



The Alliance Furnace

S O L U T I O N S

R O A D M A P



Alliance for Education Impact Solutions Roadmap

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Alliance for Education Impact

The Alliance for Education Impact, a powerful and action-oriented professional network, supports innovative leaders who champion and lead sustainable educational change. Through deep study, rich discourse, and thought leadership, members collectively aim to build education systems that equitably serve all learners to positively impact schools, districts, families, and communities.

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INTRODUCTION



For today's students to effectively lead the next generation, they must be prepared and well equipped to apply their knowledge and skills to new and unknown contexts. They must be agile in their thinking and be able to adapt quickly to meet the rapidly evolving needs and demands of society. To ensure preparedness, leaders must identify and tackle the most pertinent problems of practice facing schools and districts and ambitiously champion change.

To support education leaders in their efforts to ensure the highest quality education for their students, The Alliance for Education Impact launched the Alliance Furnace, a design-thinking inspired think tank made up of diverse thought leaders to identify actionable solutions pathways for schools and districts. This Solutions Roadmap is a compilation of actionable solutions pathways that district leaders can use to ignite change efforts in their schools and districts. To launch creative solution finding, The Alliance worked with superintendents and executive education leaders from across the US to identify core areas to tackle first. In the wake of COVID-19, a crisis that has catalyzed rapid change out of necessity, four core areas emerged.

Distance/Hybrid Learning

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to plague schools in vexing and unpredictable ways, with new and unanticipated challenges continuing to arise, with no clear resolution in sight and no discernible timetable for when it will dissipate. Among the biggest challenges are how to fluidly and consistently fortify and engage students (and families) while equipping teachers with the tools they need to effectively achieve their critical teaching and learning goals necessary to nourish and provoke learning progress and achievement in all students. These are must-have objectives for all schools adopting full or hybrid distance/remote learning models.

Social Emotional Learning

All of the pre-existing challenges of SEL have been intensified and exacerbated by COVID-19. There are significant situational and socioeconomic SEL impacts due to the 5-month absence from school, the isolating impacts of shelter-at-home, the fear/anxiety regarding the health of students, teachers, and families, and the stresses, challenges, and inequities of distance/hybrid learning. Compounding this landscape, are the difficulties in assessing, addressing, and successfully delivering effective SEL in a distance/hybrid environment, which includes the critical engagement of families and their overarching sentiment of fear, uncertainty, and disconnectedness.

Equity of Access

The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly highlighted and ratcheted up what has now become a national emergency requiring that all students have equitable access to learn remotely and by whatever mode is necessary to guarantee their equitable and consistent access to the proper teaching and learning resources and materials, wherever they are and wherever they live. This now pertains specifically to distance/remote learning, as schools transition to Hybrid or completely remote learning models and includes devices, internet access, technical literacy of students (and families), the quality of the physical learning space, and the management—and guarantee—of dedicated learning time. In addition, many students due to age, attention skills, or special needs will also need daily hands-on learning assistance from a parent/adult or caregiver.

Professional Development

Under the restrictions of COVID, a top priority is educating and equipping teachers and staff to transition effective instructional practice via a distance/remote learning or hybrid learning scenario. An urgent need will be delivering high quality virtual professional learning, training, and resources on a full range of subjects that is easily accessible to leaders, teachers, and instructional staff.

Cultivating Belonging in the Virtual Space

Problem of Practice.

Social Emotional Learning - All of the pre-existing challenges of SEL have been intensified and exacerbated by COVID-19. There are significant situational and socioeconomic SEL impacts due to the 5-month absence from school, the isolating impacts of shelter-at-home, the fear/anxiety regarding the health of students, teachers, and families, and the stresses, challenges, and inequities of distance/hybrid learning. Compounding this landscape are the difficulties in assessing, addressing, and successfully delivering effective SEL in a distance/hybrid environment, which includes the critical engagement of families and their overarching sentiment of fear, uncertainty, and disconnectedness.

Solution Pathway Summary.

As schools seek to restore a feeling of connectedness among its students, a calendar of opportunities for social engagement--promoted and coordinated at the class, grade, and school-levels--could go a long way toward helping them achieve this critical social-emotional goal. This dashboard-style resource would help promote, facilitate, and organize a school and community-wide slate of social, play-based events--including a blend of virtual and real-life events, ranging from Virtual Bingo, to a Scavenger Hunt, to a Throwback Pen Pal campaign. Prevailing research shows that students who are socially engaged, and feel more connected at school are less likely to exhibit emotional distress and demonstrate violent or deviant behavior. This is true independent of how these students are faring academically.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

The physical and social isolation brought on by Covid-19 is negatively impacting the development and growth of elementary students, especially PreK to Grade 3. They need a way to more meaningfully interact in a non-academic social play experience.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Elementary school students, families, and teachers.

Rationale for Success.

Play-based learning is a very effective way to increase SEL competencies. Elementary School parents and families will intuitively understand the benefits of these activities and have confidence that these online tools and resources are safe and good SEL nourishment for their children..

Specified Value Proposition.

Younger learners, ranging from PreK-Grade 3, have been missing out on regular and critically needed social interaction that is needed to help support their mental/emotional growth and development. Kids who have felt isolated will know that there is a safe haven for them where they are valued and can contribute. Families will know their kids are making meaningful social connections that previously were only available through in-person sports and activities. Adults will find a robust suite of support groups, workshops, and possibly discounts/coupons from local sponsors.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

Students who are more socially connected will participate more avidly in school, will express their appreciation, will be less likely to be bullied or excluded, and can also communicate their experiences by posting their reactions.

Barriers to Execution/Success.

Finding viable partners and an owner/administrator of the virtual space or app will be critical. This model must include intuitive and prevailing ways to access via mobile phone and build in community bandwidth plans so that those who have the least connectivity are not excluded. Schools will also need to ensure student privacy, possibly by assigning avatars or letting children choose their own avatar.

Full-Service Tech Support for Remote Learning: Introducing the Ed Tech Geek Squad!

Problem of Practice.

Equity of Access - The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly highlighted and ratcheted up what has now become a national emergency requiring that all students have equitable access to learn remotely and by whatever mode is necessary to guarantee their equitable and consistent access to the proper teaching and learning resources and materials, wherever they are and wherever they live. This now pertains specifically to distance/remote learning, as schools transition to Hybrid or completely remote learning models and includes devices, internet access, technical literacy of students (and families), the quality of the physical learning space, and the management—and guarantee—of dedicated learning time. In addition, many students due to age, attention skills, or special needs will also need daily hands-on learning assistance from a parent/adult or caregiver.

Solution Pathway Summary.

Create and deliver simple technological solutions that all K-12 students/families--and those who help them with distance learning--can use effectively as go-to, must-have resources. Back up the easy-to-use solutions with full-service Tech Support available via phone and online chat seven days a week between 6a-11p (prime homework time). Tech Support (on a by-exception basis) will make on-site visits to district sites and community partner sites for hands-on support and help with devices/connectivity, and face-to-face instructions (similar to Best Buy's "Geek Squad," or the "Genius Bar" at the Apple Store).

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

Effective distance learning almost always requires that the student have fluid on-demand support from a parent or other adult; the younger the student, the more critical the support. The lack of tech support often leads to disengagement and/or outright isolation from their class and school.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Students and anyone helping them with distance learning; including parents, guardians, grandparents, caregivers, and daycare providers.

Rationale for Success.

This solution will minimize disruption to learning by ensuring all students and families are connected, and able to use their devices with disruption.

Specified Value Proposition.

Pre-COVID it was enough to get the student to the school where they would be provided with everything they needed to learn; teachers and before/after school sites. Now we must provide students and those who help them learn with the flexible and continual virtual support they need to guarantee that distance learning is effective and operating for all students all the time.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

- Success rate, in terms of percentage of students successfully logged in, and actively participating in virtual learning.
- Number of support calls.
- Number of parent contacts.
- Academic progress.

Barriers to Execution/Success.

Budget limitations. Parents and the public's lack of confidence in the ability of public education to deliver service at this level.

Introducing “Do and Tell” Applications to Student Learning

Problem of Practice.

Distance/Hybrid Learning - The COVID-19 pandemic continues to plague schools in vexing and unpredictable ways, with new and unanticipated challenges continuing to arise, with no clear resolution in sight and no discernible timetable for when it will dissipate. Among the biggest challenges are how to fluidly and consistently fortify and engage students (and families) while equipping teachers with the tools they need to effectively achieve their critical teaching and learning goals necessary to nourish and provoke learning progress and achievement in all students. These are must-have objectives for all schools adopting full or hybrid distance/remote learning models.

Solution Pathway Summary.

Deploying a “Do & Tell” option for student assignments provides an opportunity for students to demonstrate learning progress or mastery of a topic/skill through completion of a teacher approved, asynchronous authentic learning experience that aligns with the student’s interests. The core objective is to deliver fun, creativity, and real-world application back into online learning.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

Distance learning has locked students into a computer-delivered lesson and assignment: it can be boring, demoralizing, lacking in creativity, and devoid of practical application.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Elementary school students, families, and teachers.

Rationale for Success.

Reintroduce and rekindle engaged learning so that students re-associate learning with everyday activities that involve practical application (yes, applied learning, and not just when they are in school). Applied Learning via asynchronous engagement puts the fun back into learning and can be differentiated for grade-level skills, with formative assessments that can be quantitative or qualitative, that also impact the students’ engagement and avid approach (SEL).

Specified Value Proposition.

The best proven option (see research below) to provide students with authentic, hands-on learning experiences integrated into the distance/hybrid learning classroom. Problem-based learning provides a way for children to demonstrate knowledge while cultivating personal growth in a fun and engaging way that has practical application in real-life circumstances. “Do and Tell” Learning also offers opportunities to involve the community, via place-based after school learning programs, summer programs, etc.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

Quantitative (what did students deliver) and Qualitative (via written/presentation) Measures

- Students’ end product
- Vocabulary
- Design thinking
- Critical thinking
- Three highlights of experience
- Share process and learning

Barriers to Execution/Success.

- Moving away from traditional assessment models
- Low student executive function (focus/attention).
- Educator time to develop the project, and approve multiple student-derived “Do and Show” projects/assessments.
- Differing expectations, as well as confusion over those expectations
- Standards alignment
- Having access to all of the required resources remotely (without having to purchase)
- Student support at home
- Bandwidth
- Proper teacher PD/training

Creating Learner-Driven SEL Goal Setting for Students

Problem of Practice.

Social Emotional Learning - All of the pre-existing challenges of SEL have been intensified and exacerbated by COVID-19. There are significant situational and socioeconomic SEL impacts due to the 5-month absence from school, the isolating impacts of shelter-at-home, the fear/anxiety regarding the health of students, teachers, and families, and the stresses, challenges, and inequities of distance/hybrid learning. Compounding this landscape are the difficulties in assessing, addressing, and successfully delivering effective SEL in a distance/hybrid environment, which includes the critical engagement of families and their overarching sentiment of fear, uncertainty, and disconnectedness.

Solution Pathway Summary.

Incorporating SEL goal setting for, and by students across the academic year, fosters opportunities for student self-advocacy and social-emotional growth. An intuitive and easy-to-use SEL goal-setting framework will provide students with the tools, opportunities, and language they need to develop their own agency.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

A one-size-fits-all approach to SEL is not effective; SEL needs to be personalized to the student's circumstances, personality, and learning style. A big part of this approach is an intentional effort to ensure that students have the opportunity and agency to self-advocate. Similarly and on a dual track, teachers need to have a voice and choice in the way they teach students, so they can truly offer personalized SEL-focused instruction.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Elementary school teachers and students.

Rationale for Success.

Students want to be heard, and research shows that students who are able to advocate for themselves, take greater ownership in their work, and are more successful in life. A more personalized approach to SEL will help them more effectively manage stress, anxiety, and trauma in their lives. Teachers must be committed to integrating students' voice and agency into their instruction.

Specified Value Proposition.

Students, in learning to advocate for themselves and , will learn to foster independence in the way they think and learn.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

Students will be assessed on their enhanced willingness to engage, as well as their improvement and success as learners. Key measurable indicators include attendance, participation, academic improvement, and growth.

Teachers who are empowered and have a voice will be more effective with student needs because their own needs are met. Teachers will also benefit because this customized approach will improve attendance, health and climate, while reducing retirements and attrition.

Barriers to Execution/Success.

Barriers include teachers wanting to do it their way, parents refusal to allow a more innovative approach, and possibly restrictions due to contracts or instructional mandates.

Online On-Demand Professional Development Resources for SEL

Problem of Practice.

Social Emotional Learning - All of the pre-existing challenges of SEL have been intensified and exacerbated by COVID-19. There are significant situational and socioeconomic SEL impacts due to the 5-month absence from school, the isolating impacts of shelter-at-home, the fear/anxiety regarding the health of students, teachers, and families, and the stresses, challenges, and inequities of distance/hybrid learning. Compounding this landscape are the difficulties in assessing, addressing, and successfully delivering effective SEL in a distance/hybrid environment, which includes the critical engagement of families and their overarching sentiment of fear, uncertainty, and disconnectedness.

Solution Pathway Summary.

Social and emotional competencies are critical tools for students to effectively manage the uncertainty and challenges life brings, particularly now during heightened isolation and stress due to the pandemic, as well as in the future.

Teachers and education leaders must have easy access to SEL resources, examples, and best practices to augment their understanding of how SEL can be addressed and integrated into instruction.

Implementing evidence-based social and emotional learning practices will result in consistent use of high-quality SEL practices, and this in turn, will benefit student academic, social, and emotional outcomes and prepare students to be productive citizens.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

The effectiveness of SEL practices is variable due to inconsistent knowledge about and comfort with, social and emotional best learning practices.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Teachers and educational leaders.

Rationale for Success.

Emerging graduate programs and open courseware focused on SEL are well-attended--this is evidence of a hunger among teachers and educational leaders to know more about SEL. Online, on-demand PD can meet this need. In addition, it can include online crowdsourced PD that promotes the virility of learning and leverages the wisdom of the crowd so that all benefit. Some of the biggest school districts have successfully implemented evidence-based SEL practices to support student learning success and ability to get along with others.

Specified Value Proposition.

Makes professional learning a lot more accessible to a lot more people, and increases educator effectiveness around SEL best practices. Greater mastery of SEL and more consistent exposure to prevailing best practices among the adults yields positive student outcomes (academic, social, and emotional).

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

- Number of educators using PD;
- Number of educators completing the course;
- Course-completion, mastery of SEL course content;
- Satisfaction with coursework;
- Improved educational practice (aspirational);
- Improved student outcomes (aspirational).

Barriers to Execution/Success.

- For crowdsourced PD--ensuring that peer-to-peer learning focuses on practices that are likely to be effective (based on the literature);
- Creating appealing and relevant courseware;
- Measuring long-term outcomes of PD participation--educator practices and student outcomes.

Professional Development Triage: Voice, Choice, and Celebration

Problem of Practice.

Professional Development - Under the restrictions of COVID, educating and equipping teachers and staff to transition effective instructional practice via a distance/remote learning or hybrid learning scenario is a top priority. An urgent need will be delivering high quality virtual professional learning, training, and resources on a full range of subjects that is easily accessible to leaders, teachers, and instructional staff.

Solution Pathway Summary.

Teachers need professional development triage right now. Schools and districts should create an online space that is designed to give teachers the resources and inspiration to build the pedagogical and technical skills they need to learn and excel at distance teaching, a mode of instruction for which they were not formally trained, for all of their students.

First, teachers must have VOICE, a way to let school/district leaders know what they need. This can come in many forms but needs to be part of a fluid, ongoing process. A simple survey form can be linked from, or embedded in the online space or can be sent out via email regularly, or an effective crowdsourcing technology platform can be used, to gauge the immediate needs of teachers.

Secondly, teachers must have CHOICE, or have at their disposal a variety of ways that they can learn/acquire the desired knowledge or skill. Schools and districts should designate one easy-to-access online space for teacher professional development resources. Vetted resources can be added and organized, making it easy for teachers to find what they are looking for. There should be both resources that can be accessed asynchronously (documents or videos) as well as ways for teachers to learn synchronously with a coach or colleague or mentor. Synchronous opportunities can include an internal webinar or informal video call (which can be recorded and archived for others). When necessary, knowledge or skills should be broken down and delivered in small “bites” so that resources are flexible and can be used across skill sets and so that the time needed for teachers to learn is flexible as well.

Lastly, but equally important, teacher learning must be CELEBRATED, providing a way to showcase success and learning, to embrace reflection and assessment. To close the learning loop, teachers need a way to share their learning; either through a teacher showcase or process for reflection. Support teachers by creating a simple goal-setting process and an optional way for teachers to share back their success. This feedback loop can provide inspiration for others by providing context for skills.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

There is an urgent need for high quality, professional development that provides training and resources for educators (leaders, teachers and support staff) that aligns with a future-ready vision of PK12 education that includes distance learning as a new and permanent option for every school community, vs. just being an *emergency backup plan*.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Administrators, teachers, and support staff.

Rationale for Success.

Professional Development Triage will be designed to:

1. Match and magnify the teachers' needs and desires (their VOICE);
2. Identify and build upon their strengths and allow them pursue their interests and goals (their CHOICE);
3. Provide a built-in optional process for goal setting and accountability (CELEBRATION).

Teachers that are motivated and appreciated, perform better and achieve better outcomes for students and parents.

Specified Value Proposition.

The best and only way to engage our students in distance learning is to engage teachers in effective distance teaching/instruction.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

- Professional educators will feel motivated and enthusiastic about teaching.
- Students will want to work with teachers.
- Teachers will want to work with leadership.

As a result, there will be greater student success (whatever success metric is used by the school/district) because the systems will be more effective.

Barriers to Execution/Success.

Money and time to implement. Overcoming fixed mindsets and the pull of "what we know" or status quo. Public demand for tradition.

Rethink Teaching and Learning--Without Replicating “School”

Problem of Practice.

Distance/Hybrid Learning - The COVID-19 pandemic continues to plague schools in vexing and unpredictable ways, with new and unanticipated challenges continuing to arise, with no clear resolution in sight and no discernible timetable for when it will dissipate. Among the biggest challenges are how to fluidly and consistently fortify and engage students (and families) while equipping teachers with the tools they need to effectively achieve their critical teaching and learning goals necessary to nourish and provoke learning progress and achievement in all students. These are must-have objectives for all schools adopting full or hybrid distance/remote learning models.

Solution Pathway Summary.

Secondary school distance learning teachers should have at their disposal new evolutionary options that allow students to explore, research, synthesize and show their competencies and learning styles. Teachers should be encouraged to create new options for learning that are grounded in collaboration and asynchronous learning opportunities not solely dependent on the time and place limitations of direct, traditional whole-group instruction.

The need to engage secondary students in education has never been more important. If they are not engaged, they won't attend. The key to improving the distance learning experience is to provide students with more chances to build learning relationships through increased collaboration while expanding their critical thinking opportunities.

Teachers should offer at least one learning opportunity that does not include direct instruction 1-3 times a week. For example, teachers could offer:

- Office hours (SEL, MTSS, academic support);
- Student/Small-Group collaboration;
- “Deep Dive” Days for students to explore in non-graded/student voice-driven opportunities;
- Student-led teaching (group or individual);
- Moving away from only direct instruction, and allow for peer feedback;
- Teacher collaboration “Tag Team” days;
- Utilize multimodal assessment to give students different ways to show what they've learned.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

Structural challenges between bell schedules and teaching/learning best practices with content schedules/scope and sequences, that have led to a predictable teaching and learning model from which students are disengaging in large numbers.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Secondary school teachers.

Rationale for Success.

Secondary students prefer a school design that offers more opportunities to choose how they want to learn the material while actively engaging with their peers--with aspects of teacher facilitation--as a key strategy for accelerating learning outcomes.

- Many secondary students have not logged in at all/not been consistently engaged in learning;
- Students report that they have not been engaged in what they are learning and feel demoralized;
- "I just turn in worksheets. School is pretty boring." (*Student Testimonial*);
- "I have noticed many more of my students being actively engaged when we do deep dive days." (*Teacher Testimonial*).

Specified Value Proposition.

Student attendance/engagement in distance learning models is vital to learning and academic progress/growth. This scheduling model has shown positive ratings from students and teachers who are provided with increased agency and voice in both the type of learning and how it's delivered.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

- Qualitative and quantitative feedback from teachers, students, administrators, and families on how the new model is working. Results of feedback should be communicated at the building, district, and community levels;
- Deliberate focus on equity within the model;
- Percentage increase in attendance and engagement after implementation of this scheduling model; include analysis on demographic subgroups;
- Feedback rating on the new model by teachers;
- Feedback by students who report having more fun in school (and virtually) using this model;
- Assignment completion rates improving/chats/LMS metrics;
- Improving scores on SEL/School Culture assessments.

Barriers to Execution/Success.

- Teacher professional development, evaluation models, and collective bargaining;
- Feedback Systems to ask students and teachers how things are going;
- Fidelity on use/follow through;
- Structure of priority: related to district initiative, board objectives, community report-outs.

School-Community Partnerships to Ensure 100% Access

Problem of Practice.

Equity of Access - The COVID-19 pandemic has starkly highlighted and ratcheted up what has now become a national emergency requiring that all students have equitable access to learn remotely and by whatever mode is necessary to guarantee their equitable and consistent access to the proper teaching and learning resources and materials, wherever they are and wherever they live. This now pertains specifically to distance/remote learning, as schools transition to Hybrid or completely remote learning models and includes devices, internet access, technical literacy of students (and families), the quality of the physical learning space, and the management—and guarantee—of dedicated learning time. In addition, many students due to age, attention skills, or special needs will also need daily hands-on learning assistance from a parent/adult or caregiver.

Solution Pathway Summary.

“Education for All” will seek to achieve effective distance learning for 100% of the K12 students in the district, by embarking on a plan that intentionally connects the school district with community-based partners and resources. The district will immediately foster community partnerships to use designated partners’ facilities to augment traditional and existing district facilities in order to provide safe study locations for those in need. These locations will be COVID-safe, physically safe, and socially-emotionally safe and welcoming and open and available every school day and strategically in sync for the partner schools’ needs, with geography also strategically planned out. The district will also create a network of teaching assistants to provide learning help and SEL/mentoring for all students that need it; using a combination of college-students, high school seniors and district employees.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

At risk students have always had barriers to access the best education, and now COVID has made the situation much worse. A certain number of major urban school districts have experienced as much as 30% of their students completely losing all contact with their school since March. Satellite location access to student learning and resources, combines human capital with physical space capital to guarantee safe, wired, and effective learning environments for students that provides much-needed continuity and stability to students’ learning routines.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Students and families.

Rationale for Success.

The district will promptly forge community partnerships to use their facilities to augment available district facilities in order to provide safe study locations for those in need; COVID-safe, physically safe, and emotionally safe... all open every school day for the hours those students need. The district will also create a network of teaching assistants to provide learning help and SEL/mentoring for all students that need it; using a combination of college-students, high school seniors and district employees.

Specified Value Proposition.

All students will get the access and resources they need and rightfully deserve, as the onus is transferred from the school only, to the entire community. The district will provide the following critical logistics for every student that needs it: a computer, sufficient bandwidth, up to three meals per day, and a safe learning haven, by working with its web of community partners in a concerted effort to support student learning and family engagement.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

The goal is 100% 'attendance for distance learning engagement, plus satisfactory academic performance for all. This will require; 1:1 device matches, full student participation, parental support, and partnerships for facilities as well as the appropriate instructional support staff/personnel.

Barriers to Execution/Success.

Financial barriers that include insufficient budgets and/or the requirement to repurpose existing budgets. Internal policy barriers and logistical challenges related to the use of district and non-district facilities. Staff restrictions due to contracts and policies at the district and state level. Participation challenges when parents/families do not take the necessary steps to receive equipment and/or log-in or show-up.

Incorporating Student Voice and Choice into Assessment (Online Learning)

Non-standard Assessment

Problem of Practice.

Distance/Hybrid Learning - The COVID-19 pandemic continues to plague schools in vexing and unpredictable ways, with new and unanticipated challenges continuing to arise, with no clear resolution in sight and no discernible timetable for when it will dissipate. Among the biggest challenges are how to fluidly and consistently fortify and engage students (and families) while equipping teachers with the tools they need to effectively achieve their critical teaching and learning goals necessary to nourish and provoke learning progress and achievement in all students. These are must-have objectives for all schools adopting full or hybrid distance/remote learning models.

Solution Pathway Summary.

A pre-scheduled Weekly Zoom for parents/families will guarantee them regular access to teachers, while giving teachers an opportunity to regularly update parents. The current use of one-to-one emails between parents and teachers is time consuming for teachers and offers inequitable access to parents. The Weekly Zoom will provide a regular update to keep parents well informed and equipped to guide their student's daily distance or hybrid learning. Parents will also have an opportunity to meet and choose to connect and collaborate during or outside of the Weekly Zoom.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

Communication between teachers and parents has been significantly reduced as well as hampered by distance learning/COVID at a time when children's caregivers need it most. At the same time, the parent's or family member's role in guiding their student's daily learning has increased dramatically. Families and teachers need to have a consistent and effective way to communicate.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Elementary school parents and teachers.

Rationale for Success.

Parents and family members know their children best. They will become more effective learning partners if they understand teachers' expectations and are informed about the weekly learning objectives. Also, when people are a part of the solution, they form greater, more successful ideas.

Examples include:

- Reviewing weekly learning goals;
- Scheduling of weekly instruction (what students will be doing in class or virtual class);
- Recommended to parents/families how they can best support their student's learning;
- Parent volunteering/tutoring opportunities;
- Introducing and reinforcing of best practices;
- Sharing of formal or informal learning experiences.

Specified Value Proposition.

When teachers are able to achieve stronger and more aligned parental or familial support, students are better organized, feel more motivated, and learn better.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

- Higher numbers/percentages of more engaged and aligned students;
- Higher numbers/percentages of more knowledgeable, informed, and engaged parents;
- Enhanced student learning outcomes.

Barriers to Execution/Success.

- Some parents/families may not have access to Zoom (substitute mobile mode, e.g., FaceTime, etc.).
- No appointed time works for everyone, but Zoom can be recorded so it can be viewed later.
- Some teachers may not be comfortable with or have the bandwidth for, the increase in parental communication, especially every week.

Training and Delivering SEL Competencies and Support Via a Peer-to-Peer-Driven Network

Problem of Practice.

Social Emotional Learning - All of the pre-existing challenges of SEL have been intensified and exacerbated by COVID-19. There are significant situational and socioeconomic SEL impacts due to the 5-month absence from school, the isolating impacts of shelter-at-home, the fear/anxiety regarding the health of students, teachers, and families, and the stresses, challenges, and inequities of distance/hybrid learning. Compounding this landscape are the difficulties in assessing, addressing, and successfully delivering effective SEL in a distance/hybrid environment, which includes the critical engagement of families and their overarching sentiment of fear, uncertainty, and disconnectedness.

Solution Pathway Summary.

Secondary students can model and learn the positive and affirming competencies of social emotional learning, from other sources in addition to their own teachers/instructors. Specifically, they can also gain insight about themselves from peers to whom they more keenly relate. At the same time, serving as a peer is a meaningful volunteer opportunity or perhaps on-the-job training for college students or other members of the community.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

There is an opportunity for effective use of stakeholders, both inside and outside the education system, to support the social emotional needs of students with coordinated peer-to-peer programming.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

University Students, Student Peers, Community Members and Parents.

Rationale for Success.

- Personal experience with the current COVID-19 situation and how people have found comfort with their peers
- Student testimonials about peer support “I loved working with Juan, he truly understands me and gets me. I think I can trust him.”

Specified Value Proposition.

A peer-to-peer, SEL-driven approach can strengthen students' social support and mentoring networks and their skills in self-management. This can help to unleash the potential within academic environments to support students' well-being and success.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

- Number of students connected/linked to a trusted peer with whom they can relate.
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of the benefit of peer-to-peer support.

Barriers to Execution/Success.

- Available pool of college- or community-based potential peers for this program.
- Ability to access funding and/or obtain college credit for peers.
- Recruiting effort to get college students to participate.

Weekly Zoom Check-in by Teachers for Families

Problem of Practice.

Distance/Hybrid Learning - The COVID-19 pandemic continues to plague schools in vexing and unpredictable ways, with new and unanticipated challenges continuing to arise, with no clear resolution in sight and no discernible timetable for when it will dissipate. Among the biggest challenges are how to fluidly and consistently fortify and engage students (and families) while equipping teachers with the tools they need to effectively achieve their critical teaching and learning goals necessary to nourish and provoke learning progress and achievement in all students. These are must-have objectives for all schools adopting full or hybrid distance/remote learning models.

Solution Pathway Summary.

A pre-scheduled Weekly Zoom for parents/families will guarantee them regular access to teachers, while giving teachers an opportunity to regularly update parents. The current use of one-to-one emails between parents and teachers is time consuming for teachers and offers inequitable access to parents. The Weekly Zoom will provide a regular update to keep parents well informed and equipped to guide their student's daily distance or hybrid learning. Parents will also have an opportunity to meet and choose to connect and collaborate during or outside of the Weekly Zoom.

Identified Problem of Practice Strand.

Communication between teachers and parents has been significantly reduced as well as hampered by distance learning/COVID at a time when children's caregivers need it most. At the same time, the parent's or family member's role in guiding their student's daily learning has increased dramatically. Families and teachers need to have a consistent and effective way to communicate.

Decision Makers/Beneficiaries.

Elementary school parents and teachers.

Rationale for Success.

Parents and family members know their children best. They will become more effective learning partners if they understand teachers' expectations and are informed about the weekly learning objectives. Also, when people are a part of the solution, they form greater, more successful ideas.

Examples include:

- Reviewing weekly learning goals;
- Scheduling of weekly instruction (what students will be doing in class or virtual class);
- Recommended to parents/families how they can best support their student's learning;
- Parent volunteering/tutoring opportunities;
- Introducing and reinforcing of best practices;
- Sharing of formal or informal learning experiences.

Specified Value Proposition.

When teachers are able to achieve stronger and more aligned parental or familial support, students are better organized, feel more motivated, and learn better.

Measurement(s) of Success/Metrics.

- Higher numbers/percentages of more engaged and aligned students;
- Higher numbers/percentages of more knowledgeable, informed, and engaged parents;
- Enhanced student learning outcomes.

Barriers to Execution/Success.

- Some parents/families may not have access to Zoom (substitute mobile mode, e.g., FaceTime, etc.).
- No appointed time works for everyone, but Zoom can be recorded so it can be viewed later.
- Some teachers may not be comfortable with or have the bandwidth for, the increase in parental communication, especially every week.

Alliance Furnace Participants

**Monique Chism, Ph.D.**

AIR
Vice President for Policy, Practice, and Systems Change

Linda Clark, Ed.D.

Idaho State Board of Education
Chairperson

Kristin Daniels

InnovateK12
Co-Founder

Jennifer L. Ferrari, Ed.D.

Education Research & Development Institute
President

Scott Frauenheim

Distinctive Schools
CEO

Paul Goodenough

Jenks Public Schools
Director of Ed Tech

Kimberley Harrington-Markus

Mount Olive Township School District
Executive Director of Innovation and Personnel

Megan Harney

Midas Education
CEO

Chip Kimball, Ed.D.

International School of Prague
Superintendent

Scott Kerwien

Spokane Public Schools
Director of College & Career Readiness

John Kurelja, Ed.D.

Central Susquehanna Intermediate District
Chief Academic Officer

Rosa Machabanski

Moraine Township, IL
Bilingual Social Worker & Community Advocate

Jeff McCoy

Greenville County Schools
Associate Superintendent of Academics

Tonie McDonald, Ed.D.

Levittown Public Schools
Superintendent

Christine McDonnell

Codelicious
CEO

Clark, McKown, Ph.D.

Rush Neurobehavioral Center
Director

Amy Ojeaburu

Federal Way Public Schools
High School Senior

Julie Olesniewicz, Ed.D.

Claremont USD
Assistant Superintendent, Educational Services

Alice Ray

Ripple Effects
CEO

Scott Relf

Infinite Growth Group
CEO

Darline Robles, Ph.D.

University of Southern California
Professor of Clinical Education

Michelle Rodriguez

Pajaro Valley USD
Superintendent

Colin Seale

ThinkLaw
CEO

Evan St. Lifer

Evan St. Lifer Consulting Group
Principal

Kenneth Wesson, Ph.D.

Science Master
Neuroscience Expert

Andre Wright

Aurora Public Schools
Chief Academic Officer



Alliance for Education Impact

