers are giving students grade-appropriate work. The way to verify that is not just walking into a classroom for a five-minute observation. You have to look at the work and the assignments students are being given.

And it’s not all about funding, right?

When we talk about the achievement gap, it’s as if there’s something wrong with black and brown students and students in poverty. That’s not the case.

This is as much about educators making a conscious decision to upend the opportunity myth. We can upend it by making different decisions with the time and resources that we have now. That’s not to say we don’t need additional funding, but we would actually begin to see a shift if we started making different choices right now. **DA**

Matt Zalaznick is senior writer.

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How not to get distracted by educational fads

DA's CAO Summit speaker Mike Schmoker says leaders must focus exclusively on three key concepts



Have you been thrown off course by a hot educational trend? You're probably not alone among public school leaders.

Author and former administrator Mike Schmoker warns that research shows little evidence that many fads have significantly improved achievement. Schmoker discussed what curriculum directors should pay attention to when he delivered his featured talk, "Teaching and Leading with Focus," at DA's CAO Summit in Chicago.

With only so many hours in a day, what should educators prioritize?

To lead with focus, which is paying attention to things that matter most—almost to the near exclusion of all else. In schools, there are three things that matter most: the right kind of curriculum, literacy and effective instruction.

I can already hear some grumbling from our readers, but what falls into the category of "all else"?

There are a large number of popular but unproven programs and initiatives that populate the school improvement terrain—things like differentiated instruction, an overemphasis on new forms of grading, and reducing class size. Reduc-

ing class size can have some benefits, but it doesn't compare to the benefits of the things that I emphasize.

So how do administrators and teachers reset to build a better curriculum?

For everything English language arts-related, start with a review of the state standards. You have to decide which ones are most important, and this job ought to get done pretty quickly. It can be done by a single team of teachers.

Once you do that, you can teach them any way you want, but make sure you don't decide to teach more standards than can be meaningfully taught during a nine-month school year.

Then, the name of the game—and this brings us right up against literacy—is you want to see a far larger amount of text being read than we've ever had before.

So, let's focus on literacy.

Everyone knows that literacy consists of abundant amounts of reading, and talking and writing purposefully about what we read. Those are supreme, and they almost form standards by themselves, which are vastly superior to the hyperparsed, hyperdelineated Common Core standards.

We'd be so smart to specify within the curriculum for English and every other course the proper amount of reading, discussion and writing. If we

don't spell out the number of writing assignments each year for every course, students will not write enough to prepare themselves for the future.

And how does that all come together to improve instruction?

A host of research has been telling us for decades that you can't get around certain fundamental elements of good instruction, starting with what it is that's going to be learned each day. When students know that, the odds that students will learn what they need to learn skyrocket. Give the students some sense of why what they're learning for the day is worth learning.

That is followed by intentionally teaching the content or skill in small, manageable chunks, with an opportunity for the students to practice that skill, such as building a short list comparing and contrasting two literary or historical figures.

While students are doing this guided practice, teachers should be walking around, seeing how well students are doing, and getting a very quick sample of how well they are learning that particular step. If they aren't learning it, we need to reteach and adjust, and break it down into simpler, clearer language so students have another chance to engage in guided practice. **DA**

Matt Zalaznick is senior writer.

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How to diversify esports

Esports diversity means English-language learners and students with special needs are less often left out of extracurricular activities. In sprawling Dallas ISD, a newly created districtwide esports league is giving these students an equal chance to compete alongside their classmates on teams at about 65 schools.

“One of our esports coaches had students who were newcomers to the country, who had limited English and hadn’t been included in any activities; now, they’ve had the opportunity to be included,” says Sharla Hudspeth, Dallas ISD’s director of student activities.

“The same goes for our students with learning differences,” Hudspeth adds. “They’ve also been participating and are doing quite well.”

Educators will likely have to recruit to achieve esports diversity. At Tipton High School in Indiana, teacher and esports coach John Robertson says girls account for about one-third of the players on his teams and about half of the students in his after-school club.

“We did a ladies-only day so girls would not feel intimidated,” says Robertson, whose school is a part of the Tipton Community School Corp. “We do what we can to make sure everyone realizes they’re welcome.”

Standing up for teammates

Gerald Solomon admits that a significant level of toxicity pervades the online esports world, which continues to be dominated by white and Asian males.

An international program designed to improve relations in the Middle East, Northern Ireland and other areas of global conflict has guided Solomon’s charitable organization, the Samueli Foundation, in helping to develop an eight-week esports diversity curriculum.

“We wanted to figure out how to create empathy and respect among players—to teach them what it means

to stand up for someone and how to respond to bad behavior online,” says Solomon, whose foundation is the primary backer of the North America Scholastic Esports Federation, which offers the esports diversity program to schools as part of a free curriculum.

One diversity lesson focuses on the battle game *Overwatch*, which requires each student to create a cartoon-like character with various attributes, strengths and weaknesses. Then, they write about what it’s like to be the character, who may be of a different race or gender than the student, and discuss their feelings with their classmates or teammates.

After that, they will write a similar piece about another student’s character.

“A white male may never fully understand what it’s like to be in the shoes of a black male or black female, but taking on different characteristics begins to create a sense of empathy, and can change how an individual thinks,” Solomon says.

K-12 esports also attracts students with a diversity of interests, such as kids who want to create team logos and “fandom art” or those who want to do play-by-play “shout-casting” for competitions, he adds.

“We’re not just looking for gamers,” Solomon says. “We’re looking for people who are casual players who may feel disengaged or disenfranchised who want to feel a sense of belonging.”

More popular than football?

A sure way to achieve diversity is to bring the activity to large, diverse districts, such as Dallas ISD and Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

The North America Scholastic Esports Federation helped Miami-Dade launch esports programs at 10 high schools.

The district plans to expand esports to more buildings in 2020-21. “While the competitive players in Miami-Dade tend to be still majority male, a lot of the



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school clubs are run by girls,” Solomon says.

In Pennsylvania, a coalition of organizations led by the youth-focused nonprofit Emerald Foundation is using state grants to achieve esports diversity. The coalition integrates esports into STEM-focused career and technical education programs in three underserved schools.

The foundation has opened an esports clubhouse at its headquarters, acquired grant funds to provide computer equipment to schools and provided stipends to team managers.

The nonprofit is also planning to put a mobile esports arena on the road in the back of a box truck, so schools that can’t afford to build facilities can still host video-gaming events, says Terry Kraft, the organization’s chief esports strategist.

The CTE programs allow students to explore careers in all areas of esports, including event management, graphic design, and software and web development, Kraft says.

A superintendent in one of the districts, the Columbia Borough School District, even reported to the foundation that more students tried out for esports than the football team.

“We’re seeing a diversity of students coming together for these clubs,” Kraft says. “It’s the captain of the football team, it’s a field hockey player, it’s somebody who’s on the margins, not engaged in anything else in school.”

—Matt Zalaznick



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Districts navigate the challenges of adding legal counsel

As court cases involving special education students, human resource issues and staff grievances continue to increase for all districts, school leaders have had to rely more heavily on legal counsel.

For decades, a single general counsel might have handled all litigation, but the ever-growing complexities of state and federal regulations, and expansions of districts' legal needs, have changed that, says Teri Engler, a longtime Illinois school attorney and founding partner in Engler Callaway Baasten & Sruga.

"While the old model is fine, districts now work with two or three firms so that they can pick the specialists in particular practice areas of school law," says Engler. "District leaders are saying, 'This firm here has the deepest bench on labor and employment, but this firm has a better bench when it comes to student rights and special ed law.'"

RFPs for legal counsel should be honed to include issues based on a district's unique needs, Engler says.

IEP intervention

Here is advice from the Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Ed for smoother IEP meetings and management.

Pre-meeting

- Explain who will be representing the school and their role, and ask guardians if anyone has been left out.
- Invite guardians to review relevant documents ahead of time and encourage classroom visits.

During the meeting

- Have copies of materials ready.
- Maintain confidentiality and don't discuss other students.
- Be willing to say, "I don't know, but I'll find out."

For more, visit DAmag.me/cadre.

"For example, you may be looking at reconsidering your counsel right before your teachers union contract is up," says Engler. "Well, have you ever had a strike? Before you choose counsel, you want to know who has a history and an ability to handle that effectively."

Proactive approach

Before reaching out for representation, district leaders should look inward to analyze specific immediate, intermediate and long-term needs, Engler says. In addition to considering experience (at least 10 years of practice in education law, she suggests), references from other districts, accessibility, and billing practices, look for firms who are mindful that they work for the district, and not the other way around, she says.

Finding that ideal working relationship is key, agrees Isabel Machado, board attorney for more than 30 public school districts in New Jersey and founding partner of the Machado Law Group.

"Every school attorney in New Jersey—we all know the law," says Machado. "It's more important to have someone who can collaborate with and who's a good fit with the administration, and someone whom you can really work with on a day-to-day basis."

Part of that relationship also includes preventing legal problems. Machado stages regular training sessions for her clients, covering issues such as sexual harassment and hostile work environments, and sharing updates to legislation and regulations.

"Training allows me to put in certain protocols for the district," says Machado.

Finding the right fit

To help districts navigate the challenges of finding and vetting legal counsel, the Texas Association of School Boards has created Working with Your School Attorney (DAmag.me/tasb), which answers common questions and provides



advice from an unbiased source, says Joy Baskin, TASB director of legal services.

For example, administrators often debate whether to add staff attorneys. "District administrators should know that once they hire in-house counsel, that's not the end of the story," says Baskin. "They can experience cost savings because the in-house counsel manages relationships with outside firms, but no one lawyer can satisfy a thriving school district's needs."

The legal needs associated with special ed, in particular, have become a huge challenge for any district to navigate because special ed has become so complex, says Baskin.

It's an area of high risk for school districts due to the mandate for individualized education programs, the resource challenges involved in fulfilling those programs, and the potential for parental relationships to break down.

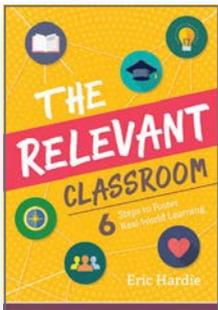
Special ed is a practice unto itself, agrees Machado. "It's easy for someone who doesn't practice special ed law all the time to be overwhelmed by the different judges, pretrial work and other issues," she says.

Ultimately, the biggest pitfall in adding legal counsel may be hiring an attorney who doesn't specialize in education.

"There are so many nuances in school law that it's easy to make a mistake," says Machado. "Not every attorney, no matter how skilled they are, is a good fit for every district." —Ray Bendici

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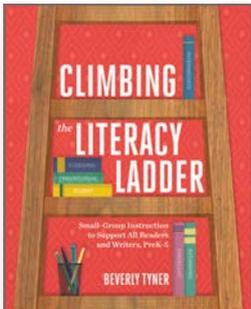
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Girls take flight with drone certification

Of the 69,166 remote pilot certifications awarded by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) in 2017, only 3,462 were earned by women.

That 5% is a statistic that the Elementary Institute of Science in San Diego, California, is working to change with its grant-funded Girls Take Flight program, says Executive Director Jim Stone. The program is aimed at San Diego USD sophomore and junior students.

One recruitment challenge for the science learning center's program is capturing girls' interest by emphasizing the uses of drones beyond the "stalking by drone" perception, Stone says.

Attaining certification

A recent kickoff event at the Elementary Institute of Science for nearly 100 girls from five Title I-qualified district high schools featured drone-filmed videos of medicine being delivered to remote African villages, whale watching excursions and other innovative drone uses. Twenty girls were then chosen for a 30-hour, weeklong drone camp in which they learned how to code drones and met women in the profession. From that group, 10 were selected for a 150-hour, May-October internship program that focused on airport operations, navigation, weather, radio communications and drone operations.

In addition to the training, the girls participated in field trips, including one which showcased real-life uses of drones at a Boeing facility. A behind-the-scenes tour at a nearby Universal Studios drone show included meeting Madeline Ong, a drone light show execution lead at Intel Corp., who was behind the record-breaking 1,218-drone light show at the opening ceremonies of the 2018 Olympic Winter Games in South Korea.

The program's goal is for each girl



EMPOWER UP—In addition to gaining FAA certification, the GirlsTake Flight program has helped young women, such as Masiti (above), to build the self-confidence to connect with other students who have similar aeronautical engineering career ambitions.

to attain the FAA's remote pilot certification, plus invest hours into honing safety-focused remote flight skills. Students also focus on drone-imaging utilization by learning videography and

photography skills. And after becoming FAA certified, each participant is tasked with a drone project that culminates in a presentation to other students at their high school.

INDUSTRY NEWS



TRAINING DAYS—As part of FAA certification, students train on drone flight simulators (above) in addition to coding drones, learning airport operations, and participating in field trips where they meet with aeronautical engineering professionals.

Increasing numbers

One student, Masiti, currently a senior, exemplifies the program's empowerment impact. "Masiti started out as a quiet student who was unsure of her career path," says Stone. "She utilized her knowledge and skills to start a drone club at her school in hopes of inspiring her peers and community. She now plans to pursue aeronautical engineering as her undergraduate degree."

Although the Girls Take Flight model is scalable for other school districts, Stone says that the biggest challenge is finding qualified female drone pilots who can also instruct.

"We have qualified 13% of all of the female FAA drone-certified pilots under the age of 20 with only two cohorts already," he says. "We look forward to increasing that number even more."

—Ariana Fine

The **New Mexico Public Education Department** has chosen **Cognia** to provide the state's mathematics and English language arts assessments for grades 3 through 8. Cognia will also provide student success data.

The **Texas State Board of Education** has approved **Houghton Mifflin Harcourt's** Into Literature Texas program for grades 9 through 12. Multiple Texas schools have recently adopted HMH's Into Reading and ¡Arriba la Lecura! programs for K-8.

Metro Nashville Public Schools (Tennessee) will equip 159 pre-K teachers with **Hatch WePlaySmart** multitouch tables to improve kindergarten readiness. Hatch will also provide online and in-person PD.

Montague Public Schools (Michigan) has installed a **NAPCO Security Technologies** system that controls

access to and opening times for up to 32,000 doors. The district also adopted **Alarm Lock's** Trilogy locks that can enact full lockdowns in 10 seconds.

Hayward USD (California) recently completed an energy program with **ENGIE Services U.S.** and **TRiGroup** that is projected to save \$65 million in energy costs. The project includes solar installations at all 33 schools that could generate 90% of the district's energy needs.

Anadarko Public Schools (Oklahoma) is helping Native American students overcome school readiness barriers through a four-year project with the **National Indian Education Association, Communities in Schools Mid-America,** and **Wichita and Affiliated Tribes of Oklahoma.** The project provides supports to ensure college and career readiness.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

In Tennessee's Tipton County Schools, principal **Varissa Richardson** conducts conflict resolution for Munford Elementary School students using techniques she learned while simultaneously working in criminal justice and school counseling. Richardson, who was recently named Tennessee Principal of the Year, focuses on inclusiveness, connects with parents and members of the community through monthly meet and greets, and offers an open-door policy that encourages parents to speak with her at any time.



Principal **Ashlee Bruggenschmidt** of Warrick County School Corp. in Indiana has led Sharon Elementary as an exemplary or A grade-level school for nine of the past 10 years. She also founded the Play for Kate foundation, which has funded 10 scholarships for graduating high schoolers and advocated for an Indiana law that requires all-terrain vehicle riders under 18 to wear helmets. Play for Kate also developed an ATV-riding robot named Safety Sam that teaches kids about ATV safety. Bruggenschmidt is the recipient of the 2019 Indiana Elementary Principal of the Year award.



—Steven Blackburn

Districts seek aid in addressing nurse shortage

Schools across the U.S. continue to face a shortage of licensed nurses. In 2018, more than 60% of schools didn't employ a full- or part-time nurse, according to the National Association of School Nurses (NASN).

"When a nurse isn't present, the care of students is left to unlicensed personnel who don't have the education or training to address the complex health conditions in schools, which puts those students at risk," says Laurie G. Combe, NASN president.

This year, more than 700 of New York City's 2,000 schools are going to a partial or full day without a nurse on-site, while shortages in Chicago and Los Angeles have led to teacher strikes, according to published reports. The Chicago Public Schools strike ended when leaders agreed to employ a nurse at every school five days per week.

MOVERS AND SHAKERS

Superintendent **Kevin Blankenship** of Scott-Morgan Community Unit School District No. 2 now leads a second district, Winchester CUSD No. 1, making him one of only two Illinois superintendents to take on a dual position. At Scott-Morgan, Blankenship overhauled the technology infrastructure, oversaw two school renovations, promoted a property tax referendum and encouraged professional development. For his efforts, the

Illinois Association of School Administrators named Blankenship Superintendent of the Year.



"When budgets are tight, administrators make decisions to hire teachers over nurses, but what many administrators don't understand is that having a nurse on staff can actually save dollars," says Combe.

For example, in schools where full-time nurses were present, Massachusetts gained \$2.20 for every dollar invested in a statewide school health services program, according to a cost-benefit study published in *JAMA Pediatrics* (DAMag.me/nurses).

Stepping in

Rather than trying to staff their own health services, some districts have turned to outside providers.

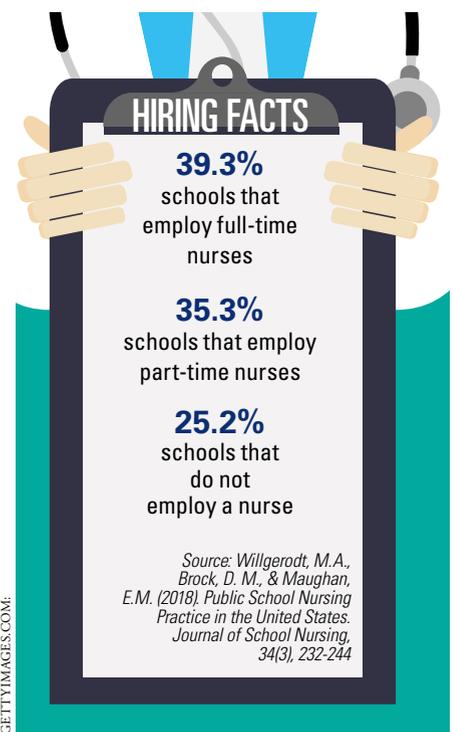
South Bend Community School Corp. has full-time nurses at every school, in part because of a contract that the Indiana district signed with Beacon Health System, a nonprofit organization that provides care in north central Indiana and southwestern Michigan. Since 2012, Beacon has provided school nursing services to South Bend to properly train and support nursing staff.

However, South Bend still has two job openings. "This year, I've had more openings than most," says school nurse manager Susan M. Cullen. "School nurses are typically paid less than nurses working in the hospital setting even though the work is still very demanding, so in many cases it becomes a question of pay."

Cullen manages a pool of substitute nurses, who fill in when needed. "When they aren't available, I along with my nursing supervisor cover the school health office," she says.

'We are going to support you'

In California, intensive care unit nurses who transferred to San Jose USD typically left within the first week. After



improving training and support, San Jose USD has now successfully recruited and retained 27 school nurses in addition to 40 health clerks and licensed practical nurses.

"Part of hiring is being able to say, 'Yes, we are going to support you,' because that's what nurses always ask for," says Melinda Landau, manager of the district's health and family support program.

A multiyear nursing orientation program at San Jose USD prepares recent recruits for working in a school environment during their first year. Those nurses then mentor and train new hires the following year.

With support from the assistant superintendent and using funds from a Healthy Start grant, Landau also employs a full-time nurse whose primary duty is to provide professional development for other school nurses.

"By providing regular training for those staff," says Landau, "we are able to get a better product, we have better standardization, and our nurses and health office staff feel supported."

—Steven Blackburn



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Lead a Literacy Intervention with Large Print

New research on improving reading comprehension and confidence

A District Administration Web Seminar Digest • Originally presented on October 17, 2019

More school districts are discovering that large-print books advance literacy and yield better learning outcomes across grade levels.

New research conducted by Project Tomorrow®, at the request of Thorndike Press, a Gale Company, also proves that large-print books boost reading confidence and comprehension skills.

In this web seminar, the CEO of Project Tomorrow® and a panel of educators discussed key findings from a yearlong national study, and outlined best practices from educators and administrators who benefited from using large print as a literacy intervention tool.

Julie Evans: In designing the study, we wanted to determine the impact of students having access to large-print titles—on their skill development with reading, their self-efficacy regarding their reading abilities, what they felt about the reading experience, and their academic results.

We saw that the students who had access to large-print books believed their reading comprehension improved because of it. We also saw that students who had the opportunity to read large-print books started reading more outside of school and also participating more in classroom discussions about the books.

Three-quarters of the teachers said their students demonstrated better comprehension and better retention with the large-print books. Two-thirds of the teachers also noted a reduction in stress and anxiety.

We found that reading large-print text is a valuable literacy intervention across all types of learners.

Victor Chapa: A big concern for librarians is the stigma that students can experience when they use resources that may

make them feel like they're being accommodated. These books looked so similar that the concern was addressed. They say that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but I think in this case you should. I couldn't tell the difference.

Another neat feature is that the Machine-Readable Cataloging (MARC) data notes that an edition is large print, which allows students to find these titles in catalog searches. We also noticed that Thorndike Press has offered some of the books on vendor lists, which librarians normally use for orders. I'm excited to know that quality texts and books of high-literary merit are available for us to purchase.

Joanna Dehn: One of the things that I've always done in my class is to establish student-choice book groups. I want students to have the experience of mirroring what adults may do as serious readers—and that is to pick a book they're all interested in and meet together to discuss it.

I have noticed a lack of complaining from students. Not one student has said, "This is too much reading. I can't



Julie Evans
CEO
Project Tomorrow®



Mary Carr
English Teacher
Marco Forster
Middle School (Calif.)



Victor Chapa
Librarian
Young Women's
Leadership Academy
(Texas)



Michele Barnaby
English Teacher
Marco Forster
Middle School (Calif.)



Joanna Dehn
English Teacher
Young Women's
Leadership Academy
(Texas)



believe you're making us do this." That made it so we could shift our focus to the things I wanted them to get out of their books. They were able to focus more on the details of the text, and on the themes and symbols.

I enjoyed being able to do more high-level activities. I even used some of my activities that I usually do with my AP Literature class in English 1, because they were able to tackle them without worrying about the reading.

Mary Carr: We test students for their reading comprehension, and then place them in six homogeneous groups of five or six students each, based on the results. Then, they're given choices of books. In this case, large-print books offered them a lot more choices.

Students who picked the large-print books would often say they were able to keep their place better. The books were easier to read; they were not as threatening as traditional books, which have so many more words on a page. The students felt more confident in their skills after they had been reading the large-print books for a while.

Students often wanted to read ahead with large print. After the large-print study, students asked for more large print.

Michele Barnaby: When we were first offered the choice of using large-print books with our book clubs, we were a little hesitant because we thought the students would think that the books were simplified or didn't have the same vocabulary. But when we showed them side-by-side comparisons and they could see the books were the same, they were very excited and they liked the idea.

We were surprised that the kids took to the books right away. They talked with each other and talked with other students who weren't even reading the same books. They discussed how good the large-print books were. And there was just a general increase in motivation and the desire to be reading.

To watch this web seminar in its entirety, please visit DAmag.me/ws101719



Enhancing your school's restorative justice practice

Through branding's 'Rule of Three,' you can leverage positive relationships, behavior and culture in the school community

By Trish Rubin

Thanks to the GMC automotive brand, you may know the "Rule of Three." Based on neuroscience and used in the TV commercial with three trucks, the rule employs three words, phrases or ideas. Why do marketers use it? The brain likes the number three. It's a foundation for delivering brand impact. In the case of the car-maker's ad, the rule influences purchase behavior. If you missed it, I suspect you are already unconsciously influenced by Nike's "Just Do It" campaign.

Move over business

What does advertising have to do with education leadership? Today's school administrators are using marketing strategies, including the "Rule of Three," to communicate school brand and positively influence behavior.

Here's a case in point. It's not found on one of your 500 TV channels, but it could be in your school. Your restorative practice implementation is a natural partner for a school brand effort.

Restorative practice focuses on behavior and community. Brand development impacts behavior and community. These are two different school practices that can be powerfully blended using a "Rule of Three" framework.

In the words of New York City education consultant Judith Wilson: "Branding a restorative justice program powers the *why* of the program. Its

Your restorative practice implementation is a natural partner for a school brand effort.

name, in two words, tells the *what*. But connecting a branding why through the power of three deepens the program's value to the school community."

During a recent leadership training session, principals leading restorative justice practice at their schools examined the concept of school brand using "Image, Promise, Result."

Marsha Elliott, the New York City Department of Education's senior administrator for school culture and climate, put it this way: "Branding begins with building relationships of trust, authenticity, loyalty and transparency. These are not only foundational for building a whole school brand, but they personally connect to restorative practices. By having students build their own personal brands, they can positively relate to their own communities."

'Image, Promise, Result' in action

Interested in refreshing the efforts of your school's restorative practice implementation? Understanding "Image, Promise, Result" is the first step.

• **Image:** Brand image is about perception. Every successful brand, or school, is clear about its core values. A restorative program trains students in a proactive way to understand and formulate their own visions and goals. By

asking "How do you want people to see you?" and "What messages are you conveying?" you start developing powerful brand awareness in students.

• **Promise:** Brand promise delivers exactly what audiences expect. A successful brand takes its promise seriously and delivers on it. Restorative justice is about defining and delivering on agreements and social contracts in an organic way that expresses values, wants and needs. When the promise is broken, as can happen with corporate brands, repairs are necessary through repositioning the brand and showing true value and accountability. This is also a tenet of restorative justice practice. Positive change is maximized when an agreement—the promise—is kept.

• **Result:** Brand result is about transparency. A brand gives people something to believe in, and the best brands take responsibility. Any brand that doesn't quickly loses business. Restorative justice is all about taking responsibility. The ability for those in the program to communicate, to confess, to repent or to ask for forgiveness mirrors what all legacy brands have done for years.

An additional benefit: shared storytelling. "It's a natural way to form bonds even when a connection has been broken," says Elliott, of NYC DOE. "In restorative practices, a story creates empathy." **DA**

Trish Rubin is a marketing instructor at Baruch College in New York and the author of BrandED: Tell Your Story, Build Relationships, and Empower Learning.

SHARE

DAmag.me/restorative



How to Reduce Anger, Anxiety, and Violence in the Classroom

Creating calm, positive learning environments

A District Administration Web Seminar Digest • Originally presented on November 19, 2019



Ruby Payne
Acclaimed Author
and Educator
Founder, aha! Process



Michael Curl
Principal, Kingwood
Middle School
Humble ISD (Texas)

Meeting students' emotional needs is essential to breaking cycles of poverty and creating positive school climates. Disciplinary approaches that spur healthy connections between adults and students, and ensure that kids feel a sense of safety and belonging in school, are also key.

In this web seminar, Ruby Payne, author of Emotional Poverty in All Demographics: How to Reduce Anger, Anxiety, and Violence in the Classroom, and Michael Curl, a middle school principal at Humble ISD in Texas, discussed how administrators can keep the school environment calm and positive, and outlined strategies for reducing shame, anger, and emotional stress.

Ruby Payne: It's difficult to change behavior, but it's fairly easy to change the motivation for behavior. It's about strategies. All emotional wellness is based on two things: safety and belonging. Emotions are pretty simple. You're either moving toward something, or you're moving away from it or attacking it. Many of the students we see most frequently are actually not sick or bad; they are injured.

What happens in many schools is simply this: A student will have an in-your-face explosion, and the educator will react similarly, and then you have two people in the room like that. The bottom line: It's chaos. Alternatively, my book has several calming and regulation strategies. Then, it moves on to what the behavior is.

The book also addresses the emotional "classroom dance." What's happening in the classroom that creates this emotional noise? The book looks at issues such as the

energy level that adults bring into a situation. For many people, there's a discrepancy between the energy and the emotional responsibility, and that's when worry and anxiety impact the classroom.

Michael Curl: If children are reacting in ways that are not traditional, that are irrational, you know that trying to calm them can be unnerving. But children reacting emotionally are not thinking about being disrespectful. It's not like they are making conscious decisions to react the way they do.

We have to help everyone understand that each reaction is an emotional response to some kind of trigger. Knowing that, we can provide those who work with students in crisis a toolkit of strategies. You feel a lot more confident going into the situation when you know what you're going to do.

It helps to understand that it's not personal. Children are not doing this to you for specific reasons. There is a lot of rationale for why kids lash out and why they react the way they do to different things.

To watch this web seminar in its entirety, please visit DAmag.me/ws111919



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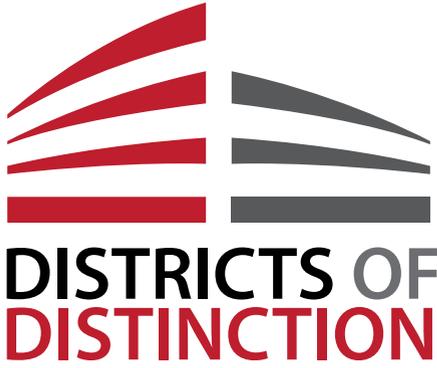


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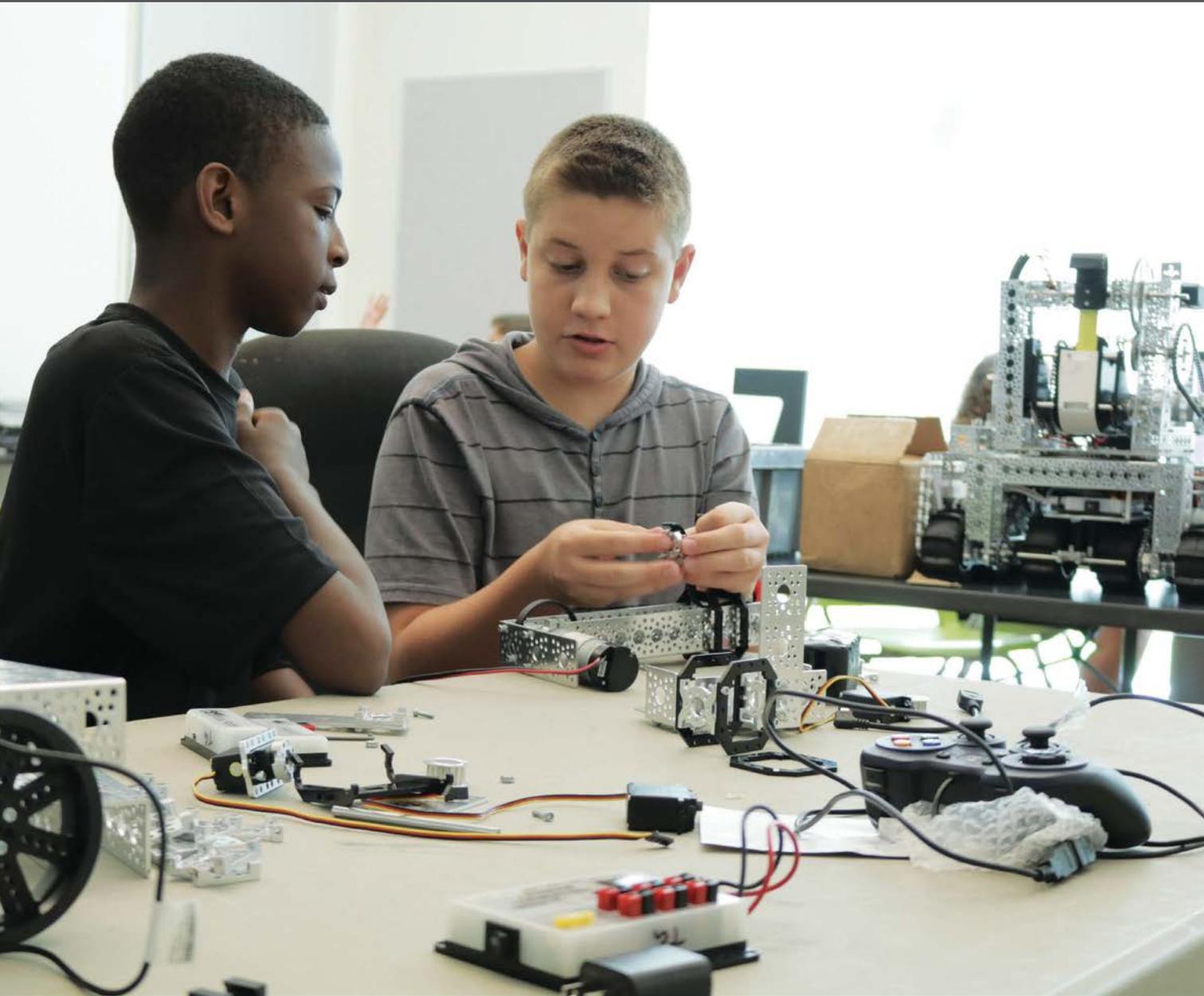
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STUDENT SUCCESS





MUSIC MATTERS

2019 grand prize honoree San Gabriel USD shows how music immersion has positively impacted an elementary school

By Matt Zalaznick



STRINGS ARE THE THINGS—Students at Roosevelt Elementary School in San Gabriel USD are exposed to music every day, and are required to play the violin starting in first grade. They later move on to other instruments, such as the piano, guitar or ukulele.

San Gabriel USD San Gabriel, California

Students: **6,400**

Superintendent:
John Pappalardo

Initiative launched:
2015-16 academic year



Educator Samantha Theisen has been interviewing students and teachers for a video about the Music Immersion Experience, the award-winning student success program she leads at Roosevelt Elementary School in Southern California.

Students rattled off all the different instruments they've learned to play while teachers mentioned the positive impact the program is having at the school, which is part of San Gabriel USD.

"Everyone talked about the climate and culture at the school and how things have shifted and continue to shift," says Theisen, the district's visual and performing arts program

PLAY TIME—In addition to the daily required study of music, students can choose from electives such as rock band, hand bell choir, Latin percussion and mariachi band.



administrator. “They’ve noticed how kids take more pride in what they’re doing with music and that it translates to the rest of their academic life.”

Rewriting a classic rock song

Every student at the school is enrolled in The Music Immersion Experience, which was recognized as the grand prize winner in District Administration’s 2019 Districts of Distinction program.

All students learn to play the violin beginning in first grade and can switch to a brass, woodwind or other string instrument in fourth grade. Students perform at school and in the community several times throughout the school year.

District music specialists instruct students each day in instrumental, choral and general music, using classical and contemporary pieces. Students also choose an elective such as improvisation and composition, guitar, ukulele, rock band, mariachi band, hand bell choir, dance and Latin percussion.

The music instructors collaborate with classroom teachers to integrate academics into music. For instance, students working on an introduction to geology lesson this fall wrote their own lyrics to Queen’s “We Will Rock You.”

Teachers say that students have improved their problem-solving skills and are also looking out for one another more because learning an instrument has made them feel connected to a bigger community.

‘Energy, positivity and a love for school’

San Gabriel USD educators had to lengthen the school day when they started the program five years ago. Their goal was to find an innovative alternative to traditional interventions in trying to close the persistent achievement gaps between students at Roosevelt and the district’s other elementary schools.

Students’ test scores continue to improve, both overall and among each demographic subgroup, Theisen says. As of last summer, the percentage of Roosevelt Elementary third-, fourth- and fifth-graders who have met or exceeded the standards on the Smarter Balanced Assessment’s English Language Arts exam had increased 27 points since the program began. Math scores have increased by 15 points. Discipline incidents that require administrative action dropped by 75%.

The program has also taken on personal meaning for Theisen, who recently moved her family to San Gabriel so her children could participate in the Music Immersion Experience at Roosevelt Elementary.

“Having music every day with all the different instructors has made a huge impact on my kids,” she says. “Their energy, their positivity and their love for school has grown exponentially.” **DA**

Matt Zalaznick is senior writer.

“The MIE program has changed our students’ lives. They are more confident in themselves, in their work and in their learning.”

—Roosevelt Elementary School Principal Cheryl Wilson





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Computer assessments helping Arkansas district screen for dyslexia in K-2 students

Istation, a state-approved initial screener, provides data and interventions

About three years ago, Fort Smith School District's K-2 teachers performed 3,000 individual, face-to-face assessments to identify students at risk in literacy skills. The next year, the Arkansas district used Istation, as a state-approved initial screener that also provides interventions and other resources to support teachers and students alike.

"Using Istation as an initial screener really saves teachers time," says Catherine Ford, intervention/dyslexia coordinator. "It's much quicker to give an assessment to a whole class or a small group than to assess students individually, on paper, for each skill."

"And it's very engaging," adds Elementary Math Coordinator Debra Ellison. "One reason we chose Istation was because it holds students' attention. It's much more motivating than using pencil and paper or worksheets."

Research-based assessments

Powered by the science of reading, Istation is grounded in the National Reading Panel's "Big Five" essential components of effective reading instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary. At Fort Smith, it is used for state-mandated formative testing of all students, as well as for state-mandated initial screening of students in kindergarten through second grade.

Students are initially screened by completing Istation Indicators of Progress (ISIP™) subtests on phonemic awareness, letter knowledge and spelling. The assessments, grounded in research, can be done individually or in small or large groups.

"The results are instant," Ford says. "If a student is identified as in need of support, we do a more targeted diagnostic assessment to determine exactly where to start with intervention."

Intervention resources

Teachers then do face-to-face interventions, with access to Istation resources such as downloadable student lessons, books and other materials. "Teachers can modify Istation interventions according to their needs," Ford says. "Students can use Istation as a center or to practice skills."

The assessments are repeated monthly as part of the district's general Istation program, so K-2 students are being monitored throughout the year.



"Istation helps us catch kids early so we can provide targeted interventions."

"The monthly ISIP allows us to constantly monitor students' progress," Ford says. "If at any point it looks like a student is struggling, then we look at them for intervention."

'Catch them early'

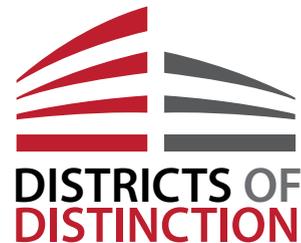
During the 2017-18 school year, 524 Fort Smith students were identified with dyslexia characteristics, and 459 students received intervention. The following year, 583 students were identified, and 513 received intervention.

"The numbers are rising because we are getting better at recognizing and identifying students with the characteristics," Ford says. "Istation helps us catch kids early so we can provide targeted interventions; it's much easier to intervene at K-2 than to remediate later."



Districts of Distinction 2019: RESHAPING STUDENT SUCCESS

The 34 honorees of the 2019 Districts of Distinction program feature a variety of innovative initiatives that bolster learning in and beyond the classroom. From specialty college and career readiness pathways to STEM academies and leadership development cohorts, education leaders from across the country continue to develop and successfully implement new ideas and approaches. For more, visit DAmag.me/dod.



CAREER READINESS

Anne Arundel County Public Schools, Annapolis, Maryland

All Means All

The Advancement Via Individual Determination program runs through all grades and classes to help develop college, career and life skills.

Center School District, Kansas City, Missouri

Preparing Students for a Strong Future

The Center Professional Studies Program provides experiential, real-world learning through partnerships with local industries, colleges and technical programs.

Eminence Independent Schools, Eminence, Kentucky

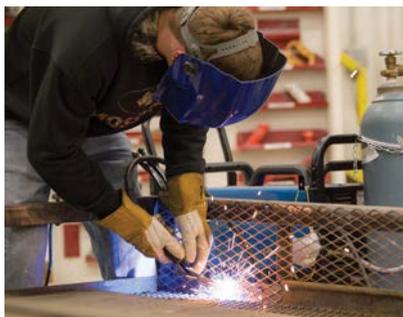
Eminence Exemplars

The Framework of Innovation for Reinventing Education requires students to complete more than 30 in-depth college and career experiences.

Lake County Schools, Tavares, Florida

Building a Strong Community

Exposure to new technologies, state-of-the-art building equipment and opportunities to earn industry certifications boost interest in construction careers.



Sioux City Community School District

Magazine School District, Magazine, Arkansas

Conservation Academy

Students learn from professionals in alternative career paths such as forestry, parks and recreation, wildlife management, and firefighting.

Perth Amboy Public Schools, Perth Amboy, New Jersey

High School Career-Based Communications Academy

A communications career-based curriculum has been developed with nearby institutions of higher education to help students learn academic theory and gain hands-on practice.

Pomona USD, Pomona, California

TRANSFERmation

A partnership with California

State Polytechnic University creates opportunities for at-risk students to learn about and apply to colleges.

Ridgewood High School District 234, Norridge, Illinois

High-Quality CTE Program in Technology and Manufacturing Partnerships with area businesses and trade associations are creating a pipeline of trained, employment-ready high school graduates.

Sioux City Community School District, Sioux City, Iowa

Sioux City Career Academy

Students can explore more than 30 career pathways, including hands-on CTE experiences ranging from auto body repair to pharmacy technology.

Township High School District 214, Arlington Heights, Illinois

Youth Apprenticeships

Student apprentices receive paid on-the-job training in either U.S. Department of Labor standards-aligned programs or those meeting certification criteria.

Westminster Public Schools, Westminster, Colorado

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Districts of Distinction 2019: RESHAPING STUDENT SUCCESS

Rather than traditional grades, students progress through class levels by showing mastery in subject areas and increasing content knowledge.

STEM

Allen ISD, Allen, Texas

Allen ISD STEAM Center

A K-12 learning environment offers science and robotics labs, collaborative learning spaces, discovery labs, and makerspaces.

Baltimore County Public Schools, Baltimore, Maryland

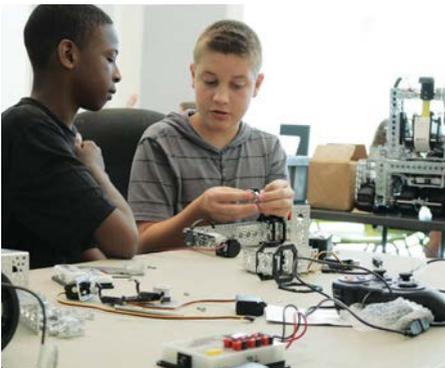
Mobile Innovation Lab

A converted school bus serves as a rolling STEM lab that visits schools throughout the district to provide hands-on learning experiences.

Florida Atlantic University Lab School District, Boca Raton, Florida

Using Engineering as a Pathway to STEM

STEM-related research and hands-on discovery is encouraged from the earliest grades through STEM-pathway clubs, activities and courses.



Henry Hudson Regional School District, Highlands, New Jersey

STEAM Academy

A state-of-the-art STEAM/STEM program includes a full curriculum, a dedicated makerspace, internships, capstone projects and AP classes.

CONSTRUCTION

Topeka Public Schools Unified School District No. 501, Topeka, Kansas

Building for the Future

Major renovations allowed the district to open a STEM-focused elementary school and a career center, and created a new space for a high school.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Verona Public Schools, Verona, New Jersey

Why Your Vote

on Mental Health Matters

Voters approved expansion of the district's mental health support services, including additional counseling, risk assessment programs and coping skills classes.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Bensalem Township School District, Bensalem, Pennsylvania

Balanced Bensalem

In partnership with the Franklin Institute, brain-based research strategies have been implemented to enhance the social and emotional well-being of students.

Steilacoom Historical School District No. 1, Steilacoom, Washington

Project Safe and Sound:



Steilacoom Historical School District No. 1

Integrating Social and Emotional Learning

A three-tiered intervention system focuses on resiliency and promotes student mental health and well-being.

Trussville City Schools, Trussville, Alabama

P.A.C.E. Program

Restorative justice practices and character education is used to remedy discipline problems, restore self-esteem, and teach personal skills.

COMMUNITY/FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

Buffalo Public Schools, Buffalo, New York

Strong Community Schools

More than 60 community partners have been recruited to improve student achievement by overhauling the district framework and launching extensive support programs.

Highline Public Schools, Burien, Washington

Highline/Wesley Home

Intergenerational Preschool

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Districts of Distinction 2019: RESHAPING STUDENT SUCCESS

Montesori preschool in a retirement community allows seniors to teach students life skills such as sewing, cooking and storytelling.

Hurst-Euless-Bedford ISD, Bedford, Texas

HEB Reads!

The district has partnered with three local libraries and communities to promote literacy, combat summer slide and champion lifelong learning.

Laurens County Schools, Dublin, Georgia

Making Literacy More Visible and Valued in Your Community

State and local partnerships have sparked the launch of reading challenges, literacy workshops, and book distribution programs for young and at-risk readers.

SUMMER PROGRAMS

Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, Houston, Texas

Camp Summit

A six-week cross-curricular program for K-2 students offers lessons that incorporate hands-on, active learning experiences.



GETTYIMAGES.COM/LEMANNNA

Donna ISD, Donna, Texas

Bridge to Enter Advanced Mathematics

Middle and high school students take the necessary courses for advanced math classes and are provided free breakfast and lunch.

AT-RISK / ELL

Pinellas County Schools, Largo, Florida

Personalized Learning Pathway

Students have anytime, anywhere access to high-quality, standards-based online lessons.

San Gabriel USD, San Gabriel, California

Music Immersion

Experience Program

All students at Roosevelt Elementary School receive instrumental and general music instruction on a daily basis.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING

Belleville Public Schools, Belleville, New Jersey

R.I.S.E. and Shine

A period is dedicated each morning to allow students to eat a district-provided breakfast while educators analyze data and formulate individualized student lesson plans.

Linden Public School District, Linden, New Jersey

*Learning and Leading—
Making an Impact*

A five-year strategic plan based on data-supported curriculum and instruction fosters the creation of long-term action plans and strategies.



San Gabriel USD

ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP

Arlington Public Schools, Arlington, Virginia

Aspiring Leaders Cohort Program

Principals, supervisors and senior leaders share expertise with a range of candidates to build a high quality and diverse leadership pipeline.

Desert Sands USD, La Quinta, California

The Goldfish Bowl

Modeled on the TV series Shark Tank, this biannual contest encourages students and teachers to pitch innovative education ideas for potential funding.

Metropolitan School District of Lawrence Township, Indianapolis, Indiana

*D3 (Distributive, Dedicated,
Dynamic) Framework*

Classroom leaders split time between instructing students and coaching peers, with extensive professional development provided to support both.

SCHOOL SAFETY

San Antonio ISD, San Antonio, Texas

Rolling Reader

School Bus Program

Equipping buses with Wi-Fi has increased learning opportunities for students and decreased disciplinary issues. **DA**

Districts of Distinction: A LOOK AHEAD

Professional development, ed tech and social-emotional learning are among the categories to be featured this year

Throughout the months ahead, *District Administration* will be sharing innovative programs from across the nation that have been developed by educators to meet the needs of their individual school districts. By showcasing these success stories, we hope to provide practical models that learning leaders can implement in their own schools.

Each issue will also include additional related content and deeper dives into the category areas.



FEBRUARY

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Features districtwide professional learning initiatives targeted at solving problems for instructional and noninstructional staff

Additional editorial content:

The latest trends in professional learning communities

MARCH

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

Focuses on standards-based core instruction initiatives in the areas of ELA; math; science; and social studies; STEM/STEAM; project-based learning; and rigorous courses, including AICE, IB and dual enrollment

Additional editorial content: A look at coding in special education

APRIL

AT-RISK POPULATIONS

Includes targeted initiatives to meet the needs of kids identified as ELL, special ed or economically disadvantaged, or district-identified underperforming subgroups

Additional editorial content:

Explores the link between listening and literacy

MAY

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

Covers programs that increase or improve industry certifications and allow students to explore different career paths

Additional editorial content:

How CTE is being approached in elementary schools

JUNE

ED TECH

Includes successful approaches for integrating technology to improve student outcomes

Additional editorial content:

Best practices and new ideas for remote learning

JULY/AUGUST

CLOSING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Features programs dedicated to improving outcomes for underperforming populations

Additional editorial content: What educators are doing to address the rural achievement gap

SEPTEMBER

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING PROGRAMS

Spotlights districtwide initiatives for students and/or adults

Additional editorial content:

Exploring SEL in the classroom

OCTOBER

COMMUNITY AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT, AND BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS

Covers unique opportunities and strategies to increase engagement and the support of local schools

Additional editorial content: A

look at the future of work and business partnerships

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Focuses on initiatives that create pipelines for new district leaders, and improve school-level support and coaching

Additional editorial content: How district leaders work to prevent teacher and principal burnout





DISTRICTS OF DISTINCTION

2020



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GOOD TALK—Robots such as Milo (above) help students on the autism spectrum test social strategies and newly learned academic skills in a safe way.

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ROBOTS EXCEL AT ACCESS

*WHY STUDENTS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM FIND
COMFORT IN WORKING WITH ROBOTS ON CODING,
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS AND OTHER SUBJECTS*

BY MATT ZALAZNICK

The key to any ed tech tool's effectiveness lies in whether students transfer the skills they've learned from schoolwork into their daily lives.

Educators at Stone Lakes Elementary School in Orlando, part of Orange County Public Schools, say this transfer is definitely occurring when students on the autism spectrum use a robot to develop social-emotional skills, such as calming themselves and greeting others appropriately.

"The students show a higher level of communication," Principal Andronidus Rollins says. "We see relationships growing stronger in their interactions in the classroom, and especially when they interact with nondisabled peers in specials periods and at lunchtime."

A range of robots—some lifelike, some cartoonlike spheres—also help special needs students learn core subjects and coding. The devices are highly effective because they provide students a safe space to experiment and near-instant feedback, educators and developers say.

"One advantage of coding and robots is that, especially with kids on the spectrum, it gives them the freedom to express what they've learned in a different way," says Katie Caster, a K-5 STEM teacher at Oliver Hazard Perry School in Boston Public Schools. "That kind of authentic assessment is much more useful to me as a teacher."

Mimicking emotions

At Stone Lakes Elementary, special education teacher Christy Dove convinced Principal Rollins to buy the Milo robot after learning about it from a parent and deciding it could be a game changer in her classroom.

She has been using the robot, which looks like a little boy in a space suit, with a small group of third- through fifth-grade students over the past two years. Milo's changing facial expressions allow Dove and her students to work on developing calming strategies, making eye contact and saying "hello," and identifying the emotions of others.

"I am definitely seeing these kids take skills learned from the robot and generalize them into everyday situations," she says.

Starting with calming techniques, Milo, developed by RoboKind, shows students how to stop and take a breath or squeeze a ball. That carries into daily life when students get upset and ask themselves, “What would Milo do?” Dove says.

Children on the autism spectrum have difficulty determining how other people are feeling. Milo has dozens of facial expressions—his eyebrows move and his teeth chatter, for example—and his video camera can record students and show them on his video screen if they are responding appropriately.

“Students can mimic Milo’s emotions,” Dove says. “When he’s happy, they can get a feel for whether they look happy, too.”

Adding Milo required very little technology training, but Dove says she did have to adjust her lesson planning to integrate the device, which she typically uses with one student at a time so the robot can generate data on each child’s progress.

Richard Margolin, chief technology officer and founder of RoboKind, says one reason robots are so effective at teaching social-emotional skills is that, unlike humans, the devices can repeat the same lessons without getting frustrated.

“That consistency and repetition is really important,” Margolin says. “It’s comfortable and it’s predictable, and Milo never gets impatient or angry. Milo never has a bad day.”

Teachers have reported that nonverbal students who have used Milo have begun communicating more effectively because in speaking to the robot, the children have seen that communicating makes life easier. This type of development allows students to spend more time in general education classes, which can save districts money.

“In this way, special education classes become more like stepping stones because

STUDENTS WHO HAVE TROUBLE COMMUNICATING AND THOSE WHO EMPLOY ASSISTIVE DEVICES TO SPEAK HAVE INCREASED THEIR USE OF LANGUAGE DURING AND AFTER THEIR WORK WITH THE ROBOT.

kids make progress and require fewer services,” Margolin says.

Coding the Big Bad Wolf

Few teaching tools captivate students as deeply as robots, says Caster, of Boston Public Schools. She uses the KIBO robot, by KinderLab Robotics, to teach lessons on math, animal life cycles and even fairy tales to students with autism, Down syndrome and other special needs.

KIBO, at first glance, could be mistaken for a toy that a child might use to learn shapes. But KIBO is all about programming and introducing children to computer science.

Children using KIBO place blocks with QR codes in a specific order, and then use a scanner to teach their program to the robot. They get to see if the robot follows their instructions.

For example, Caster’s students programmed KIBO to be the Big Bad Wolf. They recorded their voices saying “I’ll huff and I’ll puff,” and then built small houses out of different materials to test if the robot could run over them.

The activities transcend coding, math and language arts, and they help students develop key skills for problem-solving and creativity, following directions and staying

on task, and working in a group and independently, Caster says.

“It brings all of those elements together to ensure there’s a variety of access points for each child,” she says.

Students who have trouble communicating and those who employ assistive devices to speak have also increased their use of language during and after their work with the robot. “They want to communicate,” Caster says. “They’ve become comfortable working in groups and are engaged enough to take risks.”

KIBO was designed to combine the concrete, real-world elements of blocks and the abstract thinking required for coding, says Jason Innes, KinderLab’s manager of training and curriculum development. “Some kids on the spectrum really connect with the robot because they like the fact that their commands are carried out exactly and predictably,” Innes says.

Students on the spectrum can use the robot to communicate. Teachers, for example, can have students create a map of their neighborhood or town, and then each child can program a story about what they did the previous weekend by making the robot drive around map to the park, library or shopping mall.

“It also keeps students off screens and in the physical world,” Innes says. “Children are learning abstract concepts and skills, but they can see concrete effects in the classroom.” **DA**

Robotics in Special Ed: Encouraging Storytelling and Writing Across Curriculum" is just one of many special education sessions offered during DA's National Future of Education Technology® Conference, Jan. 14-17 in Miami. To view the full agenda and register, visit www.fetc.org.

Matt Zalaznick is senior writer.



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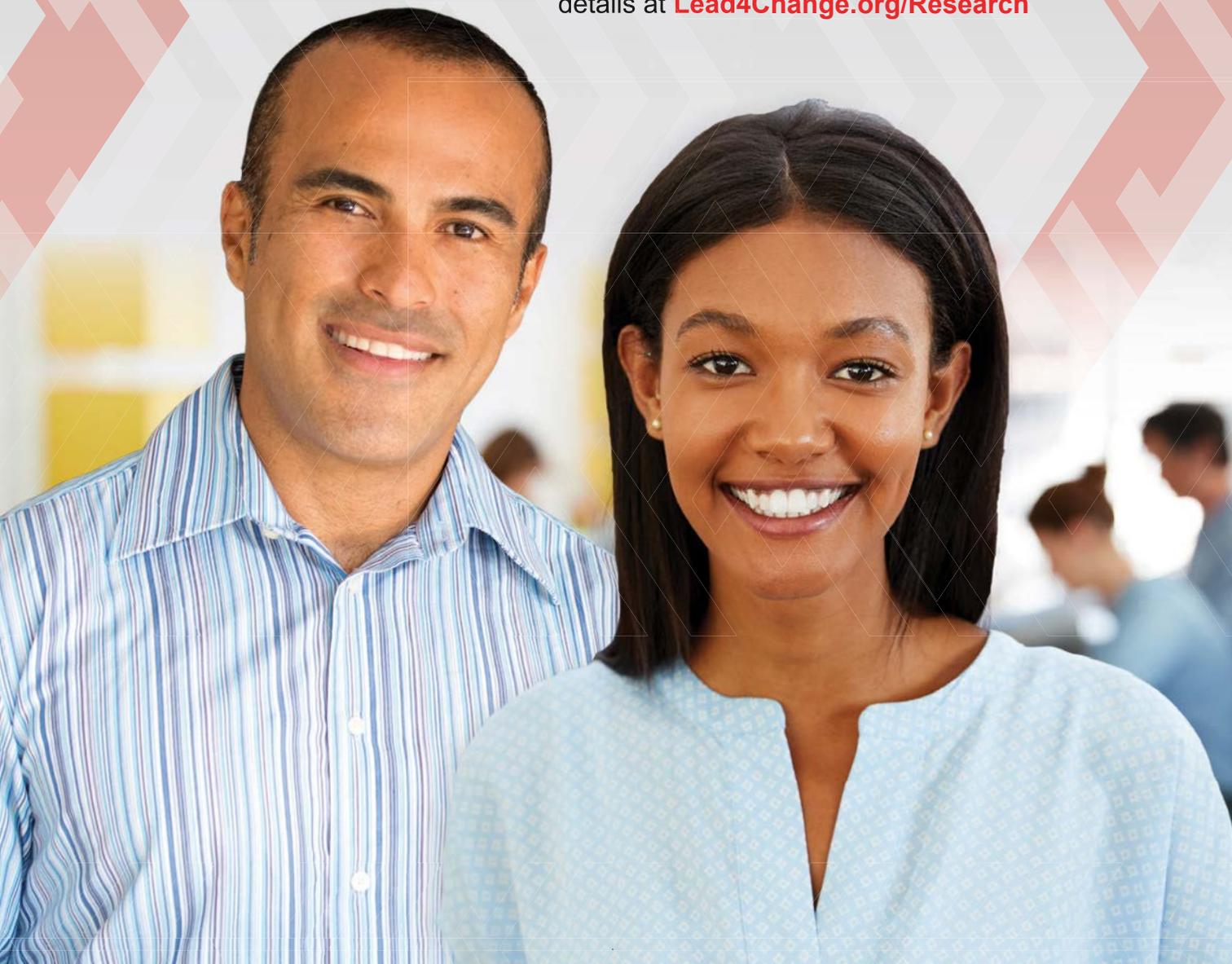


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Developing student leadership skills begins with social-emotional learning

Lead4Change study shows value in teaching self-efficacy, perspective-taking, adaptability

Q&A with **Linda J. Spahr**, Program Director, Foundation for Impact on Literacy and Learning

How and why is social-emotional learning (SEL) crucial to cultivating student leadership skills?

Developing yourself as a leader starts with self-awareness, which is a core concept in social-emotional learning. You can then develop a social awareness of others. You learn how to collaborate, manage yourself in different situations, make responsible decisions and think strategically. All social-emotional learning skills build your leadership capacity.

What essential skills can student leaders master through SEL?

Social-emotional learning helps each student develop the ability to be their best self, and to understand self-awareness and self-management so they can move into understanding relationship skills and social awareness. They can learn to value others, collaborate, identify needs around them, and figure out how to use their skills and talents to address those needs.

What tools can schools employ to foster the next generation of leaders?

Through a recent study of our Lead4Change Student Leadership Program, we learned the importance of teaching self-efficacy, perspective-taking, self-confidence and adaptability to preteens and teens. This can be done in the classroom or in any environment where students are gathered. Students also benefit from learning commitment to a vision, ambition and innovation. Programs like Lead4Change can bring these lessons into the school, allowing educators to integrate activities and practicums for students to develop those skills and also recognize that they're developing those skills. When students self-manage because they understand what's happening, they're much better team players and stronger leaders.

How has Lead4Change brought students closer to generating real change?

Lead4Change not only teaches leadership and social-emotional skills, but it allows students to put these into practice in a safe environment. The practicum is either a community service or service learning project in which the students' contributions will be welcomed and appreciated. They can then use the same skills, project framework and lessons in any other life setting.

Through this process, they become aware of how to be better citizens. Real change happens when you learn something, you practice it and you reflect on it. What did I learn? How did I practice? What is my story? How can I mentor others? We want to teach each student along the whole continuum—from being their best self all the way to being a leader for change. In that process, students will recognize their social-emotional and leadership development and be excited about that.



“Lead4Change not only teaches leadership and social-emotional skills, but it allows students to put these into practice.”

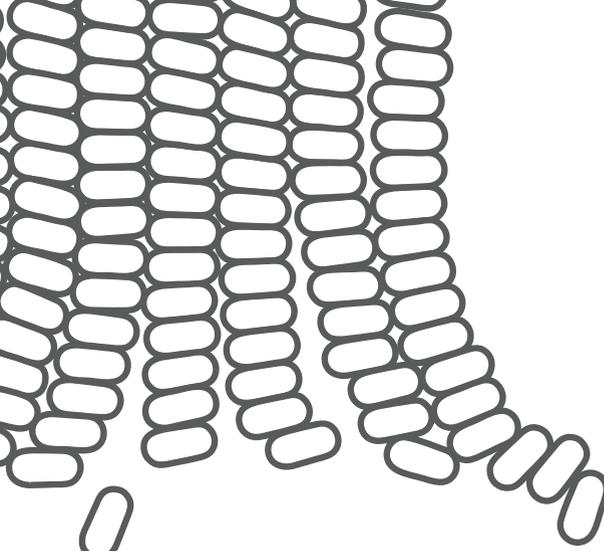
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CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

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Educators work to ensure digital equity for all students by shifting mindsets and improving professional development

BY RAY BENDICI

Digital equity in K-12 has centered on putting technology in all students' hands and expanding access with increased bandwidth and Wi-Fi.

And while those issues continue to be a priority for some districts, many educators are changing their focus to more proactively using technology to support learning for all students.

"Tech is fast-moving and education is not," says Diane Doersch, technical project director for the Verizon Innovative Learning Schools initiative. "Our students have phones and other tools even outside school, so digital equity now is really digital use equity."

To achieve that level of equity, educators must use technology to support the four C's—collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking, says Doersch, who is a former chief technology and information officer for Green Bay Area Public School District in Wisconsin.

"More money isn't always the solution," she adds.

Shifting mindsets

Before making any tech purchase, leaders should also consider how devices are going to solve specific problems, says Eujon Anderson, technology director for Troy City Schools in Alabama, and a featured speaker at DA's FETC 2020.

"Sometimes I get stuck on just wanting to purchase devices, and I have to take a step back and think: 'Is this going to benefit my students right now? Are we going to increase student achievement?'" says Anderson.

Giving students devices without having an ed tech plan also doesn't help those students who have never used a device before.

"Any district leader who thinks about digital equity in terms of technology availability and broadband access is doing themselves a disservice," says Anderson.

Teachers also need to change their relationship with

CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE



DISCUSSION DAYS—During districtwide professional development programs at Troy City Schools in Alabama, educators receive training on best practices to improve digital equity and share experiences as to what forms of ed tech are succeeding in the classroom.

technology. For example, they can expand their classroom walls.

“My husband is a middle school earth-science teacher—middle school earth science, maybe not the most interesting subject,” Doersch says. “But when they can use their devices to confer with

a scientist who is standing on an ice field in Canada, that is opening the world to them.”

Using technology to create engaging and more personalized learning is a big step toward achieving equity. And that approach, of course, starts with profes-

sional development.

On districtwide training days in Troy City Schools, Anderson and guest instructors cover best practices for digital equity and ask teachers what technology is working in the classroom. Teachers can also receive extra assistance with ed tech through after-school training or during planning periods.

DATA ASSIST

To improve digital equity, district technology teams should continually use data to align apps, tools and services, and to determine return on investment, says Zach Desjarlais, director of instructional technology for Vancouver Public Schools in Washington.

“Often, we’ll look at a product that’s not being utilized; it may have been purchased year after year, but when we look at the data, it may have 7,000 licenses but only being accessed by 3,000 kids,” says Desjarlais.

Regardless of whether the lack of use is a training issue or a poor user interface, he advises, district leaders need to be proactive and either encourage use or pull the plug and find a tool or practice that does work.

Moving the needle

Vancouver Public Schools in Washington offers individualized PD to improve teachers’ use of ed tech, says Zach Desjarlais, director of instructional technology.

“In an elementary school, for example, you may have 30 teachers, so you’re going to have 30 different readiness levels and experiences,” says Desjarlais. “So how do you set expectations in understanding a common goal with that group and move them forward?”

The PD’s skiing theme allows teachers to identify their ability level, from a beginner’s bunny hill to an advanced black



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CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

diamond designation. All levels cover similar topics but at different speeds and depths. Sessions on student learning variability directly address digital equity and the digital use gap by increasing awareness and providing new teaching approaches.

The hybrid program combines online courses with face-to-face collaboration sessions that allow for peer interaction and support.

Conference-style events, in which teachers can choose sessions based on ability level, boost participation in PD.

The district also develops its own technology coaches, says Desjarlais. Each is given extensive PD, including leadership training on equity.

Providing ed tech training for principals and other administrators has also helped move the digital equity needle, says Desjarlais.

“When a principal becomes an owner and a driver of a tech initiative, that’s

“Some things remain constant—relationships with students, the willingness to provide grace to others when maybe they don’t know everything about a subject, and the willingness to work together.”

**—Diane Doersch, technical project director,
Verizon Innovative Learning Schools**

really when we see some real change in building communities,” he says. (See “Starting at the top,” below.)

Empowering students

In 2012, Miami-Dade County Public Schools issued a \$1.2 billion bond that allowed district leaders to purchase and deploy 154,000 devices to students, increase bandwidth, and make other tech-related infrastructure upgrades.

But in a 300,000-student district, getting sufficient instructional and technical support for ed tech implementation remains a challenge, says Marie Izquierdo, chief academic officer.

“We’re also really trying to shift the teacher mindset from more of a teacher-centered one to a student-centered one,” Izquierdo says. “So we’re focusing on how we can use technology to empower students—not how we can use technology to deliver a lesson.”

In addition to PD digital literacy days, the district stages “Synergy,” a three-day event at the start of the school year that’s designed for the instructional leadership teams of Miami-Dade’s more than 400 schools. Educators learn about practical digital skill-building classroom activities, such as having students explore a location through Google Earth and interview local residents via Skype, or create an app or game that teaches counting with fractions and then share it through a learning management system.

The district also has six digital facilitators, who visit classrooms to help develop lesson plans, conduct demonstrations,

and model and co-teach technology-driven instruction. Building competency allows teachers to support students’ innovative use of ed tech.

In addition, the district’s curriculum-pacing guides now include standards-aligned digital resources so that teachers don’t have to search for tools and can focus on taking student learning to the next level, says Izquierdo.

“We’re empowering kids with skills that we know they’re going to need in the workplace of tomorrow, and how the four C’s—collaboration, communication, creativity and critical thinking—are facilitated through this huge investment we’ve made in technology,” says Izquierdo.

Educators at Troy City Schools are also striving to find as many opportunities as possible to provide access to ed tech. Current efforts include trying to extend the hours for and increase staff support in the libraries and computer labs, says Anderson.

Solving digital equity is more about teaching than tech.

“Some things remain constant—relationships with students, the willingness to provide grace to others when maybe they don’t know everything about a subject, and the willingness to work together,” says Doersch, of the Verizon Innovative Learning School initiative. “Ultimately, those are the things that are going to get kids and our teachers moving forward.” **DA**

Ray Bendici is managing editor.

STARTING AT THE TOP

In an effort to get administrators on board with digital equity issues, Washington’s Vancouver Public Schools regularly provides ed tech training for school leaders. During sessions, principals see the digital tools teachers use and learn about technology implementation issues.

“It’s been a huge home run,” says Zach Desjarlais, director of instructional technology. “We’ve seen a shift in the principals’ role from ‘Is it OK to do this?’ to more of ‘We’re going to do this, and this is how we’re going to do it.’”



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Research supports Idaho district's purchase of reading curriculum for Tier 3 students

Providing access to Istation boosted students' academic growth at Coeur d'Alene Public Schools

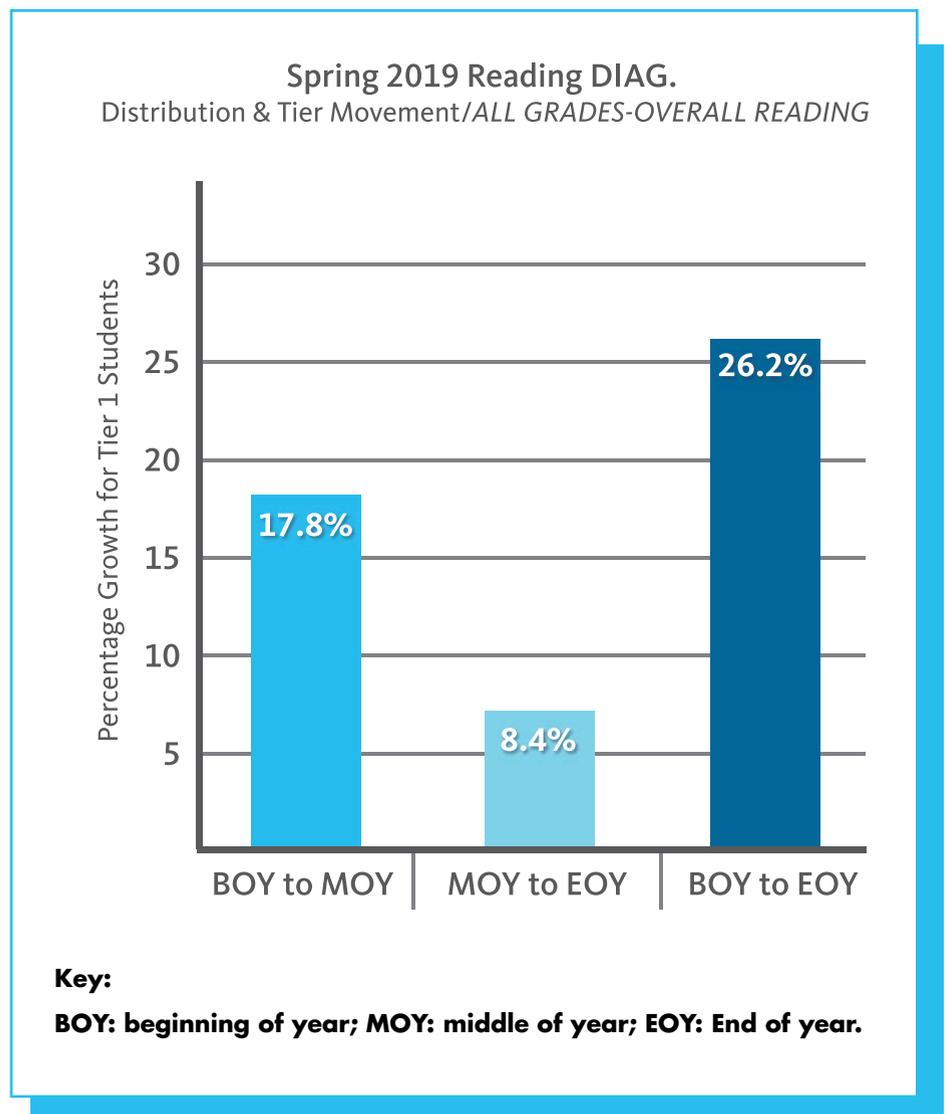
When Mike Nelson was named director of assessment and system performance for Coeur d'Alene Public Schools in the summer of 2019, he was ready to answer one important question: "Is what we're doing making a difference?"

System performance, he explains, is the lens used by the north Idaho district to ensure money is well spent. It's also used to gather data to assist in future decision-making. An educator for 20 years, Nelson was particularly interested in whether the district's recent purchase of Istation curriculum licenses—which were provided to all students who were identified as Tier 3 after taking September reading assessments—was a good use of taxpayer dollars.

Outperforming their peers

"We purchased the licenses because we wanted to have a supplement to instruction that tied the assessment and curriculum together, and provided opportunities for students to have deeper practice and differentiation," Nelson says. "The key takeaway from our research is that students provided with an Istation curriculum license outperformed their peers without an Istation curriculum license."

Using diagnostic growth numbers for the 2018-19 school year, the study found:



- K-5 students with the curriculum license showed 25% more growth than those students without a curriculum license.

- K-3 students who used Istation instructional licenses gained 30.1 points, compared with 23.29 points for students without Istation licenses.



'Right level of support'

The study also showed significant tier movement for students using Istation's curriculum. Findings include:

- The number of Tier 1 students in all K-5 grade levels went from 61% to 77% over the course of the school year.

- The number of Tier 2 students decreased from 22% to 13%.

- The number of Tier 3 students was halved, going from 18% to 9%.

"We've been very pleased overall with what we've seen," Nelson says. "The biggest thing for our district is that these data points show Istation is providing the right level of support for students, and it does demonstrate that schools using it as a key intervention are seeing particular success."

For more information, please visit istation.com

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Unprecedented number of teachers embrace assessments

Coeur d'Alene Public Schools first used Istation reading assessments in 2017-18, when three of its elementary schools were selected for a statewide pilot. Today, Istation's Indicator of Progress (ISIP™) is used as the Idaho Reading Indicator for all K-3 students in the state.

"The pilot showed us that the way we measure reading now is through instant feedback, and it's not binary. It's not just a number," says Mike Nelson, director of assessment and system performance for the north Idaho district. "We are not only able to plot growth, we are also able to look at the pinpointed needs of every student."

Detailed reports

Powered by the Science of Reading, Istation's assessments and instruction cover the National Reading Council's "Big Five" foundational essentials. Schools get the support they need to improve comprehension and growth with activities and lessons that provide actionable and insightful data that measures phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary, as well as other skills.

The interactive assessments adapt as students master skills or demonstrate the need for further practice. Detailed reports provide teachers with actionable data they can use to differentiate instruction or provide additional practice.

"As teachers were preparing for conferences recently, they were pulling student summary reports as well as reports on tier growth to share with parents," Nelson says. "It's somewhat ingrained in the intervention practices now."



Unprecedented acceptance

Nelson credits Istation's ease of use, reliable information and teacher support for his district's unprecedented acceptance of it.

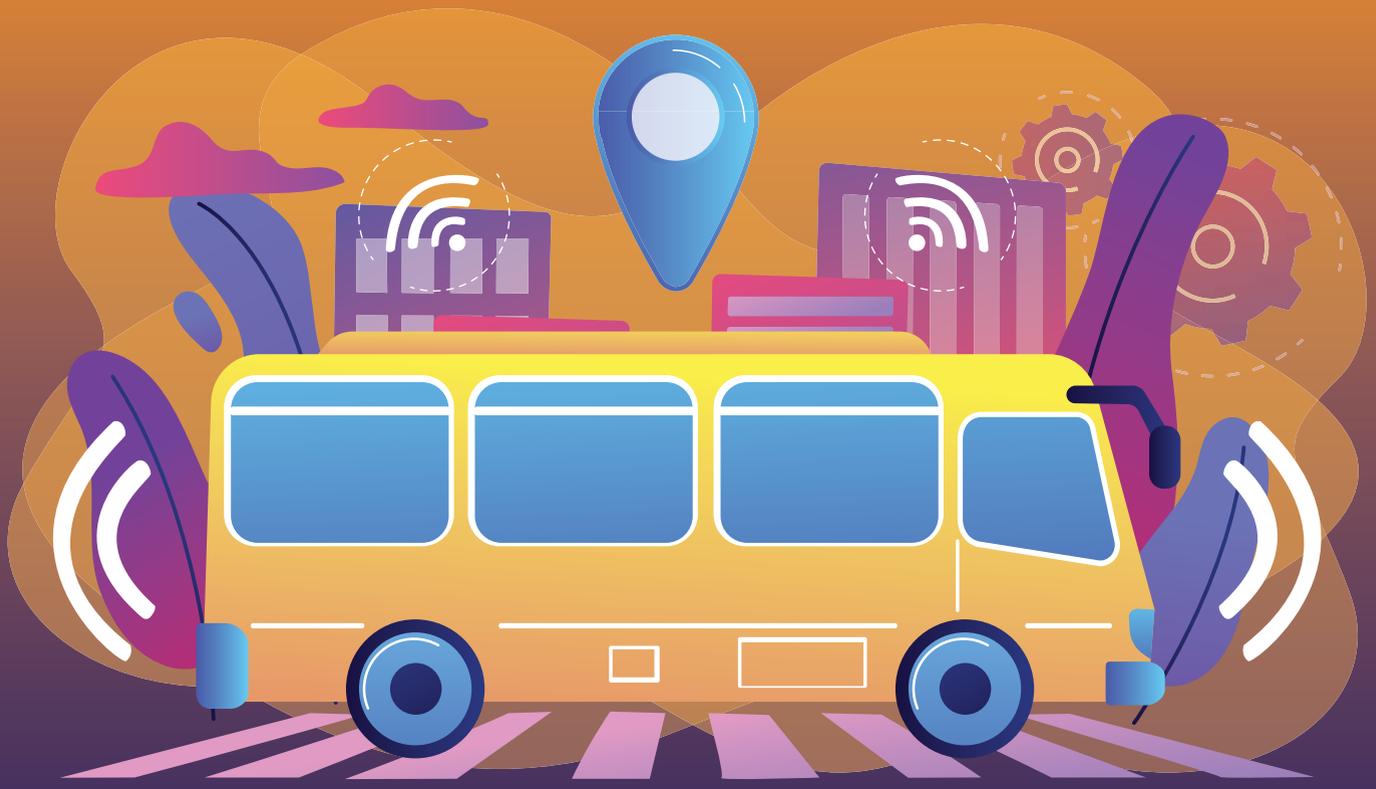
"It's difficult for teachers to accept first-order change—especially to go from a one-minute timed, face-to-face assessment to one that is computer-

based," Nelson says. "Our staff members now rely on Istation practices, reporting features and clear indications of growth."

By law, students must take the assessments two times per year. By choice, about 95% of Coeur d'Alene teachers assess students monthly.

Clarity of information

"That's a feather in Istation's cap," Nelson says of teachers using the assessments more than required. "I've worked in the district for 20 years and have rarely seen this kind of buy-in. Based on the amount of data we get back, the clarity it provides, the consistency in how it's being measured, and the cleanliness of reports, it seems Istation has been very good for our district."



ROLLING IMPROVEMENTS

By Steven Blackburn

District leaders implement the latest technology on school buses to improve student safety—and success

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GETTYIMAGES.COM: VISUAL GENERATION

Although a tremendous amount of attention is dedicated to protecting students while on school grounds, ensuring their safety while being transported to and from school is just as essential.

In New York, Springville-Griffith Institute Central School exclusively manages a fleet of 50 buses that were all manufactured after 2015. Many feature the latest technology, from routing software and interior cameras to collision mitigation and electronic stability control systems.

Thanks to a special agreement, district leaders never have to worry about equipment becoming outdated. “Every year, there are advances in technology that can help us transport students safely, so we worked a five-year rotation agreement into our budget to receive new vehicles from our bus manufacturer annually,” says transportation supervisor Ann Rugg.

Unfortunately, this type of arrangement is rare in K-12, as

EdTech Trends to Watch in 2020: What K-12 Leaders Need to Know

What the future of education technology could look like

A District Administration Web Seminar Digest • Originally presented on November 26, 2019

Administrators have taken great strides to leverage technology across districts, to improve student outcomes and to engage students in meaningful ways. What's in store for 2020, and is the best yet to come?

In this web seminar, three K-12 tech thought leaders and administrators discussed major edtech trends in 2020, as well as key topics that will impact schools and districts of all types and sizes.

Frankie Jackson
Independent Director of Strategic Initiatives
Texas K-12 CTO Council
Education Technology Leader and Success Advocate

Interoperability is a huge topic. In the most simplistic terms, it's just the act of exchanging information with standards agreed upon in advance.

Technology changes so quickly. So what can we do? First, be proactive. Student learning is all about the systems that support it being more efficient, more compatible, more secure. When we're talking about interoperability, we don't work in silos. We must team with K-12 suppliers in developing standards and even data-sharing agreements, with a focus on data privacy and security. Second, reduce the number of software applications in use at any time, so we can get better controls on those standards.

Jeffrey Felix
Former Two-Time California Superintendent of the Year
Academic Advisory Board Member
PowerSchool

It's important for leaders to remember that going toward an interoperable system, or anything that creates standardization, is going to be a huge cultural change for districts. So it's important for tech leaders and business leaders in the district to start with creating a set of personal standards for themselves.

Regarding another trend: Know the difference between curriculum and content. Free content is

“Curriculum comprises content, but content is not curriculum. Work with your chief academic officer to develop the standards for open educational resources.”

wonderful, but don't think that it's curriculum, which includes state and national standards that are aligned with goals and instructional strategies. Curriculum comprises content, but content is not curriculum. Work with your chief academic officer to develop the standards for open educational resources.

Tony Davis
K-12 and Strategic Education Advisor
PowerSchool

Education leaders are looking to use digital content in a way that will improve outcomes for kids, but they have to make sure that they have a clear vetting process so teachers aren't relying on novel gimmicks. It's all about effect sizes and making sure that solutions will have a positive impact on student outcomes.

Teachers should not change content to the point that it loses its integrity. Too often in education, we give people permission to have it their way, but when we make significant changes that compromise the intent of the content, then that lesson will not do anything to benefit student achievement.

To watch this web seminar in its entirety, please visit DAmag.me/ws112519

ROLLING IMPROVEMENTS

most districts struggle to afford any type of bus upgrade.

“Schools will never have enough revenue to address all facets of student transportation, so districts need to use their resources judiciously,” says Curt Macysyn, executive director of the National School Transportation Association, an advocate for private operators of the school bus industry.

Schools should invest what funds are available in technologies that keep students out of harm’s way, especially when getting off the bus because the biggest issue is impatient and distracted drivers, Macysyn says.

Consider: On a single day during the 2018-19 school year, 130,963 school bus drivers in 39 states reported that 95,319 vehicles passed their buses illegally, according to the ninth annual survey by the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services.

Here are some of the latest technologies that schools can install on their bus fleets to improve safety and better protect all students.

Tracking and surveilling

Last summer, Karen Miller, a transportation assistant from Boyertown Area School District in southeastern Pennsylvania, helped pilot a bus-tracking app by choosing five students, including her son, to test the technology for two weeks. These students rode different buses and represented kindergarten, elementary, middle, high school and special needs populations.

“I got a notification when the bus pulled into a five-minute bus stop radius that I had set myself so I could tell my son that he had five minutes to get out there,” says Miller.

By October, the GPS technology was installed in the district’s more than 100 vehicles.

“If a bus doesn’t start in the morning, our contractor inputs that into the system, which automatically sends a notification to parents,” says Miller.

"INSTEAD OF A DRIVER PULLING UP TO A STOP AND THEN TURNING ON INSIDE AND OUTSIDE LIGHTS FOR CROSSING, WE AUTOMATED THE PROCESS SO THEY ALL COME ON AT ONCE."

—Rob Travis, transportation manager
Medina City Schools

By having the app and knowing when the bus will arrive, students don’t spend extended time waiting at the stop, where there is always risk of an accident and other safety concerns.

The app complements an earlier initiative that involved installing up to four high-definition cameras on every bus. “We now have a better visual of student and driver behaviors than our previous cameras, which had dead spots,” says Superintendent Dana Bedden.

The new cameras also provide higher quality video and editing capabilities. “Before, we sometimes couldn’t share videos with parents because students who were not involved in an incident were recorded,” Bedden says. “Now we can block and blur out the faces of those who are not involved.”

The cameras and related technology also can document if a bus driver is speeding.

Slowing down automatically

Late last school year, Clark-Pleasant School District in Indiana became the first school system to pilot an electronic stability and collision resistance system, which is standard on certain manufacturers’ vehicles. The district has since traded in the 17 vehicles in its fleet for buses equipped with that technology plus cameras that monitor when a bus crosses the yellow dividing line.

The electronic stability technology

anticipates and adapts to loss-of-control and rollover events. “We had a few incidents earlier this year when we had a lot of rain and the roads were slick, so this was helpful,” says Robert Downin, director of transportation.

The collision technology alerts the driver if an object is in front of the vehicle, and can calculate its distance, which is critical on foggy and rainy days. “If we’re coming up on a car too fast, it will tell us, and if we don’t correct it, the bus will automatically slow down,” says Downin.

The radar also determines the speed of approaching vehicles to avoid accidents at bus stops. “If an oncoming car is showing no signs of slowing down, a light goes off inside our bus and a megaphone under the hood announces to students to not cross the road,” says Downin.

This summer, the district also installed stop-arm cameras on two buses; the cameras document license plates of cars that don’t stop as required.

Ensuring students have disembarked

After a previous safety check procedure failed, leaders in Orange USD in California recently installed an alarm program on all 116 buses that prevents drivers from leaving students unattended in parked vehicles.

“Once the bus driver turns off their bus and pulls the key from the ignition,



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ROLLING IMPROVEMENTS

they have to walk to the back of the bus and push a button or the headlights and horns go off,” says Pam McDonald, director of transportation.

In 2015, a student from another district died after being left unattended on a bus, so legislators in California passed a law requiring schools to adopt new technology by 2018. Orange USD only needed to install an updated version of its alarm system.

“Some school districts had a hard time because the systems got back ordered and they needed help installing, so there was a lot of panic,” McDonald says. “We took care of it ourselves and were already familiar with the technology.”

Around the same time, the district purchased radio-frequency identification (RFID) passes that students use when getting on and off buses. “It notifies parents via text message where and when their child scans their badge,” says McDonald.

Illuminating drivers and students

Due to an increase of cars passing stopped buses when loading and unloading children, Medina City Schools in Ohio purchased auxiliary interior and pedestrian lighting systems over the course of two years to better illuminate the driver and students.

Installing a system on each of 59 buses only took the district’s head mechanic and three technicians one month. The four-person team also designed the mounting systems and wiring harnesses that connect the new technologies to the buses’ eight-way lighting system.

“Instead of a driver pulling up to a stop and then turning on inside and outside lights for crossing, we automated the process so they all come on at the same time,” says transportation manager Rob Travis.

More online: To see our vendor-based Q & A on the latest bus safety trends, visit DAMag.me/bustech



DOUBLE CHECK—An alarm program installed on buses in California’s Orange USD requires drivers to walk the entire bus and make sure there are no students still aboard at the end of runs.

The pedestrian lighting system that the mechanics mounted behind each front bumper is angled across the open lane of traffic, so it shines on the part of the road where students walk across, says Travis.

Rolling study hall

Talladega County Schools in Alabama recently piloted free Wi-Fi on six buses for two years to create opportunities for students to complete homework to and from school.

For the installation, the district’s transportation department chose the six buses that travel the longest routes. “We had to ask if it made sense to add internet to buses that only travel 15 minutes, for example,” says Deputy Superintendent Vicky Ozment. “By the time students settled in and got their devices out, they’d be home.”

The Wi-Fi was installed in 2018,

and the program was tested that summer. “We had to make sure that students could gain access to the programs, and that holding laptops while on the go wouldn’t be an issue,” says Ozment.

After a successful first year, the district plans on adding Wi-Fi to 10 additional buses at its expense.

As part of the initiative, district leaders chose fully paid trained educators who would travel with students in the morning and afternoon on these six buses, which ultimately increased student safety.

“Our drivers said they were able to focus 100% on the road because they had another educator on the bus,” says Ozment. **DA**

Steven Blackburn is associate editor.



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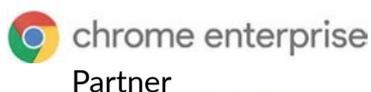


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OER COMES OF AGE

By Emily Ann Brown

Keys to personalizing and sustaining
OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES in your school district



Experimentation with open educational resources is over at Liberty Public Schools 53 in Missouri, and the materials are now an essential component of everyday teaching and learning.

Administrators, like leaders in an increasing number of other districts, give Liberty’s teachers the OER option when a subject or grade level is due for a new textbook adoption. If teachers choose OER, they must work together to create a three-year plan on how they will spend funds that would otherwise have paid for textbooks.

These resources power the district’s focus on real-world learning and students’ use of authentic, primary sources, says Jeanette Westfall, executive director of curriculum, instruction, and staff development.

“In our district, it’s about threading in passion-based learning, which you can’t do with a prescribed scope and sequence or when assessment scores are constantly shoved in your face,” Westfall says. “We don’t hate textbooks, we just want the best materials.”

Adding multiple perspectives

OER have matured to become more than digital substitutes for textbooks; educators are now leveraging open

MAKING CONNECTIONS—The implementation of OER allows students in Liberty Public Schools to access more recent resources than traditional textbooks.

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OER COMES OF AGE

licenses to make instruction more learner-centered, says Kristina Ishmael, senior project manager for education policy at the think tank New America.

Teachers can also promote diversity, equity and inclusion by selecting OER that offer new perspectives or feature authors and characters of color, Ishmael says.

“This approach to instructional materials emphasizes other perspectives, and offers a mirror in which to see ourselves and also a window to view into the lives of others,” Ishmael says.

In a Colorado district where Ishmael is consulting, middle and high school educators are creating an inquiry-based English language arts curriculum around three themes: identity, community and culture.

An instructional design team is curating videos, learning prompts, worksheets and other OER that lead students to ask critical questions, such as: “Who am I?” “What are my struggles?” and “What am I contributing to my community?”

In such a process, teachers can cus-

“Instead of spending \$80,000 on social studies books, we said, ‘Let’s pay the teachers, provide them with professional development, and let them do the work.’”

—Anthony Gabriel, director of learning and innovation
Centennial School District, Pennsylvania

tomize OER to make activities more relevant to students. Adaptations might include using students’ names instead of generic ones to personalize questions on a worksheet so that students can see themselves in the problems, Ishmael says.

Teachers can also add artifacts and events specific to the region. For example, in Broken Arrow Public Schools in Oklahoma, educators teaching a unit on erosion replaced photos in an online science course with images of a mudslide that occurred on a local interstate.

Liberty Public Schools 53 in Missouri—a mostly affluent, homogeneous student population—uses OER to encourage students to understand com-

munities of color and other identities.

Meanwhile, in Garnet Valley School District near Philadelphia, ninth-grade social studies OER were designed to teach students the similarities between major religions. The module includes videos, a sample quiz previewing the topic, and an activity in which students pair up to discuss what they’ve learned.

Finally, teachers in San Diego’s Grossmont Union High School District, which has a large ELL population, have chosen culturally relevant OER in the students’ native languages that also cover experiences relevant to communities of color.

“OER is where we will be able to provide multiple perspectives and be sure we are discussing multiple identities,” Ishmael says. “Customizing material is easier when it’s openly licensed.”

Four steps for adopting OER

Anthony Gabriel led Pennsylvania’s Garnet Valley School District in adopting and adapting nearly 40 OER modules.

All materials must undergo a close evaluation before being introduced to the classroom and shared with educators in other districts, says Gabriel, now director of learning and innovation at Centennial School District, north of Philadelphia.

He suggests the following key implementation steps:

1. Establish student learning goals and outcomes.
2. Adopt and adapt existing learning materials and resources that meet that goal. Then, create a collection of OER tools, lessons and activities (possibly from other schools and districts) that fit the outcome.
3. Understand that OER will need periodic reviews. At times, you may need to recruit other teachers, instructionalists and curriculum designers to weigh in with a fresh set of eyes.
4. Revise every two to three years, at a minimum.

Choosing lessons à la carte

Teachers adopting OER must collaborate to align the new lessons to state standards and to design the related assessments, says Anthony Gabriel, who, as former supervisor for learning, development and professional growth, spearheaded the adoption of OER at Garnet Valley School District.

“It’s about reinvestment, reallocation and changing our systems—to put the money where it matters,” says Gabriel, now the director of learning and innovation at Centennial School District, north of Philadelphia. “Instead of spending \$80,000 on social studies books, we said, ‘Let’s pay the teachers,

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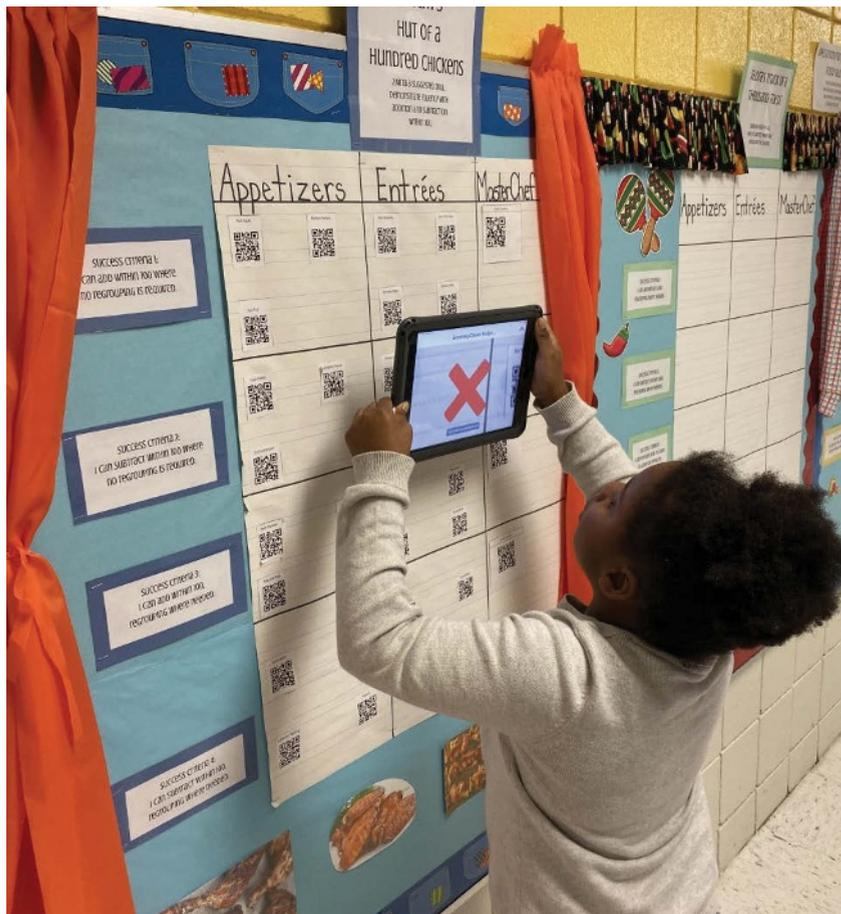
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OER COMES OF AGE



BLENDED LEARNING—The availability of OER allows educators to create blended lessons that incorporate ed tech and also feature both digital and traditional resources.

provide them with professional development and let them do the work.”

A big benefit of OER is that educators can adapt the resources to support learning outcomes for specific students. Typically, teams of teachers, instructional experts and ed tech specialists discuss what students should know and be able to do in a subject. They may write the curriculum, search for OER materials, and then evaluate tools to determine which align with standards and learning expectations. Once approved, materials are classified and integrated into a unit lesson.

Openly licensed materials are also

stored in a digital library hosted on the district website or shared online in other forums, such as the OER Commons (oercommons.org). The resources then require ongoing updates and revisions to ensure hyperlinks are still active, and content remains relevant.

It is also crucial to make sure all OER components, such as video or animation, work with district devices. Issues may also arise if websites containing the OER are blocked by a district filter or policies.

Thus, educational technologists and IT staff must be involved in OER adoptions to confirm that materials are avail-

List of OER resources

If you’re just diving into OER—or looking to build your collection—here are some suggestions:

Achieve the Core: Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool (IMET) to analyze OER textbooks and other primary resources.
achievethecore.org

EdReports to check on supplemental materials and to winnow down OER choices.
edreports.org

Educators Evaluating the Quality of Instructional Products (EQuIP) Rubric: criteria to gauge alignment, instructional supports, and assessments.
DAmag.me/equip

CommonLit, a collection of free reading passages in both literary and non-fiction genres.
commonlit.org

Match Fishtank, a set of free OER curricular resources in social studies, math, and ELA.
matchfishtank.org

able offline and, if not, to provide internet access to students when a live connection is required.

One Garnet Valley social studies teacher with whom Gabriel worked felt the available textbook was costly, and the one-size-fits-all approach didn’t align with her classroom goals. “I told her, ‘Let’s spend this year building out the curriculum with a scope and sequence and set of skills and outcomes for kids that you believe are worthwhile,’” he says. “We’ll go à la carte and pick resources to match your curriculum.” **DA**

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The secret sauce for successful cultural change

Change can be a disrupting factor for employees if you don't have a management plan

By Lenny Schad

It doesn't matter what industry or business sector you work in today. The landscape of every organization, including K-12, is changing quickly. Growth in consumer digital technology and automation is resulting in organizations embarking quickly on digital transformation strategies.

Transformation is disruptive. Unfortunately, most organizations do not appreciate how emotional and personal change can be for the employees who are affected. Most organizations simply believe that having a training plan is enough to prepare employees.

Secret sauce

Here is the secret sauce: Organizational change management (OCM) is a framework designed to provide the emotional support employees need. To understand OCM, it is important to know the differences between change and change management. Change is a move from one's current state to a transition state, which leads to a future state. Change management takes that process one step further and supports the individuals impacted by change.

Defining the solution is not part of the OCM methodology. Designing, developing and implementing the solution are elements of a project management methodology. Recognizing the need for change and providing necessary emotional supports are elements of OCM. Both methodologies are required for

Address what employees really need to know: How is this change going to affect me?

any project to be successful, but are mutually exclusive and parallel.

Without a proven OCM methodology, it is difficult to manage the people side of change. Communication and training plans are not enough to successfully implement a major initiative. Most communication plans are essentially "telling plans." They do not address what employees really need to know: How is this change going to affect me? Training plans do not explain why the change is happening and why an employee should be excited.

Critical factors

When deciding on the right OCM methodology, consider the following critical factors.

- **Make sure the selected methodology and implementation partner have proven track records in K-12.** OCM is common in the private sector, but K-12 has just started to embrace the concept. An implementation partner cannot be successful without a basic understanding of the K-12 environment, culture and processes.

- **Look for methodologies that are scalable and easy to use.** OCM is a process that should be used for any significant implementation and should not be limited to transformational projects.

- **Seek out methodologies that**

provide training and certification.

Investing in-house resources to become certified will save money. It can also reinforce your leadership commitment to OCM.

Pushing change never works

Leaders should emphasize that they are getting an organization ready for change. Implementing and leveraging an OCM methodology allows leaders to show employees that they understand the emotional impact of change. When leaders create the expectation that they are preparing an organization for change—not forcing it—a culture emerges that embraces continuous improvement.

To provide more strategies on leading a technology team, I am excited to announce the 2020 schedule for District Administration's CIO Summits. They will focus on the top trends and issues facing K-12 technology leaders. We have engaged a powerhouse lineup of speakers who will provide practical leadership and strategic practices, and we will offer hands-on learning. Attendees will work closely with their peers, establishing new and hopefully long-lasting professional relationships.

The CIO Summits will be held October 14-16 in Chicago and November 18-20 in Long Beach, California. To register and learn more, visit daleadershipinstitute.com/events. **DA**

Lenny Schad, one of the most prominent voices in K-12 technology leadership, is District Administration's chief information and innovation officer and technology editor at large.

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