

Virtual Teaching Academy Kickoff Part Two

Good morning.

Welcome everybody to our second webinar in the Alliance for Virtual Learning series.

Okay, thank you all for joining us here today.

We're gonna get started in just a few seconds, before we do that, however, wanted to give everyone a quick run through some housekeeping items here.

For those of you that have used GoToWebinar, it's the platform we're using today, this will all seem very familiar and if you haven't used it before, hopefully it will be useful to you.

We will be taking questions throughout the webinar today.

We'll be moderating those questions and feeding them through to our panelists.

To submit questions, go ahead and use the questions panel typically it's on the right hand side of your screen at the bottom of your GoToWebinar panel.

If you go ahead and submit those, again, we'll feed those to our panelists, some of those we will answer as we go as well.

We're gonna try and get to as many of those questions as we can today and we'll try and group those questions together too so we can get to as many as we can.

I'm gonna give people just another minute or so to join in and then we will kick this off.

Alright.

Pat, if you're ready, should we go ahead and get this started? If Pam's not on, Andrea was going to.

Okay, Andrea, fantastic.

Alright, Andrea, let's go ahead and get started then, all our panelists are here.

If you wanna go ahead and kick us off, that would be great.

Be happy to do that.

Good morning everyone.

My name's Andrea Smiley and I am the vice president of public relations for University of Phoenix.

We're so glad you are all here today.

Unfortunately, we should have Pam Roggerman, who is the dean of our College of Education.

She is having some technical difficulty so I'm gonna go ahead and kick us off and hopefully Pam will be able to join us a little bit later.

But this is the second in a series of webinars that we are holding with our partner, Blackboard, and working with a number of K-12 leaders across the country.

Our next offering will be our summer Virtual Teaching Academy, which will kick off on Friday, June 26 and run through July 1st.

Keep checking the microsite that you used to register for this event to learn more about the Virtual Teaching Academy.

Just a few housekeeping items.

Please feel free to ask questions throughout this discussion, we will answer them as they come in and as quickly as we can.

You can use the question section to the right or the chat section.

We'll be monitoring both and sharing those questions with the panelists.

Now, I just wanna share a little background about why University of Phoenix created the Alliance for Virtual Learning with Blackboard and other K-12 leaders who are bringing you this event today.

Obviously, K-12 education has been forever changed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Schools had to move extremely quickly to pivot to virtual learning, which meant that teachers had to pivot to online classrooms, often without the support or clear guidance on how to keep all of their students engaged and maintain learning continuity.

This has highlighted the need for a longer term approach to virtual learning.

According to a recent survey that we commissioned here at the University of Phoenix where we spoke to 1,000 K-12 teachers across the country, less than 1/2 or 47% felt that the training that is available to them is good or excellent in terms of virtual learning, and over 1/2 expressed interest in learning how to create compelling content and how to best leverage online technology for teachers.

So there's clearly a need and we wanna be part of addressing that need.

So we formed the Alliance for Virtual Learning to bring together leading minds in K-12 education and virtual learning to provide a comprehensive curriculum and resource support to district leaders and educators.

Among our partners, I've mentioned Blackboard, we also have Dr. Pat Hoge and Heath Morrison.

Blackboard, as you know, is recognized as a provider of K-12 online learning management tools and communication systems, with one in every two K-12 students nationwide using Blackboard services.

Dr. Hoge is a veteran K-12 educator with deep experience in both traditional brick and mortar environments as well as online learning and teaching.

She has most recently served as a chief academic officer for Connections Education and Pearson Online and Blended Learning.

With a focus on curriculum and instruction, she has devoted her career to helping students and the adults who serve them achieve success and develop tools and resources to help them in their journey.

Heath Morrison is former president of McGraw Hill School Group.

He brings extensive experience in the K-12 education space, including a rich history serving as school principal and superintendent.

Leveraging his connections with superintendents across the country, Heath brings a unique and deeply informed perspective to the gaps superintendents are seeing in their pivot to online learning and how to best address their evolving needs.

Our efforts are ultimately in the service of helping students and we're doing that by providing you their educators and leaders the resources needed to serve them in the best possible way.

And now I'm very excited to introduce our moderator today, Mr. John Watson.

At this time, I would like to put up his slide, thank you.

John is the founder and CEO of education, I'm sorry, Evergreen Education Group, which runs Digital Learning Annual Conferences and Digital Learning Collaborative.

For more than 20 years, Evergreen Education Group has been researchers and advisers to school districts, state agencies, foundations, companies and NGOs seeking to improve educational opportunities and outcomes.

I'd like to introduce John and turn it over to him.

Thank you.

Thanks so much and thanks for having me.

Glad to join you all today from Durango, Colorado.

I'm gonna frame a couple of very quick opening remarks, then turn it over to the panelists to give brief introductions of themselves.

Then we'll be going through some of their opening ideas, and then I've got a few questions for them, and then we're going to be going to your questions.

We're watching them come in so as others have mentioned earlier, please get those questions in and we will be watching them and pitching them over to the panelists.

As a way of framing, I wanna talk a little bit about what we've been seeing.

As was mentioned in the opening, my company, the Evergreen Education Group runs the Digital Learning Collaborative.

We're a group of school districts, and state agencies, and NGOs, and others, and researchers and as we've been watching over the last several months, what we've started to think about is this framework of phases that we're seeing in terms of the pandemic school closures and now what schools and districts are doing in response.

We think of the first phase as when COVID hit, that was, as you all remember, it seems to me at least quite long ago, but it was actually very, very recent, schools had to close almost immediately.

And the schools that we were speaking with had to make those adjustments sometimes over a week long spring break, sometimes over a weekend.

They made that transition into what we think of as emergency remote learning, that was really that first phase, very much a scramble, very much initially based on using synchronous video for teachers to be able to reach students.

The second phase that we saw after that was schools and districts starting to realize that they may need to reach out a little bit more broadly and thinking about what were some of the issues that they needed to address very, very quickly, things like equity and access, students with special needs and getting their teachers more and more comfortable teaching virtually as well.

Right now, I think we're in this third phase where district and school leaders are looking to the fall, getting ready for the high likelihood of rolling school closures, the possibility that parents are going to be wanting to keep their children out of school at times, even when the schools are open.

All those approaches are going to require that districts have seamless ways to shift between online and face-to-face and be able to do remote learning, again, very much on the fly, and that's really what our discussion is about.

That's what University of Phoenix and Blackboard have joined together to help everybody here on the discussion today and others as well, to try to create that blueprint going forward for online learning for the fall and beyond.

With that, I wanna give each panelist a chance to quickly introduce themselves, so I'll go first to Lisa Dawley.

Hello everybody.

I'm Lisa Dawley, the executive director of the Jacobs Institute for Innovation and Education at the University of San Diego.

We're an R and D institute that focuses on supporting inclusive innovation initiatives with K-12 districts and I'm happy to be here talking about online teaching and online teachers.

Thank you, Lisa.

Dan, let's go to your next.

So John, thank you so much and thank you to University of Phoenix and Blackboard for sponsoring today.

So my name is Dan Gohl.

I have the pleasure of serving as chief academic officer in Broward County Public Schools, that's in South Florida between Miami and West Palm Beach.

We have about 270,000 students, 50,000 in about 90 charter schools, an other 220,000 in the traditional public school district system, and I'm really excited to be part of today's conversation so thank you, John.

Thank you, Dan.

Lonnie, we'll go to you next.

Yeah, so I'm the executive director of BOSS, which is Blended and Online School Solutions and on the side I also, since he is from Broward, work for CSUSA.

I have about 6,000 students in a week seeing that I serve as superintendent of kind of is a brick and mortar at the same time that we handle that.

Our headquarters is there in Fort Lauderdale and Florida.

And we're just excited to be here and talk about those things that we can do to help students.

Excellent, thank you, Lonnie.

DeWayne, I'll go to you next.

Great, thanks John.

My name's DeWayne McClary.

I am the director of the League of Innovative Schools for Digital Promise, where we serve over 114 school districts across the country and about 2.5 million students across the country.

Prior to that, I was director of Ed Tech and Library Programs for the great DC Public Schools and it's been a great adventure and doing some innovations there and have a broad experience from rural, suburban and urban school districts.

Excellent, thank you, DeWayne.

And Heath, I know we got a quick bio from you earlier, but I think we have your slide up now and you are on screen, would you like to give your quick overview as well, please? Yeah, Heath Morrison, 30 years as a principal, teacher, superintendent, and then took a little journey on the private sector and both public and private sectors working to increase digital functionality and technology to improve education.

And really proud to be part of this effort with University of Phoenix and Blackboard to really fill a need as we're all trying to create the best educational opportunities for students in this unprecedented time with COVID.

Thank you, Heath.

I have to say, this is a star-filled panel.

As I mentioned earlier, we've been looking at K-12 online and blended learning for 20 years or so now and one of the things that we've observed is some of the places that you folks are from are among the leaders.

I know DC Public Schools has done tremendous work that we were looking at years ago in terms of some of the in-classroom use of blended learning.

The board, of course, has been a leader as well.

Louisiana, also, all these areas, all these districts and charter schools that you've all worked with are really leaders.

And of course, Lisa, you've been studying this, I think for about as long as we have, so I know you have tremendous expertise as well.

I'd like to start with a question to each of you as panelists.

I mentioned this a little bit in my opening remarks.

There's lots of conversation right now about preparedness plans for the fall.

There's guidance coming out of state agencies, there's guidance coming out of the CDC federally and each district is having to figure out what is the fall gonna look like? Each of you has been engaged with school leaders over the last few months, some of you have been school leaders as well and still are in those positions.

One of the things that we see is August or September for folks who are in one of the later starting school districts, that's coming on fast.

And I know that there's a real, real sense of urgency around the country among everybody from teachers to school leaders to district leaders as well about that sense of urgency and how do we get ready? I would love to hear from each of you based on your experience and the conversations that you're having with others in K-12, can you just give us maybe three big things that you think that you'd suggest should be thinking about, planning for, some of the things that they have to take into account to maximize their chances of success in the 2021 school year.

DeWayne, I'm gonna go to you first.

Yeah, so my three big ideas are digital equity, master scheduling and social-emotional learning.

So when you look at digital equity, a lot of people just think about devices and Internet, it's more than that.

You really have to look at the digitizing of curriculum.

What does that look like? How are teachers going to deliver that to students? Do you have an LMS? You also have to look at digital citizenship, teaching kids the dos and don'ts and online etiquettes.

And then also looking at digital literacy.

Do kids know how to curate information? Do we know where primary sources are? So it's very important that as districts move into reopening, what does that even look like? Because a lot of districts have not even touched this in the past years.

The next thing is massive scheduling.

This is a very important one and this it's something that districts all have to figure out, especially if we're gonna do hybrid or all at home.

So pretty much, what do students' schedules look like? Is this gonna be synchronous, asynchronous? What is being taught? How is it being taught? Is it gonna be taught in different sessions? Like a kid's not gonna stay on Zoom for 90 minutes, like how are you gonna break that up? And then the biggest thing that a lot of school districts are worried about is remediation.

Students have, I call it the summer slide, the learning you lose during the summer, but now there's a COVID slide that led up to the summer slide, so what does remediation look like? And it's very important for districts to understand that students should not lose instructional time for remediation, that needs to be set aside separately.

We have to be very cautious of that.

And then also the social-emotional learning piece, the SEL.

Students have dealt with a lot trauma from COVID, may have lost family members or our friends, also the racial disparities that are going on and then any other prior traumas that students have had to endure, that's something that schools are really dealing with, like these are the big three for me.

Thank you, DeWayne, and we're certainly hearing a lot about those things as well.

Lisa, let's go to you next.

What are you seeing from, I believe you're in Southern California, what are you seeing in Southern California from your porch in Southern California? I'm in El Paso, Texas today, but I think in general the good news is when we look at what teachers need to know to be effective in working with students in the digital space, we have over 15 years of research, best practice, many examples, we don't need to reinvent the wheel.

And so if we could help district leadership get focused on one on the notion that online teaching is developmental, teachers grow over time and it's common sense that a first year teacher has different training needs than a second year teacher or a third year teacher.

And so, for example, we know from our going virtual research series, that first year teachers the big three issues for them, they feel isolated, they have technology skills that they need and they have time management issues.

And so when you can think about creating a professional development plan at the district level that focuses on over years and teachers years of experience and meeting those needs as they evolve over the years, you'll be in a really positive space.

A guideline that district leadership can use for that are the NSQ Online Teaching standards.

They cover not only online teaching and facilitation skills, but also course design skills.

So it's a really good reference for creating your PD strategy, and always encourage teacher self assessment at the beginning of any semester and reflection.

What is your major learning need this semester? How can you get your needs met? And at the end of this semester, did you achieve that? And then what are we gonna focus on in the next semester? So looking at is it an ongoing growth opportunity? I think there's a really important need to distinguish between online teaching is different from online curriculum design, they are two different skill sets.

And if you can help your teachers focus mainly on the facilitation skills and possibly developing some supplemental curriculum to help personalize for individualized students, but to expect a teacher to fully design a curriculum and fully teach the curriculum is really overwhelming for a teacher.

And highly recommend that the district or the larger school leadership should take on the curriculum strategy, whether you're outsourcing with a vendor or whether you're developing your curriculum in-house, like a fourth grade playlist that gets handed out to all fourth grade teachers, not to put the burden of the full curriculum design on the teacher.

And then the last piece and I was really glad to see DeWayne also mentioned SEL needs and that really getting students engaged virtually and meeting their learning needs, their emotional needs in the digital space.

We know from research that you can promote engagement through student choice, so giving students choice in their learning activities, whether it's pick two out of these three activities this week, just anytime you give a human being choice, they feel more bought in and more engaged.

And the more we can focus on authentic learning opportunities, whether it's problem based learning or career based learning, any type of authentic learning that allows students to create and build.

So we get focused on those higher order thinking skills and kind of moving beyond understanding, memorization, regurgitation, kids feel empowered when they can build and create especially something that's meaningful in their own personal lives.

On the SEL side, I highly recommend using peer based pedagogy, getting students teamed up in pairs, in small groups and those can be done in Zoom breakout rooms or asynchronously in discussion forums or in the live classroom.

A really great activity at the beginning of the year is interview a peer and share your interview results just to build that social connection.

Synchronous learning is super powerful for supporting social learning and getting away from that sage on the stage teacher teaching and allowing kids to interact in real time.

And then finally from a tech perspective, I would recommend at a minimum you should have an LMS of some sort or content storage, an email tool and a webinar technology to support both synchronous and asynchronous learning.

And that's it.

Thanks Lisa.

Well, it looks like John is stuck on mute.

Uh-oh (laughs).

John, there we go (chuckles). Is--

Okay, there we go, sorry about that.

Lisa, you brought up some great points.

One that I wanna ask you to go back to for a moment, you had touched on online development resources for teachers.

Can you talk a little bit more about that and the value in that as well? Online development meaning that training side, John, or their curriculum? Yeah, yeah.

There are so many, I honestly don't know where to start.

I would suggest, especially for first year new to online teaching, it's super critical to build a professional learning network within the district or school itself.

And so whether that's done in a weekly meeting on site with your peers or whether the district sets up some type of professional learning network on Facebook or in the LMS that teachers have the opportunity to share in real time, here's what I made, here are the issues I'm having, they need that support and that support is actually one of the most important supports that can be built for online teachers.

Excellent, thank you.

I also wanna make a quick comment.

You mentioned the NSQ and it's in your slides, the National Standards for Quality around online learning which are now being co-developed by Quality Matters and the Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance, which sounds a little a bit different like a group, but is a bit different, just to let folks know where they can find that.

I think it's a tremendous resource and I also think so many of what your comments reflect is that there are, as we've talked about, organizations that have been thinking about these issues for a long time and there's a lot of valuable information out there to go to, so thank you, Lisa.

Dan, I wanna go to you next with your three big ideas.

John, thank you and big kudos to DeWayne and Lisa for their outstanding comments.

So I'll start talking, but if we can get the slide transitioned over.

First and foremost, I think in order to do all the work that DeWayne and Lisa have set out, we must have the confidence of our communities that we can execute something, and they have confidence in the story we tell.

Is there a clear vision of what they can expect? They know it's not gonna be what was prior to March, but do they have a sense of vision of what it is we're going to do? And I think it is critical that regardless of the size of the community, a clear, simple vision be articulated.

Here in Broward, what we did was say that we were planning and building out an extension of the physical classrooms to the digital, and then COVID did a forced migration of our entire community just to our digital spaces.

And now as immigrants to this digital space, what is it that we were gonna do when some of our community felt like they were refugees and others felt like they were really a mature, fully integrated acculturated immigrants? We had to help each other adjust.

So providing a clear, simple reference point that people can talk about are we meeting that or not is incredibly important, but then people get to their particular concerns.

What about special ed? What about early learners who can't take text-based materials online? What about, what about, what about gifted? What about English language learners? Have buckets and places, destinations for them to go to for asynchronous, that's websites, that's webinars, but also have some live conversations where people can go.

A simple phone call is really important.

So we redirected our district phones to people's individual phones 'cause they were still being paid.

They could talk with people, that high touch is really important.

And then have ongoing systems to gather questions because those indicate systemic shortcomings.

We must have a way to constantly be informed of what people are experiencing.

Knowing that we're gonna hear from the problems more than others, but we have regularly surveyed and we continue to monitor our email feedback, our phone feedback to come to understand whether or not we are meeting the vision that's been outlined, but that vision depends on infrastructure.

So infrastructure is my second point.

Have a clear understanding of what your infrastructure is.

So what should people do in order to get access to the vision? For us, it was about you go to our site single sign-on and from there it's like going through the front door of the school and then you will find all the classrooms, the digital spaces, the library, the other things that you can do, where are your resources are.

You go to your learning management system to go into your classroom.

Making analogies to the behaviors beforehand are absolutely critical to help people navigate the new way of doing business, and have communication systems.

We used a lot of asynchronous communication, particularly on teacher-to-teacher support mechanisms.

We happened to use Yammer, but we also used the support mechanisms within our Microsoft suite.

The vendor isn't really important, what matters is, is the infrastructure there to allow communications both synchronously, when people wake up in the middle of the night and wanna talk with a friend, they can't, so do you have the asynchronous, but during the day, can they reach out and have the synchronous? Making sure your communication systems are there.

Our infrastructure was built on making sure kids had devices, they had connectivity and that they had a destination to go to.

And by putting those three things in place, we could then have a high level floor to make sure that our pedagogy and curricular work occurred.

Once that stood up, you've got to implement with fidelity, monitor with intentionality and intervene quickly.

When you become aware of something, let people know, let people know you're working on it and then tell them when you've addressed it so that they have a sense that this isn't just being yelling into the ether.

So that meant training staff to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

If they express frustration to the students and parents, we lose our community buy-in.

We have to remind staff to draw on their expertise of what they've done before.

The tactics change but our strategic direction continues.

We need to help students learn.

We must conduct our processes, our interactions with a longterm commitment to nourishing our relationships.

Regardless of whatever achievement outcomes we've got, that social-emotional high touch is so important.

We have a brief window between now and the delivery of a vaccine.

People will either say that online learning is a permanent change or they will say it was an emergency that was only used because of the pandemic.

We need the former, not the latter.

And with that, John, I'll hand it back to you.

Dan, you made so many fascinating comments as with all the panelists, I could probably just sit here and ask you questions for the next hour.

I won't do that, but I do have a couple of questions, one that actually fairly detailed.

Clearly, you talked a lot about when the pandemic hit and the school closures and everything that was going on and now it sounds like, obviously, there's a lot of work going on now as well, but this is a time when normally a lot of your teachers and staff would perhaps not expect to be working and I'm wondering if you can talk about that.

Are you paying them? What are the expectations and how does that work with those existing contracts? What does that look like right now? So we do have contractual obligation to provide stipends to our teachers for summer training.

We are doing that.

There is substantial cost associated with that.

So what we've done is paired down our catalog, focus it very much on what we anticipate.

63 days from today, a little over 1,500 hours, our students come back on August 19th, our teachers come back on August 12th.

We are running continuous trainings over the summer and running up a bill on the stipend side.

So we've got to use every minute of those trainings, which means that our teachers need to have courses available to them.

We've already published the first quarter for next year, we're working on the second quarter.

We do not know whether or not we will be fully distance learning or e-learning or we will be a hybrid, because we don't know what the Florida cases are gonna be.

Will we be farther along in allowing to bring people physically together? But we are standing up, our management of instruction and learning has to be done using digital tools, and then we take advantage of every minute physically we can.

We've also identified about 9,000 special ed students who probably need to be in school five days a week, because online learning isn't gonna work for them.

We've segmented off our early learners, our headstart and voluntary pre-K, those are other populations.

And what about our non-literate or low literate students all the way K-12, do they get a differentiated approach? And those are the decisions we're gonna make in June.

We're gonna logistically enable the systems in July and then we're gonna go live in August.

Fantastic, I was gonna hold my next question, but you touched on a piece of it so I wanna ask it right now.

You talk about these special populations of students and you touched on several, the one I don't think I heard was what about students who don't have access to technology? How is the district thinking about them? So, based on tremendous work by my colleagues throughout the district and the community partnership, we got 99% of our students to be able to access our electronic system by the time we hit April 1st.

So we did a lot of work.

That meant distributing 100,000 laptops as loaners.

Our system was bringing your own device and if you don't have one at home, we're gonna loan you one now.

We worked with AT&T and Comcast to provide home Internet access and work our families through that by leveraging our social workers, our counselors, our school administrators to help the families complete those applications.

We ran into problems where families had bills owed to those vendors and they would not provide access.

So then we back-filled with loaner devices that were billed to us from others.

It's this layered approach.

Our vision was 100% having a device, having connectivity, and then it was on us to stand up to single sign-on the learning management system.

So that device connectivity destination, we got devices with the families together.

We worked on the connectivity and then it was on us for the learning destination.

Final thing that I'll say very quickly before going on to Lonnie, one of the things that's fascinating, Dan, about what you're saying is sometimes I feel like some folks in the media and some policymakers feel like there should be some silver bullet solution, there should be some one approach, hey, we just do this and we're done.

And what I hear from you is you have all these things that you've been working on as a district to think about students individually, to think about issues individually, that you think are top challenges, but I think incredibly valuable to the kind of approaches that you're talking about.

Alright, Lonnie, I'd like to go to you next for your three big ideas.

Very good, and I've really enjoyed listening to the other panelists because some of the same topics, I may just put different nuances on it.

The first topic that I had and I think they'll go ahead and put my slide up there is on infrastructure, and that was touched on by two or three different panelists.

The first one is choosing content that is intuitive, engaging and meets the state standards is the key to success.

And many of us, some of the different clients that we've been working with the difficulty was that they already had an online school.

That was a process that they did, that they had content that was available, but what many did in this blended environment or what they tried to do during COVID is have teachers just throw up what they were doing and put it on the screen and try to Zoom it and do whatever.

And as Lisa talked about earlier, there's a big difference between a teacher that knows how to teach online and one that can actually design curriculum.

So, what we do with content I think is a very important piece to start with with infrastructure.

The next piece that was mentioned a little bit is making sure that we do have devices for every student.

If you don't have a device and Internet connectivity, you really can't even meet the needs and do what they do.

And we struggled with several groups or schools that we worked with that said they had connectivity, but when we went in, it may have been as a cell phone that was shared between three kids and the family or it was that they had to drive to the school and try to connect wirelessly to their school in the parking lot or had to share one laptop with four different kids.

The CARES Act in Louisiana, the money that came in, well basically in Louisiana, I think every student will have a one-to-one device and we're actually buying MiFis or whatever we have to do to connect the kids to the Internet if they don't have Internet connectivity.

We have Comcast in one part of our state that did deep free Internet access, other parts of our state, the prices were at different points and we couldn't do that in Louisiana and other states, we've been able to do different things with that.

Some of the populations, as was mentioned before, bring your own device worked in some places, in some of our Florida schools and some of the other schools.

In Louisiana that did not work in most of the cases because the kids did not have devices or at least not enough devices for every student.

And when you're trying to assume, master scheduling as DeWayne talked about becomes an issue because if everybody wants to Zoom ELA at nine o'clock in the morning and there's only one laptop in the household, that became an issue that we had to work through.

The next piece that I would mention in infrastructure and most of the districts already have this, but not to the level that they need to do this.

They have student information systems, they need to have a learning management system now, if they haven't had one.

Different people were piecing together parts and doing whatever during COVID, they need to have that, but then there needs to be a business intelligence that ties those things together so that there can actually be information that's used well and making instructional decisions for the kids.

'Cause what we've seen is a lot of times there's no management on that, maybe a principal can go in and do a walkthrough and see what's going on with a Zoom call or with something like that, but there hasn't been a thought process on the business intelligence.

When you go fully virtual, you need to really track and make sure the kids are engaged and performing or you don't really get the good results you need.

The next piece I would talk about is professional development.

That actually Lisa did a much more detailed discussion with that, but we definitely need to make sure that our teachers are trained and the administrators in how to use the systems, but then how to motivate students and parents in this particular environment is quite different and the motivation is what changes, and that goes into my last topic is engagement.

Because typically if you look, that's really what the problem has been in online education.

If you look before COVID hit and you look at what was going on in online education, that was the problem, that a lot of the big vendors that did online education, probably 50% of the kids weren't doing anything if you go and see the research on that.

So what has changed and how do you engage? And some people have really made big progress in that.

I think some of that you have to have the business intelligence of your learning management systems tied into your system and figure out how you can track that and help with motivation, but how do you do that? So engagement is the key to success.

How do you inspire at the same time monitor? How do you motivate, but hold accountable? And how do you love your students from afar? And I think several things were talked about very well on that.

I think social-emotional learning is critical.

We're requiring that in the schools that are our clients.

And I'll just give a little bit of my past history with this.

I served nine years as a traditional superintendent and I never had a suicide in my schools.

I became a statewide virtual charter superintendent and the first year, I had four suicides of the population of the student base.

It's quite different.

A lot of the kids that need this do have social-emotional issues and we quickly learned how we had to restaff and rethink our organization, are we thinking on how we're doing counseling and how are we doing all of those other topics that need to happen in schools? The counseling services are needed even more so during this so we should not try to find out a way of doing things cheaper, we need to do things well and I think the points were made very well by several of the panelists on that.

Thank you, Lonnie.

We've had great points and again, so many that I could go back to.

I do wanna go back to one maybe two.

I know we've got still the three big ideas to come from Heath, but we also are getting a lot of questions and so I wanna touch on a couple of them.

One, and Lonnie, I'll mention one of the things about letting the audience ask questions is sometimes they ask hard questions.

So I'm teeing up the hard question for you because you mentioned student engagement and others have mentioned that as well, and we see a lot about the idea about how teachers engage with students, that feels like the first level.

The second level, especially with the younger learners that we see people thinking about is how do teachers engage with families as well? The question that's come in is, "How do we keep students engaged with each other "during times of remote learning?" Well, that is quite interesting and I would say that I would do this by also backtracking to the teacher and then we'll go to the student with that.

I think that when we look how we're doing this, we can have a teacher do face-to-face and can do blended, that same teacher we should not, and I think we tried to do this with COVID, have that same teacher sometimes have three people in three different places, some that are fully virtual, some that are blended and some that are face-to-face.

I think a teacher can meet the needs of maybe two of those categories and I think if it's a fully virtual student, we need to have staff dedicated to that and handled in a whole different manner.

So I think that part's a pretty critical piece of how we do that.

So back to how do we keep the students and how do we keep them engaged? That's something that when we go through the professional development, we really spend a lot of time on, there's not a silver bullet to that.

I think engagement and motivation of students has been studied.

I think Lisa mentioned a couple of the specific things and how you design the lessons that there may be projects that the students work together or some of those things.

I typically use, I don't know if you're familiar with the Schlechty Center, but they have 10 design qualities for their lessons that they use to make sure that one of these categories will inspire everybody to do something.

So to figure out what inspires a student to connect and how do you connect, but I think there's ways, face-to-face it's easy blended, I think there's ways to connect.

And then when you move all the way to virtual, we can connect the students as well.

So instead of laying out a silver bullet and I really didn't totally answer your question 'cause that's a hard one, but I think there's several tools to do that, but what may work for this student may not work for that student so I think there's a whole host of things we could get into on how you would connect students together.

Alright, well thank you, Lonnie.

Heath, let's go to your three big ideas and then I'll circle back to some of the other questions that have come in and then maybe put them to anybody who wants to answer.

And then I have some questions that I have teed up to ask some of you as well, but first, Heath, let's go to you.

Yeah, thanks, John and first of all, they build off of the wonderful, insightful comments of my colleagues and they're really not my big ideas.

I've spent so much time over the last several months talking to school district leaders across the country and trying to really figure out what's on their mind as they're getting ready to welcome students back to school.

And so that really starts off with the first one, is you think about this 90 days leading into to the traditional reopening of schools, the focus on having to have a hybrid approach.

When you think about a regular school opening at a school district like Daniels with hundreds of thousands of students, thousands of teachers, hundreds of schools, and trying to get everyone to where they're supposed to be on the first day, it's the logistical challenge of epic proportions.

This year, you've got to think about when are we going to be able to reopen school? What are the guidance that we're getting nationally, federally, locally? What social distancing gonna apply? What are the precautions that we're gonna have to have? Are we gonna have to run alternate schedules, multi-track school? Are we gonna have to utilize space in our schools in a different way? No matter what configuration in each district within each state is required to use, there's going to have to continue to be a reliance and need to access remote distance virtual learning, and so how do we continue to make that a focus? One of the things that my colleagues have all talked about is this idea around social-emotional needs.

As we are welcoming students back, whatever that's gonna look like, how do we make sure we are addressing social-emotional needs that we know during this time of distance learning were not being addressed adequately? And then DeWayne mentioned this and I think it really needs to be a focus area, and that idea of, we traditionally in public education, have to think about summer lose.

Students who are in poverty tend to lose half of what they learn in an academic year during those three months of summer vacation, with COVID, that's gonna be even exasperated more.

So how do we use our technology to quickly assess how much learning was lost and then how do we try to recapture that? Because a student that's in fourth grade now is gonna have third grade standards that they did not master and you can't just say, "Well, I hope at some point they get it." There has to be a purposeful plan to get that to happen.

The next big idea from colleagues across the country is really what I call a moment of truth, and that is how do we really focus on our professional development, purposeful technology, both in our focus on classroom digital transformation and a continual focus on online virtual transformation of public education.

And that really means how do we look and gather data about how our core customer, our students, our teachers and our parents really think we did during this pivot to virtual learning? And I think the best leaders that I've been speaking with are really prepared to get some very harsh criticism.

Heroic work had been done with thousands of school districts across the country in making this pivot.

Many of my colleagues mentioned, there was almost no time, over a weekend, over spring break, massive plans have been enacted and there was phenomenal work being done.

But the reality is, is that now when you're really saying, okay, we made the pivot, but how much learning actually happened? How much actual teaching occurred? How much mastery of the standards occurred? And how many students were lost? Those things have to be quickly assessed.

And I think one of the things that's gonna come out and the school districts that are most authentic about it and truthful will quickly be able to pivot to make solutions is a recognition that there were lost opportunities along the way.

The survey that was mentioned that we did early on, over 1/2 the teachers surveyed said they felt fully unprepared to teach in a virtual setting.

The reality is is all of us that started this transformation around digital learning, whether it was one-to-one or other aspects, there was training that we did that probably wasn't as good as we hoped it would be, there was products, tools, and solutions that we bought that not only didn't deliver the way we wanted it to deliver, but actually aren't being used.

There's some survey results coming out that over 60% of digital tools that districts bought were not used.

So all those things are gonna have to be accounted for so that we can have those painful truths and then get better.

And that leads into the third area around parallel planning or what I like to call plan B.

The reality is that what has gotten exposed during this pandemic is a very hurtful truth about public education, that is students who've come to school with less, traditionally get less in public schools.

Less access to rigorous curriculum, less access to modern facilities, and less access to purposeful technology.

And so we're gonna have to quickly, however possible, and I loved when Dan talked about the pivot that happened in Broward County, one of the biggest districts in the country.

So all the reasons why you say we can't do this, but they have a focus around how we can.

So what do we need to do to make sure that every student has a device, every student has connectivity, every teacher has the professional development so that they can access the kind of instruction that needs to occur to ensure learning is going on? And then how do we reimagine key functionality in different ways to deliver education? Early in this conversation, we started to say, education is not going back the way it was before.

How do we use this pivotal moment to really have a sense of urgency? The fear of urgency of now to create something different for the sake of being better, something different so that all students get the education they need in a traditional sense, in a classroom setting and through quality virtual learning.

And when we start to think about all those different areas of how we can, it's exciting about what we can do differently on behalf of students and teachers.

Fantastic, thank you, thank you, Heath.

I wanna come back to a couple of things that you said before we do that, we've got questions rolling in and I've got a couple of questions that I'm guessing maybe one of you might wanna take, but I encourage at this point any of you to jump in and we can have a conversation on some of these issues.

The first one, DeWayne, I wanna go to you on this, just on my fear that maybe you have some ideas about this through your work with Digital Promise, where schools are dealing with an unprecedented crisis at a time when we're likely to be looking at unprecedented budget cuts as well.

And I wonder if you can talk about what you're seeing in terms of different funding sources, different funding strategies, I'll start with you and anybody else who wants to comment as well, I welcome also.

Yeah, if you know of any, send them my way (laughs).

No, but seriously, at Digital Promise, we've been working hard to try to figure out how can we help best support our schools, especially those that are really struggling, really our rural schools are really struggling.

So what we've done is we're looking at starting a purchasing consortium where we can help schools join together to get more buying power where we can kinda help bring down the price of resources that they need.

We're also looking at identifying funding and funding sources and opportunities for organizations that are willing to do in-kind services for districts at no cost.

So really trying to figure out like what is the best way to match make with these school districts that have a need and can we find the actual entity that supports it.

But we wanna make sure that we're vetting the right vendors for them, because there are a lot of vendors out there now doing some predatory lending.

Making districts sign some agreements for three and four years and they say it's free for today but tomorrow it's not.

So trying to make sure that we're putting districts in a right position moving forward financially.

Yeah, yeah, excellent.

Thank you, thank you, DeWayne.

I'll put that question to either Dan or Lonnie to see if there's anything that you want to add about how you're seeing schools, your funding situation, your budget situations, how you're thinking about these issues.

Dan, I'll start with you if you would like to-- Yeah.

So the funding situation is uncertain.

We know that the state anticipates a significant drop in tax revenue, that's how schools are funded in Florida.

It appears that we will not be informed of what the budget reductions will be until the midyear adjustment, which means that we start with this fantasy that we're fully funded, but knowing that we're gonna get decimated in January.

That means we have to preemptively make decisions now.

We've frozen all spending unless it's directly tied to COVID, we've frozen all positions unless it's directly tied to an immediate service.

That will begin thawing in the coming weeks to prepare for the school year, but we've had to reduce.

It also means rather than making new big purchases, we're looking to extend or expand existing contracts.

So we find ourselves in a reduction of who the players at the table are.

These are very difficult decisions.

We don't know not only what the budget will be, but what will the tax revenue collection rate be.

So even if people get the tax bills, can they pay them? And we're not gonna see that impact for six to 12 months.

It's very frightening, but those are adult problems.

Let's stay focused on the kids and what it's gonna take to make sure that they have a place to go and a quality experience to get when they come back to us and then we'll figure out the details behind the scenes.

The only other thing I'd say is people have choice in many states and whether it's a public district, a public charter, private school vouchers, when people are frustrated with their current experience, they're gonna go shopping, right? And so that means that we may see enrollment shifts and that's impossible to prepare for, but we know that we're gonna have to deal with it.

So, Lonnie, that plays into some of our common struggles and competition, so.

(panelists laughing) Go, Lonnie.

Yeah, so I would say with funding, and it's totally different between states for us of how they're tackling it.

For instance, and I'll give a difference between Florida and Louisiana.

In Louisiana, the CARES Act money is funneled down directly to the schools and to the LEAs and we've been able to handle that well.

So that basically is what's provided all of our one-to-one technology, et cetera, et cetera.

We go to Florida or the Carolinas or other places and the money is not flowing that way.

And they may use it for something else so they haven't even done the allocations yet, so that's a difficulty when you're trying to do new initiatives and try to do things.

And as Dan talked about, actual the revenues are going down instead of going up.

So we've been blessed in some states where the CARES Act money went directly to the schools and they're getting to do what they need to do to prepare for distance learning, and we have other states where we can't even figure out what they are going to do with the money.

So that's a difficulty, a big situation there.

I would also say even internally, we're looking at if there's a school facility that has multimedia space and other spaces, if we're at phase two in most of our schools, if we go to phase two and you can have 15 kids in a classroom the way we're looking at it, but say for your budget, you have 25 kids or so in the classroom, what do you do with the other 10 kids if the parents all need to be at work and it's an elementary school? So we're looking at radical things of how do we have it where we may have those 10 kids with a student teacher or an aid or something else, but have them still in our facility and teach, you know, we talk about remote teaching or distance learning, the teacher may be teaching a concept and some of the kids are down in the gym or down in the cafeteria or down somewhere else.

So we are really radically thinking this because as Dan said and I think it's a key point, there's going to be competition, enrollment shifts.

How do you pay? How do you make some of these happen? So we need to be flexible and figure out how do we meet the needs of families? And especially in some of our states like in Louisiana, you either have single parents that are working or you have two parents that are working.

They want their kids in school so that they can go to work so that's part of the process that we're working through.

Is there ways of looking at every nook and cranny in your building and figuring out a way that you can bring the kids in and have them there? And even the distance learning might be across the hall if you have a great teacher and not just at someone's home, because a third grader needs a parent or a learning coach or something at home, they're not gonna be able to sit there and just, anyway, so that's my thoughts on that.

Hey, John, just really quick on the funding.

Yep.

Going to another federal stimulus package and we have to make sure we're advocating for public education.

The cost for COVID are increasing the spending on school districts at a time where they're getting less funding.

Who else is in a better position to say, we have needs here that have to be met and if there's gonna be another federal stimulus, K-12 has to be a recipient.

Second, we saw from the recession, too many states got federal dollars and there were some planting going on, Lonnie mentioned that.

We've got to make sure that we're not just getting the additional federal dollars and then seeing state funding go a different way, because what happened in the recession is our most vulnerable populations, early childhood programs, programs for English second language learners, programs for students with special needs all got decimated.

We can't let that happen.

And then the third area is school district leaders are looking for budget cuts.

80% of budgets are people and I'm always worried about this time when we're looking at trying to extol the virtues of virtual learning which are vast and immense, we don't wanna make it seem like we can do with less teachers and more virtual.

We're gonna need our great teachers to be leveraged with the technology, not need less of them because we have technology options.

Yeah, all great points, thank you, Heath.

I appreciate that and I think many of us have a role in whatever small way we can to try to influence some of those decisions, so thank you.

Lonnie, I wanna just comment on something that you said and then I wanna go over to Lisa Dawley.

Lonnie, you brought up an interesting idea that we've started to see mostly coming out of post secondary.

A lot of the discussion in the K-12 level, I think, has been around is the fall gonna be online? Is it gonna be hybrid, meaning part on site, part online? What we're starting to see in post secondary is something that's called the HyFlex model, which some or all of you may be familiar with, the concept that a teacher may be in a room with students and simultaneously broadcasting to another set of students who may be at home or somewhere else offsite.

Lonnie, I'm curious, is that sort of what you had in mind at all or are you seeing some of these ideas? It strikes me as very challenging, which is why I think it's such an interesting concept.

Yeah, that part is the most challenging that we're having major discussions to do, and how do you take that great teacher and have them shared with other kids that don't have the access to the great teacher? But especially because of the whole issue, if we're at a phase one and you can only have 10 kids with a teacher at the school or we're at phase two and you can have 15 kids in the classroom or wherever we are with that, we would like to have our kids as much in the building and have ways of having, and it does cost more money as Heath said because then we have to hire a whole nother aid or somebody to take care of the other 10 kids and have them down the hall.

But we'd like that one great teacher to still be teaching these 15 and the other 10 that are down the hall.

So you're right, John, and that's exactly what we're talking about doing, is making sure that we do have the right type of equipment in the classroom where it's still engaging and exciting to do that, but I think when we've also had to work with some of our administrators who think you could just do that all day, I think to think that a kid can sit in front of a Zoom or in front of a video camera the entire day is not the answer either, but I think a piece of that is definitely the answer, John, I really do.

Yeah, thank you, Lonnie.

Lisa, it's been awhile since I could come back to you and I've had this question teed up that came in awhile ago.

You started talking a while ago about some needs around teacher professional learning and others have mentioned it as well in teacher support.

One of the questions that came in that I think is a really great one is, okay, so we're putting supports in place, we're putting professional learning in place, how do you know if a teacher is being effective in a remote learning environment? I think there are a few different measures of teacher effectiveness and digital learning and the good news is a lot of them are in the back end if you have an LMS, there's a lot of great reporting in there that a teacher can look at or a school administrator can look at to determine effectiveness, and so that's where I would start, with some basics.

We know from research, for example, at the college level, if a student logs in at least twice a week and they're participating in discussion forums, they have a 95% chance of getting an A.

And so there's just some key data like that, that are they logging in, are they showing up? And you wanna start there and if they're not showing up, we've got to get their showing up going on.

Another piece that we know from research is with students click activity, what are they clicking on virtually in the online lesson, in the online environment? By far, the main thing that students will click on is their own work.

They like revisiting their own work once it's submitted, and so what is that phenomenon? It's pride.

Think about things that you've posted online and Facebook, your videos, your pictures, you'll revisit those things.

That's a human behavior, that you're reflecting on your own work.

So when we give students opportunities to create and build videos, projects, slide shows, prototypes and put those online we're encouraging that online interaction.

And then also we look at things like, is the teacher giving quality feedback to the students? We can assess that and look at that in the online environment.

I would like to say in the time of COVID, one of the things that's most inspired me about K-12 teachers is the level of playfulness and joy that they're bringing to the virtual space.

It's so important, it's not just about the content, it's creating a feeling like you wanna hang out there as a kid.

And so depending on the age, we'll see elementary kids bringing their stuffed animals and introducing them to their friends online.

I've seen middle school teachers hosting disco parties with the dog dressed up and disco lights.

And so it's that sense of virtual learning isn't just a space for memorizing or learning content, but it's a place where human beings come together in a spirit of joyful, playful learning.

And when we see evidence of that and really creative learning activities, I get really inspired and kids do too.

Yeah, those are great points, thank you.

Dan, I saw you had put a comment about some things as well.

It's similar to what Lisa talked about.

I wonder if you could touch on those, but here's the other question I'm curious about, when you think about your district, who's doing that observing to see if those behaviors are going on? Sure, so part of it needs to be automated and part of it needs to be sample-based, 'cause with the automated processes, by having a learning management system and some other technology tools on the backend, you can get very granular, but at the same time develop patterns of how long are people logged in? Are they checking in every day? You can do it, and we set up dashboards and can drill down based on those automatic transactions.

So number one is, are the kids engaged? And Lisa spoke to that absolutely wonderfully, because what she's talking about are behaviorals, it's not prerequisite knowledge.

If the kid's logging in and doing the work, it doesn't matter whether they've been well prepared or not well prepared, they're doing well in the class because they're trying hard.

So can you automate some of that? But some of it needs to be sample-based.

So what I added in was that you've got to have a sense of what's being asked of the student and how is the quality of the response to that, be that a homework, a test, an essay, anything else.

If people are being asked to do low level materials, it doesn't matter if they do a lot of it online.

Quantity is not what this is about, we go to make sure and the only way to do that is to have teachers show each other and have administrators and coaches be able to log into the system and take a look at what's being asked of kids.

So that needs to be done at a cascading level of authority through the organization.

And then the next piece is very much about are the kids getting feedback? Lisa talked about the students wanting to look at their own work, but part of that human behavior is wanting to know that somebody else has as well.

Submitting work and just getting a score back does little to motivate and it does nothing to understand whether or not what you did was meaningful and how it was wrong.

We must continue to provide feedback to students, be it physical or virtual, but these questions in our online learning are no different than the questions of our physical learning.

We just have more transparency with our online tools and we need to take advantage of that transparency.

Yeah, yeah, great points, thanks, Dan.

I wanna go back to an issue that both DeWayne and Heath brought up around equity in education, and I wanna put just a slightly different view on that.

So both of you talked about equity in education.

We're coming into this discussion from mostly the framework of the pandemic, but of course we have other really tragic issues going on in our country right now with the killing of George Floyd and the subsequent protests and a heightened awareness of issues of equity and racial issues.

And so I would like to put the question to both of you, perhaps starting with DeWayne and then going to Heath, when you think about digital equity and access how it informs and it influences so much of your thinking and so much of district leaders' thinking, what do you think that school leaders should be asking themselves and thinking about relative to these issues within this discussion that we're having as they're planning for the new year? Yeah, thanks John.

I think is very important for school district leaders to one first, understand and identify do they have an issue? Do they have a problem? Do they have students that don't have access to the Internet? But then also an even bigger issue is equity itself, like are you really looking at your policies? Are we ensuring that there's equity in spending with our funding? Is there equity in hiring practices? Is there equity in the selection of curriculum? Is there equity in grading? Is there equity in attendance? Like there is so many different pieces that equity play here.

So you must have an equity lens looking at all of the issues that kind of lead into the digital equity piece.

Now let's speak on the digital equities piece.

When I say digital equity, I think of more than just a device and Internet access, it's also the curriculum side, access to rigorous digital curriculum but also access to training for professional development and digital citizenship and digital literacy.

So districts needs to ensure that whatever they're providing, students have access to it and if they don't, how are we gonna ensure that students who are marginalized and don't have access to a fully functional laptop or desktop, how do I get that student the same caliber of education that other students are receiving? I think that's an important piece.

We also, as educators, must understand that sometimes BYOD, may not be a good thing because think of this for example, if you tell our students to create a video or something like that when it comes down to the curriculum and they only have a Chromebook, it's gonna be hard for that student versus a student that have an iPad or a MacBook Air.

So we have to really think about what are we asking our students to do and do they have the resources and real estate to do it? So it's very important that when we're developing that curriculum we're ensuring that we're asking questions that are equitable, not just based on the feel, that students can see and feel themselves in the curriculum but also the response that you're asking for them to do.

Can they even perform that? Yeah, thank you, DeWayne.

Phenomenal response DeWayne. Heath.

And what I'll say is we're having these conversations right now as a country about systemic racism and we have to look at what's happening in K-12 education and let's call it out.

You can't get a more horrific example of systemic racism and white privilege than what's happening with virtual learning across the country.

Who is getting virtual learning at a high level versus who's not? And it tells a story and as a country and as educators, we either have to be comfortable that story or change that story.

The best districts, and we've got some of those leaders on this panel today, didn't start their digital transformation outside of their equity framework, they did their digital transformation aligned to their equity framework.

And so they spent more on schools and communities that they need to serve who couldn't bring their own devices.

They didn't do an infrastructure for schools that were the newest, that oftentimes are in the more affluent communities, they actually started with the schools that had the least access to technology.

They didn't stop at just the buildings, but they did the module units and then they went above and beyond that to get connectivity in all neighborhoods.

And so this conversation about virtual learning is not, you know, it is aligned to the conversation around equity and it's not until we focus on those issues and acknowledge the hurtful truths that we have an opportunity to make it better.

Yeah, I would just say, and it's something I say all the time, digital equity is the new social justice issue that we're dealing with and we must acknowledge that.

One of our great league members, Baron Davis, superintendent in Richmond School District Two states that, digital equity and access to a device and access to Internet should just be an essential part of life.

Just like when we walk in our house and flip the switch for our lights and turn on the faucet, water comes out, lights turn on, Internet should be the same way.

Yeah.

Yeah, I think it's a great point, DeWayne.

Somebody sent me just a couple of days ago a short clip that had been on, I think it was on the "TODAY" show, five minutes or so comparing Detroit to Grosse Pointe in Michigan around digital access.

And it feels to me like to raise or to amplify the point you just made, DeWayne, these were always critical issues, maybe now they're being raised to the point that it becomes more clear and it's easier to talk about because it used to be this idea that, hey, maybe that digital access is an add-on, maybe it's not really necessary, but now it's become so clear that it really is.

So I absolutely love the points that you're making.

Yeah, I think all of us on this call have been saying this for years.

Like since I started in education, I've saying we need to access and Internet for everyone, but I think this COVID-19 has really brought to spotlight that the work that we've been doing for years, people are finally understanding.

But I just pray that we don't go back to business as usual when this is over, that we get to a point where we can change the way education looks moving forward 'cause we can not go back.

Yeah, thank you.

We are at about 10 minutes or so remaining in our planned time.

As time goes on, my list of questions gets longer, not shorter because the knowledge on this panel is just incredible.

So I'm gonna try to get a few more questions in because we have so many questions teed up.

I wanna go back to Lisa.

Somebody mentioned a survey earlier and honestly I don't remember if it was you, Lisa, or somebody else, but it was about teachers feeling unprepared this spring to make the shift.

You've been thinking about this as we've talked about for a while and I'm curious, what do you think are the biggest issue? What is most likely to get in the way of success when trying to teach in a virtual environment? What does that suggest are the areas of need and training and support when it comes to successful virtual teaching? You can take a very expert 20 year veteran teacher who's never taught virtual and because it's a totally unfamiliar environment, they'll revert back to the way that they were taught as a kid, it's like they have to learn all over again.

And so this is why I really emphasize understanding that learning to teach virtually is developmental and those first year needs focus around and somebody was talking about this earlier, definitely the tech skills.

It's hard to focus on student relationships, student learning, social-emotional, when you're uncomfortable with the technology, you don't understand where to click, how to open the webinar software, how to create breakout rooms.

So the tech skills in year one are critical with your base platforms.

You don't wanna add 10 apps, but get the base skills down.

Time management is another huge issue.

How do I float at all? Am I getting online every day? Am I getting online once a week and then we're doing stuff asynchronously? What is the actual schedule look like? We saw a lot of public school teachers being online every day, all day long.

It's a huge burnout and it's not actually a great strategy to be totally synchronous all the time.

There's benefit to both synchronous and asynchronous learning strategies.

So figuring out that balance at time is extremely important and then also how to overcome the isolation that you feel when you're teaching virtual.

And that's why I recommend setting up a professional learning network within the school itself, so teachers are learning from each other and they're not feeling isolated.

And those three things, when they're addressed in year one, tend to go away and by year two, online teachers are now more focused on student responsibility, parental engagement, and really digging into learning more deeply because they've knocked those initial needs out of the way.

Excellent, thank you, thank you, Lisa.

Mm-hmm.

Dan, it's been a while I put a question to you.

I think you're next up, because I think it's really interesting that you've talked from the perspective of your district, some of the things that you had in place before the pandemic hit, before the school closures hit.

And I wonder if you can touch on, if there were just one or two of those things that were most important, I'd love to hear that.

And then the second thing that I'd love to get your thoughts are for districts that aren't at the level that you were at three months ago, where do you think their starting point is? Is it fundamentally different in any way or is it more like, well, they're tasked now with trying to move as quickly as possible to do all the foundational things that your district was able to do.

So just a couple of remarks and I wanna thank John, you and everyone, but you got to understand how to connect a kid with stuff.

Now, everything that needs to be built out can be accelerated with money.

So you can get a single sign-on solution stood up fairly quickly by extracting information, but doing that quickly is no good if you do not ensure interoperability.

So we slowly built an infrastructure.

We started with a single sign-on and then overlaid a business platform and added in LMS.

You can deploy those things fairly quickly if you've got the money to put into it and that's motivated by need.

Right now, the need is strong.

But if you don't design that and most importantly implement it with a commitment to open interoperability standards, you will find yourself with pieces of a system that do not fit together into a single ecosystem.

So envision, how does any child get to your district, your school's materials? Have a very clear, you know, what's gonna be their ID? Your tech folks can work through that stuff, but be able to say, I need to be able to get provisions, I need to be able to get authentication.

You go solve that, but I need it.

And then all your pieces need to play nicely together because otherwise you will spend the rest of your career trying to retrofit systems to work into each other.

And with that, I'll let somebody else join in on that thought.

100%.

We are right there with you.

So we're actually supporting schools right now.

We're doing what we call Data Ready 2021, where we're walking school districts through the process of looking at data interoperability moving forward.

So if you are a school district, reach out to me, we're gonna do that free of charge for you and you can sign up for that today at Digital Promise.

Excellent, thank you, DeWayne.

Lonnie, our time is winding down, this may be the last question or maybe we'll have one more after this, but you're in a position where you've been thinking about the virtual education space for a long time.

And so you have been able to gain a lot of knowledge, from a slightly different perspective about what makes for the most successful virtual teaching and learning experiences.

I'm curious, based on that experience, what do you think districts should really be focused on now? And I know we've talked about so many different ideas, so in one sense it feels like a little bit like I'm saying, hey Lonnie, can you summarize the last 75 minutes in three minutes, which I know is extremely difficult, but also I wonder coming out of this, what do you think are the top, I don't know, two or three areas that they should really be focused on? Well, there were so many wonderful thoughts with it.

Let's talk about the paradigm, you're going from face-to-face to all the way to virtual and somewhere in between depending on what things look like.

I would try to put some of those things in a box.

So I would take the fully virtual and say that you are going to have some kids that will not come back to school.

They are immune deficient, they live with their grandparent that's 85 years-old is the primary caregiver, they're not coming back to school.

So you need to have a game plan on a fully virtual student.

What does that look like? And it should look different than having one teacher teaching 25 first graders that has some fully virtual, some blended, some face-to-face, it's too much.

So take all of your fully virtual, put them in one pot and kind of separate that.

Now look at it with those that are going to do some virtual and you may have to go from phase one to phase two so that other teacher may kind of do something different depending on if it's August or September, but that teacher can do some face-to-face, and we're struggling with that.

Each school district's doing something different.

One of our school districts that we work with is doing it every other day, A through K comes on Monday, L through Z comes on Tuesday and they're doing alternating days going into next school year.

Everybody's doing something different, but I think so many things were mentioned.

Once you have all the infrastructure, you have all the businesses since you have everything set, how do you do, as Dan said, connect the kid to the stuff? And that's the important part.

And how do you inspire, I loved all the pieces that everyone talked about, how do you inspire and motivate kids to work? And how do you have systems that you can see, as Lisa said, where it's clicks, but not just how much time are they spending, how are they performing and how do you inspire them to do that? So as we just go through it, I'd separate the fully virtual from the other two spots and then what I would do is figure out how do I motivate and engage and monitor to make sure that we can get the good product we wanna get to.

Fantastic, thank you, Lonnie.

Alright, we have one minute left, which means we have 10 seconds for lightning round.

Final thought, hate to put you on the spot but, I don't hate to put you on the spot or I wouldn't do it.

Heath, starting with you, final thought.

So we've been so focused in this country around digital transformation in K-12, we have this opportunity around virtual learning and it solves something we've always been focused on, extending the reach of the great teachers, extending opportunities to students who need more at school, not less.

If we get the virtual instruction right, it can be the game changer we need in public education.

Fantastic, DeWayne, and going to you next, lightning round.

Yeah, it's very important that you reach out to your peers.

You can do this better and faster if you reach out to folks that are in the same arena with you.

It's also important for those who are non-school systems, who are nonprofits organizations, that we also come together and provide resources for schools so they're not going in 20 different places.

Excellent, thank you.

Lonnie, I know you were just talking final thoughts, but I'm gonna give you five seconds anyway, anything would you like to add? I think just sharing with others as you've talked about and learning from others and being willing to listen to others.

Y'all had great comments today, good stuff.

Lisa.

This is our chance to level the playing field with digital equity.

Having a one-to-one initiative and making sure every student has broadband access can take our whole country and our learning system in a new direction.

Excellent, thank you.

Dan, final word.

Collaborate, think, but don't find yourself paralyzed by analysis.

It is better to get started on doing something than leaving people with a vacuum when they come back.

We get one chance to start the school year.

Do the hard work, lead but keep moving forward.

Fantastic.

You all were absolutely fantastic.

When we can all travel again, we need to do a road show.

With that, I'm gonna turn it over to Pam for closing comments.

Hi folks, thank you.

This is Pam Roggerman from the University of Phoenix.

What an incredible conversation.

You've given us so much to consider when we start thinking about what back to school looks like for this fall.

We're not done with this conversation and I'm sure you're not either.

I hope that you will plan to join us all at the free summer Virtual Teaching Academy, which will include these voices and more, on June 26 through July 1st.

You can enroll again for free at go.blackboard.com/virtual-teaching-academy.

And again, this is free of charge and together we'll help you begin to build your individual blueprint for this fall and beyond.

On behalf of Blackboard and the University of Phoenix, thank you again to our amazing panelists, our wonderful moderator, John Watson, and most of all, thank you all for doing the good work that's gonna get us back to school this fall and joining us today.

We hope to see you again on June 26 and have a great day folks.

Bye everybody.