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Helping students overcome ‘social media speak’

BY LAUREN GEHR, ENGLISH TEACHER, DUTCH FORK HIGH SCHOOL

These days, it seems my students can't let a minute go by without checking TikTok and Instagram or responding to their friend's latest post on Snapchat. Teens' widespread access to smartphones for the last decade has fed this fascination with social media and texting. According to Pew Research, 95 percent of teenagers have access to a smartphone, and 45 percent admit to being online 'almost constantly.'

Though social media platforms can present a wide array of challenges both in and out of the classroom, I wanted to address the indirect impact of students constantly typing on phones and the resulting 'social media speak.'

As an English teacher, my students' use of



social media shorthand has become a bigger and bigger challenge with every new school year—especially as I see it carrying over into their coursework. Due to heavy reliance on

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3 tips to help navigate your classroom, from an ex-improv artist

BY DANIELLE FILAS

I am not here to tell you that 2020 and the COVID-19 pandemic have been great gifts to education if you just look at them right. That kind of toxic positivity drives me bonkers, truth be told. Instead, I want to share some strategies I've been using to navigate this wild era based on strategies from my time prior to teaching, back when I performed as an improv artist in Chicago (yes, you read that right).

There are three strategies in particular that have helped me and my students to power through this roller coaster of a year, and I

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Virtual learning can't succeed without digital skills training

BY DANIEL NOYES AND THEODORA HANNA

As we enter into a new school year, two things are certain. First, the experience for every member of the extended school community – students, educators, families, school officials, and staff – will be profoundly changed this fall. Second, learning for many students will take the form of full-time or part-time virtual learning outside of the classroom.

As learners and their families tackle these unprecedented challenges, it is incumbent on school districts, state and local officials, and

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abbreviated words, slang, autocorrect, and a tendency to write too quickly, these bad habits cause students to make a multitude of grammar and spelling mistakes.

That said, as noted by the U.S. Department of Education, “The nature of writing and writing instruction is changing. Technology plays an increasingly important role in how students learn and practice writing in and out of the classroom.”

Unlike me and my peers, today’s high school students were practically born with smartphones in their hands. Therefore, it makes sense that schools like mine are embracing new edtech tools and resources in an effort to boost the writing and reading skills of students, rather than relying on the traditional tools. This turns out to be ideal, as the transition from smartphone to computer might be a little less painful than moving from phone to pencil and paper, especially in the age of COVID-19 and distance learning.

Below are a few tips and benefits I’ve seen with some of the latest edtech tools our school is leveraging right now to help overcome social media speak. These tools are not only empowering me to combat the negative impact social media and text communication have on my students, but are unlocking more of their writing potential every day.

Engagement through interest-based writing curriculum

I don’t think I’m being too bold here, but in my experience, students can often find grammar boring. One of the writing curriculum platforms we’re seeing a lot of success with right now focuses on how I engage my students. NoRedInk, an online writing curriculum, provides students with writing exercises based on their interests. This might include a student’s favorite celebrities, Netflix

shows, sports, or hobbies. With NoRedInk, I’m seeing firsthand that when my students see topics they’re passionate about, their attention in the entire writing experience is amplified, resulting in a major improvement in proficiency and exam scores.

Through this compelling content, students find my classes more relatable and interesting and in turn it’s keeping them actively engaged and their writing is constantly improving. Just imagine a grammar quiz featuring singer Billie Eilish or actor Tom Holland. It’s no surprise that students are engaged quickly.

Inspiration through digital video-based discussions

Another way I remain engaged with my students in and out of the classroom is through Flipgrid. Educators can leverage the tool to record writing

As long as the technology is beneficial and not distracting, we must welcome technology as a friend—not an enemy—in the classroom. After all, ensuring our students evolve into effective communicators is nothing to LOL about.

assignments or provide feedback. Students can then use Flipgrid on their end to respond with a video demonstration or send their teacher a clarifying question. It’s also good to point out that the video aspect is beneficial for students because they’re able to save teacher feedback for later use, while keeping track of the improvement of their skills.

Yes, there are other free video-based tools available, but tools like Zoom can only offer educators so much due to their overly-broad functionality, which can actually be limiting. Turning to purpose-built edtech solutions created with both teachers and students in mind improves learning and strengthens teacher-student relationships.

Adaptive and flexible

NoRedInk and Flipgrid also meet my classroom needs because they’re both geographically agnostic. This feature is so critical right now. Online lessons and curriculum allow teachers to easily transition from at-home to in-person learning without losing valuable instructional time. Additionally, their ability to offer students real-time feedback allows me the opportunity to quickly go over specific skill categories in subjects where my students need the most improvement. I am also able to adjust lesson plans, practice exercises, and quizzes based on this real-time data.

These edtech platforms have enabled my students to overcome their excessive use of social media speak and short-form communication. They have helped me to break bad writing habits

and re-train my students to use proper English and become more proficient in their writing skills across the board.

An online, interactive program that meets students where they are now and not where they have traditionally been (paper and pencil) has produced solid results in our English department at Dutch Fork High.

As long as the technology is beneficial and not distracting, we must welcome technology as a friend—not an enemy—in the classroom. After all, ensuring our students evolve into effective communicators is nothing to LOL about. 

Lauren Gehr is an English teacher at Dutch Fork High School.

Virtual

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communities to ensure that students have every support and resource possible to help them learn effectively in virtual learning settings—including access to actionable, culturally-competent digital training.

Since schools were forced to make the rapid and unplanned transition to distance learning this spring, news outlets, educators, businesses, and non-profit organizations across the country have consistently drawn attention to the disastrous impacts of the digital divide, borne disproportionately by students of color and those from low-income households.

The digital divide, though commonly associated with the gap created by a lack of access to digital devices and internet connectivity, actually covers a much broader range of existing disparities. Access to the internet and digital devices is a critical first step, but without the necessary skills to take full advantage of connectivity, students and families cannot easily and effectively engage in digital opportunities – from online lessons from teachers to critical health and employment resources.

Recently, “a Pew Research study found that during the spring lockdown 36 percent of low-income parents reported that their children were unable to complete their schoolwork at home because they did not have access to a computer, compared with just 14 percent of middle-income parents and 4 percent of upper-income parents,” according to reporting in *Wired Magazine*.

This disparity has led to profound levels of disconnection. In May, the *Boston Globe* reported that more than 10,000 students enrolled in Boston Public Schools had not logged in to class during the previous month, “suggesting they could be virtual dropouts whose formal education stopped two months ago when schools shut down to slow the spread of the coronavirus.”

The virtual learning challenge is not



limited to communities in Massachusetts. Around the country, school officials, educators, and parents are working hard to tackle urgent, overlapping crises—without a blueprint. Understandably, much of the effort to address the barriers to participation in virtual learning have focused on providing the hardware necessary for students to log on, including laptops and internet hotspots. Access to digital devices and reliable internet connectivity are two critical legs of the stool, but their full value can only be reached with similar focus on the third leg: consistent and comprehensive training.

For too many students and families, providing access to technology without digital skills training is like providing someone a book, but failing to teach them how to read. In early July, a poll in Massachusetts found that families who do not speak English at home were less likely to have their children participate in online learning. Many children from low- and moderate-income families rely on their peers – rather than their parents or caregivers – to help them use and understand technology, a prospect made even more difficult in a moment of profound social isolation.

The critical resources and opportunities available online remain out of reach for many, because even when they have access to digital devices and the internet, they lack the digital skills necessary

to leverage technology to support the well-being of the student and the entire household.

With fundamental digital skills, devices, and internet access, families can participate in virtual learning, access employment opportunities, order food and essentials from home, and access telemedicine and mental health resources.

As educators, school officials, and municipalities consider how to sustainably and equitably advance learning as school resumes, robust support for digital training must be a part of the equation. An intense focus on access to technology alone threatens to crowd out support for comprehensive, culturally competent training that meets students and families where they are.

The profound uncertainty and disruption caused by COVID-19 has left students, families, educators, and officials at every level scrambling to react and adapt, but if we are genuinely committed to providing every student the best chance to succeed in a landscape heavily reliant on virtual learning, school officials and municipalities must take a holistic view of digital inclusion. **eSN**

Daniel Noyes and Theodora Hanna are co-CEOs of Tech Goes Home, a non-profit working to advance digital equity in education, the workforce, and beyond, based in Boston, Massachusetts.

Tips

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hope they might help you, too. The strategies include:

1. Embrace the plot twist: Ask any improviser for the rules of improv and they'll inevitably mention "Yes And." Successful improv artists hop up on stage and dive into whatever reality the audience and their acting partners suggest. For example, I might expect that I'm about to do a scene where I'm waiting at a train station, but my acting partner tells me we're socks in a washing machine. Instead of arguing with my scene partner that my idea is better, I obey the improv rule. The rule of "Yes And" invites me to accept this new reality and build upon it.



"Yes And" requires the player to embrace unexpected challenges as plot twists instead of disasters. I remind my students of this all the time, reinforcing the resilience they're building day by day. Parents can use this framing to help kids embrace the "yes, and" of improv instead of resisting the plot twists life brings. And we teachers? We benefit from this reframing as well. Instead of spending our finite store of energy fighting the reality of masks, social distancing, unstable Wi-Fi, and the burden of Zoom, we dive into these challenges with a sense of pioneering adventure.

2. There's Always Another Scene: Some improv scenes inevitably devolve into disaster. Audiences don't get our jokes, we miss the connection with our partners, or we think of the perfect line... after the lights go down. So how

do improvisers find the courage to jump up on that stage? How do improvisers keep stage fright and anxiety at bay? We remember a second truism of the improv mindset: there's always another scene! We shrug off bad scenes, take what we learned from our flops, and we work to make the next scene better. Knowing many students feel shame and anxiety around test-taking, an "improvised" shift challenges me to make sure "there's always another scene" in the classroom. You can do this, too. Build in ways to allow students as many swipes at assessments as you can. Personally, I love assessment tools that allow my students to retake a test from a large question bank as many times as they need without hurting their grade. The fact that I can set it to auto-magically score

for me saves me time as well. This small shift has helped my students learn fearlessly. Instead of tossing away tests with low grades in shame, students eagerly dig into their mistakes. They learn that mistakes are not failures, but gateways to deeper understanding. They learn what improvisers already know: mistakes are often more interesting than successes.

3. Find the Game: The Upright Citizen's Brigade Comedy Manual, easily my favorite book on improv, places a heavy emphasis on "finding the game" as a means to creating terrific improv scenes. This method requires players to view every interaction on stage as a clue to the underlying game. The gift of viewing each scene as a game ensures a sense of play on stage; it ensures joy and engagement. What educator would not

want their students to approach learning with a sense of play, joy, and engagement? I used Schoology to create an optional gamified course. In it, students had the option to complete a variety of tasks to earn experience points (XPs) through grammar exercises, entering writing contests, doing good deeds, or acing comprehension quizzes. This created a fun atmosphere for students who enjoyed playing this year-long giant game. For students willing to cash in their XPs, I provided prizes ranging from dollar store Bob Ross puzzles, to seating chart changes, to free hints during a test. Some students chose to keep their XPs and rise to the top of the leaderboard because bragging rights are free! I found that students who engaged in the gamified optional course reported more satisfaction with the course overall and each of them mentioned feeling excited to tackle the tasks that also, they noted, expanded and deepened their learning.

When I bring up my background in improvisation to other educators, I'm often met with skepticism and doubts. People confess that they could never improvise. It's too scary. They couldn't possibly come up with something out of nothing. The idea of inventing their way into a new reality seems like fantasy. But here's the truth of it: improvisation is absolutely the most natural and human activity, and we are all doing it all the time. (Nobody scripted that you read this article today, did they?) And the truthier truth? The 2020 supervillain and its evil sidekick COVID-19 have forced our need to improvise into high gear. So, why not use strategies the professionals use?

If you'd like to share your best (and worst) classroom improvisations, please reach out to me on Twitter @msfilas. I promise I'll "Yes And" you. 

Danielle Filas serves as the 8th grade Dean and the 8th grade English teacher at Presbyterian School in Houston, TX. She has been teaching for about two decades and is a PowerSchool Champion, Google for Education Certified Trainer, and a Google for Education Certified Innovator.

How school librarians are getting creative in a pandemic

Libraries may be closed in many districts, but school librarians are using resourcefulness and determination to make sure students are reading

BY BRITTEN FOLLETT

New questions from school librarians... *Will ultra violet disinfectant devices damage books?*

How long should I quarantine a book before circulating it again?

How can I use technology to coordinate curbside pick-up for students who want to check out print books?

Meet the same old challenges... *How can I ensure teachers know about the content available in my library?*

My principal wants to convert my library into a classroom. What should I do?

My budget is on hold until further notice.

Back-to-school season is often chaotic, but the anticipation of a new school year can also be exciting. 2020 brought chaos, anticipation, trepidation, and change. As districts pivot to new ways of teaching and learning, school librarians must also grapple with how to do their jobs in the COVID-19 virtual environment.

The very nature of a library implies physical books stored on rows of shelves. But with school closures the norm—not the exception—students no longer have access to the place many of them found comfort and knowledge: the school library.

Of the 25,000 customers who responded to a recent Follett survey, only 15 percent of schools are delivering fully in-school instruction. What's more, the American Association of School Librarians recently surveyed more than 1,000 professionals and found that more than 40 percent of school libraries will not reopen this school year.

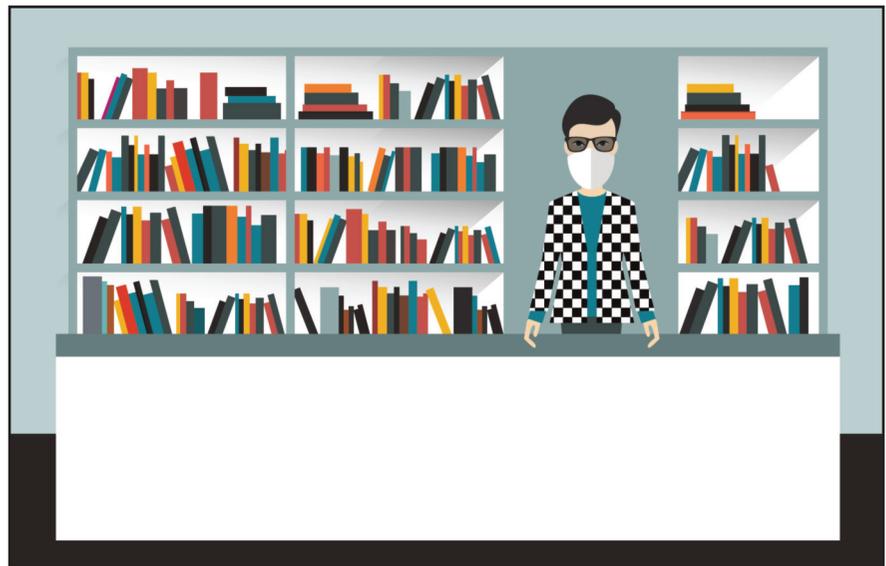
In many districts across the country, the librarian's job description had not

been updated to reflect a “future ready” world that includes the delivery of digital resources, curriculum partnerships, and community connections. When you layer on a pandemic that includes hybrid and remote learning, there is no job description available. But resourceful school librarians from coast to coast are finding innovative ways to work in a system that has no precedent.

“Librarians save lives by handing the right book at the right time to a kid in need.” (Judy Blume)

solution: hang plastic shower curtains from the dollar store in front of the bookshelves to protect the books.

Other school librarians who have in-person instruction in their schools are wearing out their book carts as they wheel books from classroom to classroom to ensure students have materials they are excited about—even if they can't visit their library in person. Massachusetts librarian Kerry Roche Ferguson said she decorated “a cart, aka ‘book bus,’ and [am] lugging it down



Librarians, by nature, want to help young readers—and each other. This has never been more evident than in recent discussions in the Future Ready Librarian Facebook group. Michigan school librarian Lisa Smith Brakel asked, “We are face-to-face this year. My school is using a ‘fogger’ to disinfect classrooms. I am worried about the library books. Should the fogger be used in the library?”

Leave it to a librarian to come up with an inventive makerspace-style

two flights of stairs to the other end of the building to make checkout fun for the kids.”

For those with all-remote learning, taking their library online is a challenge—but is also rewarding.

“I’m creating a lot of digital content, which takes a long time but is pretty fun!” said California librarian Christine Jensen. “I just started doing unboxing videos when book shipments arrive and I read first chapters from four different

Creative, page 15

10 SEL activities for students

COVID-19 has thrown education for a loop, and paying attention to mental health is critical—these SEL activities can help students maintain peace

BY EMILY DOERR, NATIONAL MARKETING COORDINATOR, APERTURE EDUCATION

We are all dealing with high levels of stress right now. On top of normal pressures, current events are causing stress related to job and financial worries, health risks, and disruption to our normal routines. We need to find ways to effectively manage our stress—and practicing SEL activities can help.

During these uncertain times, it is critical that educators find ways to effectively manage and reduce stress. It is also critical that we help students do the same. Just like with adults, if students' stress goes unmanaged, it can lead to anxiety and depression and can cause harmful physical effects. It can also increase students' risk of dropping out, substance abuse, and suicide.

As an educator, you are in a unique position to provide stability and support to your students and their families during uncertain times. One of the best ways you can help students is by looking after their social-emotional health.

Here are 10 SEL activities to help your students learn effective stress management.

1. Help students understand what is happening. A simple and age-appropriate conversation about what is going on and why their routine is disrupted can help alleviate students' anxiety and stress. Send home talking points to help parents talk to their students about what is happening in a constructive way. If you have a school or class web page, keep it current with the latest information about your district's plans and available resources.

2. Host morning meetings. Morning meetings are an important way to stay connected during in-person and virtual learning with your students and address any issues they may be having. Spend some time at the start of the school day

to check in with students. This can be a time to address any issues they may be facing, talk through their feelings and emotions, and practice social-emotional skills. Morning meetings can strengthen student-teacher relationships, increase social awareness and self-efficacy, and reduce stress.

3. Promote a growth mindset. Research shows that a growth mindset can help students maintain a sense of

• **Coping Skills Bingo:** This free game teaches students how to manage anger and cope with stress in a fun, interactive way.

• **Stress Management Escape Room:** Students engage in hands-on, interactive puzzles that explain the biological stress response and how to manage stress by getting organized, doing exercises or yoga, relying on social supports, etc.



control over their lives, and it addresses the cognitive causes of stress within the brain. Growth mindsets allow us to see the world through a lens of growth, which means we have the power to turn our thoughts from a negative focus induced by stress to a positive focus striving toward improvement. Help students develop a growth mindset by teaching them to focus on the positive and view challenges as opportunities for growth, rather than threats.

4. Teach through games. Games are a fun and interactive way to teach students social-emotional skills like self-management. Here are a couple of our favorites:

5. Encourage students to get enough sleep. Younger children need 10-12 hours of sleep each night and high school students need around eight to nine hours. Talk to students about why getting enough sleep is important for their physical and mental health.

6. Teach mindfulness. We can help students reduce the negative effects of stress through mindfulness. Mindfulness involves an awareness of your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations and how they can impact your actions. This framework has been proven to help students recognize triggers and changes within their bodies,

SEL, page 15

10 SEL activities for teachers

COVID-19 has thrown educators for a loop, and paying attention to mental health is critical—these SEL activities can help teachers maintain peace

BY EMILY DOERR, NATIONAL MARKETING COORDINATOR, APERTURE EDUCATION

We are all dealing with high levels of stress right now. On top of normal pressures, current events are causing stress related to job and financial worries, health risks, and disruption to our normal routines. We need to find ways to effectively manage our stress—and practicing SEL activities can help.

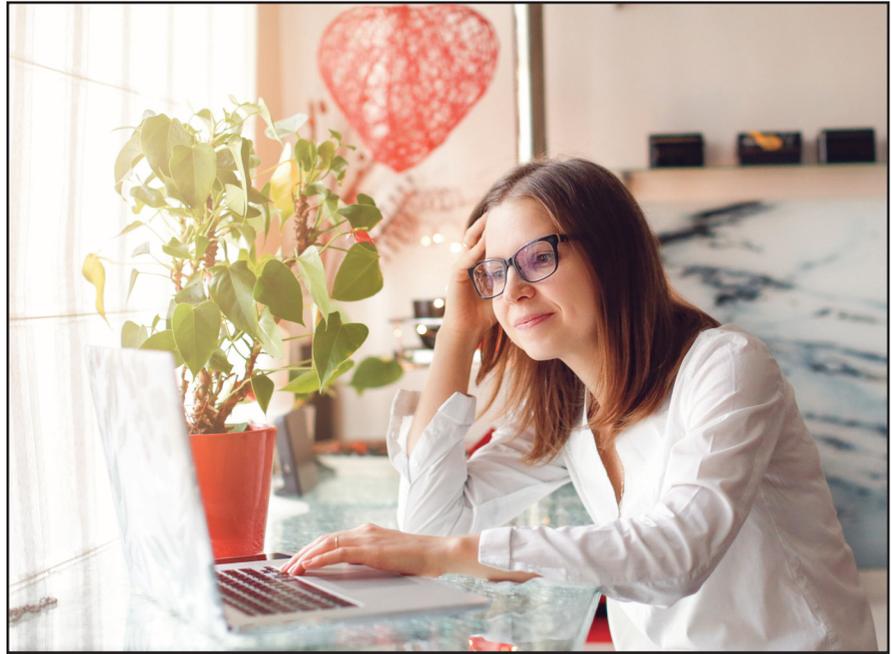
When not addressed, stress can lead to harmful health concerns like anxiety and depression, reduced attention, impaired self-regulation, and decreased learning readiness. It can also lead to negative well-being factors, such as sleep and eating disorders. Extended exposure to toxic stress also can have lasting mental and physical health effects.

We've compiled 10 tips to help educators work through stress and 10 tips to teach students effective stress management. Try these out to find which work best for you and your students.

Educators: 10 SEL activities to de-stress

Educators, we know you have a lot on your plates right now. Be proactive about keeping your stress levels in check. Try these 10 de-stressing activities to find out which strategies work best for you.

1. Identify your stress triggers. Stress can be caused by many different factors — long hours, frustrations around technology and virtual learning, too much news exposure, etc. Make a list of all the stressors in your life, noting those you have control over and those you do not. Begin tackling the list by choosing one or two items you have some control over that cause you the most stress. Make a plan to manage the stressor(s), write down a goal, and create accountable measures to help you follow through.



2. Perform deep breathing. Deep breathing can have a powerful physical effect in reducing tension and helping the body relax. Clinical research shows that regular deep breathing exercises affect the heart, the brain, digestion, and the immune system. They can have immediate results and can also be used to reduce the production of harmful stress hormones. Try the equal breaths exercise. Breathe in for a count of four, and out for a count of four. Continue for a few rounds, then try adding an extra count (in for a count of five, out for a count of five). You can continue this exercise until you feel your stress levels decreasing and your heart rate slowing.

3. Get enough sleep. We can't stress this one enough. Getting enough sleep is critical to your health and to reducing stress. Try setting an alarm for when it is time for bed and do your best to get seven to eight hours of sleep each night. Most smartphones have a feature that reduces blue light in the evenings — try putting your phone on this setting after 10 p.m. to help your eyes relax.

Maximize the sleep you do get by “unplugging” (i.e. turning off the computer, phone, TV, etc.) at least an hour before bed.

4. Watch what you eat (and drink). A balanced diet does wonders for your health and state of mind. Try to eat nutritious foods and cut down on processed or sugary foods that can deplete your energy. Also be sure to drink plenty of water. An estimated 75 percent of people in the U.S. are chronically dehydrated. A good rule of thumb is to drink half of your weight in ounces each day (example, a person who weighs 150lbs would drink 75oz of water per day). You may need more or less depending on the climate you live in, your body type, or how much you exercise.

5. Exercise. According to the Harvard Medical School, regular aerobic exercise (like walking) can boost memory and critical thinking, improve sleep, and reduce anxiety. Find creative ways to exercise while practicing safe

Activities, page 16

5 practices of educators who prioritize equity

**BY STACEY PUSEY,
CONTRIBUTING WRITER,
EDWEB**

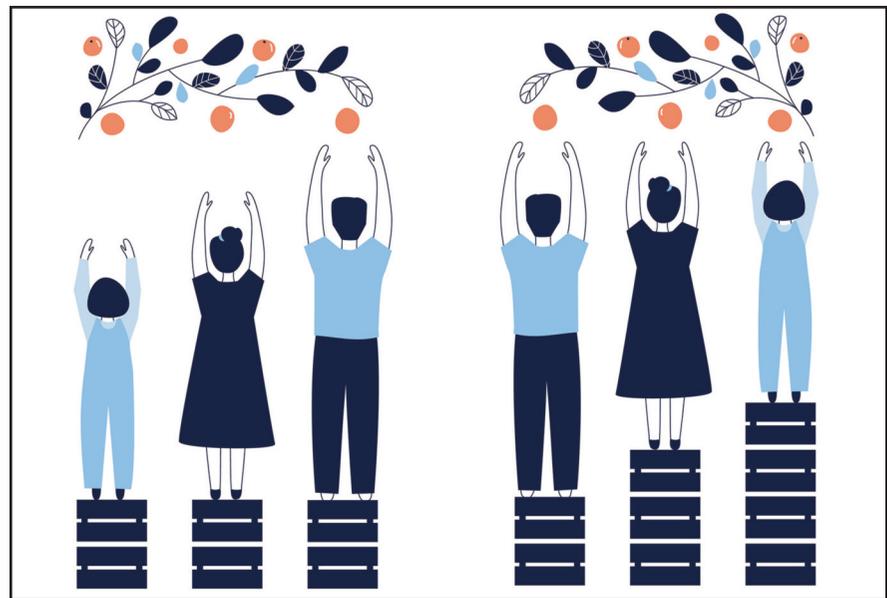
While equity requires vision from its leaders, it also requires courage.

During the edWebinar “Leading for Equity: Courage to Lead with an Equity Agenda,” hosted by AASA, The Superintendents Association and AASA’s Leadership Network, Dr. Khalid Mumin, Superintendent of Reading School District (PA), and Marlon Styles, Superintendent of Middletown City Schools (OH), discussed the challenges they faced and the tough decisions they made to keep their equity agenda moving forward.

Equity sometimes requires unequal supports for students. While the goal is the same outcome for all students—graduation—the effort to get each student there will look different. Instead of trying to give each student the exact same experience and expect them all to graduate, leaders need to figure out what each student needs to complete their educational goals.

Equity agendas require constant revision. Today’s actions might focus on internet access at home and the impact of social justice movements, but new equity challenges could arrive tomorrow. Leaders must be willing to go back to their boards, back to their administrative teams, and update their plans and budgets based on the current needs of their students and staff.

Striving for equity means tossing a lot of old hiring practices. If the goal is to have a teaching staff that not only reflects the student population, but also understands the students’ needs, then posting job openings and choosing candidates from a generic pile won’t work. Now, leaders need to hire based on their equity goals—for all positions—and how candidates will fit into the desired culture and student experience. This can also result in schools forging their own pathways for teaching licenses and administrative positions.



A strong equity agenda can also make the student code of conduct obsolete. Most student codes are punitive and only focus on dealing with adverse behavior after the fact. Many students won’t read them because they are just lists of what not to do. Both presenters said they upended the system at their schools by first trying to understand where these behaviors were coming from and second, by trying to work with students before they exhibit those behaviors. This requires schools to invest in student and family liaisons and to be active participants in all students’ educations.

Pursuing equity requires constant professional development for all staff. Equity doesn’t end in the classroom—it’s a school- and district-wide culture. The work never stops. Schools must continually invest in training, coaching, and personnel so they can take the equity agenda from words to action. Staff may think they have other important issues to focus on, but in order to erase decades of disparity, equity education needs to be constant at all levels.

This edWeb broadcast was hosted by AASA, The Superintendents Association and AASA’s Leadership Network, providing premier professional learning for educational leaders.

About the presenters

For the last 20 years, Dr. Khalid N. Mumin has served in various capacities as a teacher, dean of students, principal and central administrator. Dr. Mumin earned a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership from the University of Pennsylvania, a Master of Education in Teaching & Curriculum from Pennsylvania State University, a Bachelor of Arts in Secondary English Education from Shippensburg University, and an Associate of Arts in English from Northeastern Christian Junior College.

The strength in Dr. Mumin’s leadership revolves around being a student-centered educator, who has a vision of success for all students and a belief that building positive relationships through cultural competencies is paramount in promoting student success. Dr. Mumin is a change agent and is committed to promoting and sustaining student achievement, equity and access to educational programming for all students, as well as creating plans that are fiscally responsible. He maintains a keen focus on fostering collaboration with stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, administrators, community,

Equity, page 14

3 ways online STEM education combats the COVID slide

Learning may have moved online for most students, but critical STEM education doesn't have to suffer the learning gaps brought on by the COVID slide—here's why

**BY MICHAEL BODEKAER
JENSEN, FOUNDER & CEO,
LABSTER**

Student regression is no longer just a summer issue, and we are seeing the learning losses magnified since remote learning began. What Dr. Megan Kuhfeld and Dr. Beth Tarasawa call the “COVID slide” in performance is going to slip right into spring 2021.

Overcoming the pronounced academic setbacks characterizing the COVID slide will challenge STEM educators for years to come. High impact learning losses are predicted for foundational skills in math and reading as early as third grade, placing future success in STEM areas on shaky ground.

As educators and leaders in education technology, it is our responsibility to work on building hybrid solutions to bridge the gaps students are facing.

Here are some of the most immediate ways we can begin to tackle the COVID slide:

1. Providing the right education support

High school students on STEM pathways are taking a challenging course of study, and they will need additional support to maintain their pace toward college readiness. Other students — especially if they are girls or students of color — risk being left out of STEM careers altogether if they cannot build strong conceptual foundations during high school.

Overall, the educational inequities have been exacerbated by the pandemic, and the COVID-19 educational response longitudinal survey found that remote learning programs are less rigorous in more schools located in histori-



cally higher-poverty and low-achieving districts than in wealthier, higher-achieving districts. Another recent study found that households located in higher-income areas were much more likely to search Google for online resources to supplement their education than households in lower income areas.

Students need more individualized support to meet them where they are in this unprecedented situation, whether it be a need of basic resources like laptops and internet, or more one-on-one time with guidance counselors and educators. Remote learning offers a new opportunity to be creative about how we support our students.

2. Provide more opportunities

Opportunities for learning are not evenly distributed, especially during the pandemic. Yet our teachers are still tasked with preparing the next generation of students to enter the workforce in a market where students will compete for jobs in increasingly technical fields.

Now is the time to make high quality online STEM education available in high schools. Online STEM tools provide teachers with efficiency gains, such as easier grading and ways to support students who miss assignments.

Teachers can find free and low-cost digital learning tools to supplement their traditional lessons with videos, kitchen science labs, augmented reality (AR) simulations, and narrative-driven virtual laboratories. They can find tools like Kahoot, Quizlet, Newsela, and more to support their instructional method, whether it's team-based learning or flipped classroom, tools that teach procedures, skills or concepts, and tools to assess learner

engagement and progress. Teachers can share the best online learning resources with their peers, to the benefit of their students.

3. Edtech companies must help teachers

No online science simulation can replace a great teacher. In fact, it is the thoughtful integration of digital resources within well-constructed curricula by teachers that allow online STEM programs to truly enhance students' learning quality. It is not sufficient to simply present a student with a resource without topical or pedagogic context.

STEM learning is most successful when students are emotionally and cognitively invested in their learning activities, allowing them to make deep critical connections to the knowledge they engage with. When students are not receiving face-to-face instruction, they may struggle to connect with the abstract concepts and factual content they study. Promoting engagement is where online STEM programs can make a critical difference.

Education technology companies can step up to provide more resources to

STEM, page 14

How SEL and achievement lead to academic equity

Schools are struggling to ensure that all students have what they need to be successful—here are some important components of academic equity

**BY STACEY PUSEY,
CONTRIBUTING WRITER,
EDWEB**

As schools reckon with academic equity, they're often focused on academic progress. During the edWebinar *Leading for Equity: Academic Development Through an Equity Lens*, hosted by AASA, The Superintendents Association and AASA's Leadership Network, the presenters talked about the important role social-emotional learning (SEL) plays in the process. In fact, they argued that schools must connect

focus on competencies and reaching specific standards without thinking about individual students' needs. This adds to a deficit-based mindset where the teachers are focused on fixing the students. Instead, said Duchesneau, educators and staff need to recognize cultural and contextual differences and how they impact students.

Based on the research, the report's authors have six policy and practice recommendations to get on a path to academic equity:

1. Provide meaningful professional

orous curricula that is free from stereotypes and negative reinforcement. SEL should be integrated into the materials;

5. Develop inclusive discipline and dress code policies. Discipline, for instance, should focus on restoring relationships; and

6. Provide access to integrated wrap-around services and supports, which should include partnering with community officials like law enforcement and hospitals to ensure that students receive support wherever and whenever they need it.

One school district modeling this type of intentional equity is Montgomery County Public Schools in Maryland. District Superintendent Dr. Jack R. Smith said when he came to Montgomery County, he noticed while many cohorts of students were achieving sustainable success, he couldn't say all students were being set up for success.

Based on the district's strategic plan and other work being done in the district, the leadership developed an equity and achievement framework based on three main principles.

- **Evidence of learning:** Dr. Smith said the key questions he asks are: "Are all students learning?" and "Are they learning enough?" The district is using multiple measures from the classroom to district level across internal and external categories to determine if students are college and career ready.
- **Equity accountability model:** Administration looked at the groups of students that were typically underperforming and asked how they know they are underperforming and why. Without the deeper details about these students, the district couldn't develop an action plan to help them.

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academic equity with SEL if they're going to reach their goal of serving all students.

Across the nation, district equity discussions include how schools must examine current biases from bus stops and classroom materials to educator and staff expectations. In *Social, Emotional, and Academic Development Through an Equity Lens*, from The Education Trust, researchers found most families of color don't think schools are set up for their students to succeed.

Nancy Duchesneau, a Research Associate at The Education Trust, said that's because current SEL models

development and supports in key areas like reducing bias and culturally sustaining pedagogy;

2. Engage parents, students, and communities as full partners so that leaders have reliable information about the school climate and school needs;

3. Diversify the educator workforce so that students from all backgrounds recognize themselves in teachers and staff, thus feeling more welcome in the school;

4. Ensure equitable access to and supports for success in rigorous and culturally sustaining coursework. In other words, all students should be using rig-

Lead

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• **Equitable access to resources:** More than just culturally-appropriate rigorous curricula, district leaders also looked at how all staff, time, and money were being used to support all students. For Dr. Monifa McKnight, Deputy Superintendent, the key questions for every program are: Who has access to that program? Are we providing resources to make sure all students are successful in that program? Again, the resources need to support the students' well-being as well as academics.

The key to all of this, said Dr. Smith, is to think of data as a flashlight and not a hammer. It tells us the questions and where to look, but data should drive us to numbers, then to names, and then to faces. Each student is an individual who deserves attention to their specific needs. As Dr. McKnight reminded attendees, there may be a different path for each student to reach the standard, and it's the job of everyone in their district to help each child on their journey.

This edWeb broadcast was hosted by AASA, The Superintendents Association and AASA's Leadership Network, providing premier professional learning for educational leaders.

About the presenters

Nancy is a P-12 Research Associate and leads the Social, Emotional, and Academic Development work at EdTrust. In this role, she works to fill current gaps in research, policy, and advocacy to ensure that schools holistically support the well-being and development of students, and especially for low-income students and students of color.

In addition to having served as EdTrust's Spencer Fellow for Social, Emotional, and Academic Development, Nancy worked in multiple roles prior to joining EdTrust. Recent experiences include serving as a research assistant under education faculty at Michigan State University. She has also worked on projects with

researchers at Education Testing Service (ETS) and interned with consultants at the Center for Assessment.

Jack R. Smith began his tenure as superintendent of Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) on July 1, 2016 and is now in his second term as superintendent. A dedicated lifelong educator, Dr. Smith has been a classroom teacher, principal, curriculum director, and a local superintendent of schools. Dr. Smith's steadfast goal has always been to provide all students, regardless of their learning needs, race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, with options and choices upon graduation.

Among Dr. Smith's many illustrious awards and honors, he was named Maryland Superintendent of the Year in 2013 and he received the 2010 Change Agent Award from the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Career and College Readiness. Dr. Smith is a member of Leadership Maryland's Class of 2011, and he has served on a variety of volunteer boards. A graduate of Eastern Washington University, with a bachelor's in English and Communications and a master's in School Administration, Dr. Smith received his Ph.D. in instructional leadership from Notre Dame of Maryland University.

Dr. Monifa McKnight currently serves as Deputy Superintendent in MCPS. Prior to this role, she served as the Chief School Management and Instructional Leadership Officer for Howard County Public Schools. Prior to going to Howard County, Dr. McKnight served as the Director for Secondary Leadership Development Programs in Montgomery County Public Schools. She also served as a Campus Principal Ambassador Fellow for the United States Department of Education in 2016 under the leadership of Secretary of Education John King.

Dr. McKnight was honored as the 2015 Maryland Middle School Principal of the Year by the Maryland Association of Secondary School Principals and as the 2015 Maryland State Principal of the Year by the

National Association of Secondary School Principals. She received this honor during her 5th year as the Principal of Ridgeview Middle School in Gaithersburg, MD.

Dr. McKnight's prior experiences in education include classroom teacher, English Resource Teacher, Staff Development Teacher, and Assistant Principal. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, South Carolina, a Master of Science in Educational Leadership from Bowie State University, Bowie Maryland, and a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy from the University of Maryland, College Park.

About the host

Valerie joined AASA early in 2019 as the Assistant Executive Director responsible for guiding leadership development services and programs. With years of experience in the superintendency and roles in instructional technology, she knows that AASA's Leadership Network can be a substantial resource for school leaders trying to keep pace with the rapidly changing delivery of K-12 education.

Join the community

Leading for Equity is a free professional learning community on edWeb.net for school and district leaders who face many challenges leading schools and driving school improvement for all students, especially now with COVID-19. 

Stacey Pusey is an education communications consultant and writer. She assists education organizations with content strategy and teaches writing at the college level. Stacey has worked in the preK-12 education world for 20 years, spending time on school management and working for education associations including the AAP PreK-12 Learning Group. Stacey is working with edWeb.net as a marketing communications advisor and writer.

Getting There: Innovation in Education

Keeping COVID innovations even after the pandemic passes

One district is hoping to preserve new technologies and innovations it adopted this year—even once COVID lockdowns are a thing of the past



BY KEVIN HOGAN

Hoover City Schools in suburban Birmingham, AL, was already one-to-one when the pandemic struck in March. And while its transition to remote learning in the spring was relatively painless, teachers and students continue to adjust to the new realities of hybrid school days.

In this conversation with eSchool News, Bryan Phillips, CTO of Hoover City Schools, describes some of the positives he notices with this forced migration and divines which practices should probably remain once we get back to whatever normal is.

eSN: What are some of the things your teachers are doing that they didn't do before COVID, but you think they will continue to do when the pandemic finally goes away?

BP: A lot of teachers are running Google Meet every day, recording their lesson, and keeping it. So the kids that aren't there, they can just send it to them. It's a vlog—a video diary of what they do every day. Keeping those lesson plans, I think that's a plus.

For a lot of the advanced courses, we don't have a teacher for both physical and virtual. So she may have office hours on Tuesdays with the remote kids can ask questions, which I think will be a huge plus moving forward. Some kids may not feel comfortable walking up to a teacher or calling a teacher over their desk in class and asking a question. But if they can go back and send the teacher a message, "Hey, I need to talk to you."

They get them on Meet and work that out and learn whatever that concept is. That's something you do in college. Well, kids are now learning it in seventh, eighth, ninth, 10th, 11th, 12th grade.

eSN: Remote learning and things like video conferencing have been getting a bad rap with all the complaints of Zoom fatigue, etc. Have you seen any positive aspects?

BP: I think the virtual office hours is a huge one, and of course, everything being in the cloud, not tied to our network, not tied to anywhere specific. When COVID went into full mode, full lockdown, we had kids who were no longer in Hoover that had went to stay with grandparents in other states or wherever else. So I start looking at IP addresses of our Chromebooks. I mean, they're all over the US! So I think that showing the remoteness of it all was a plus—that our kids can still learn from our teachers, but be anywhere. Also, faculty meetings that used to last two hours now last 15 minutes, because you got a bulleted list, you'd run through it, you're done.

eSN: How do you see faculty adjusting to these new tools and dynamics?

BP: I will tell you a rough guess that 75 percent of our teachers right now use the devices for the kids three times a week. I think moving forward that number will be 80, 90 percent. A lot of them have learned they can ask questions

they've never asked before. They're no longer the smartest person in the room. The collective internet is the smartest person in the room. So that was a big learning point for our teachers, when they realized, okay, we have to ask questions we've never asked before and look for different answers to questions we have heard before.

eSN: So do you feel this will ultimately improve the quality of education over time? Is this the promise of "anytime, anywhere learning" being realized?

BP: So the idea of our engaged learning initiative (before the pandemic) was to engage them more than we were engaging them from 8 am to 3 pm. To engage them at home, to engage them wherever we could to extend that day, to give them more time learning. That's the whole idea. We still want to do the same thing. If you look at any study and you look at any of the numbers, kids who have more opportunities learn more. So if we can give every kid the same amount of advanced opportunities than what we had, we've done our job. **eSN**

Kevin is a forward-thinking media executive with more than 25 years of experience building brands and audiences online, in print, and face to face. He is an acclaimed writer, editor, and commentator covering the intersection of society and technology, especially education technology. Most recently, he has been Managing Director of Content for Tech & Learning. You can reach Kevin at KevinHogan@eschoolnews.com

How IT leaders can thrive in the post-COVID era

When looking to enable remote learning effectively and save costs, IT leaders should look towards their current cloud models

BY JOHN PELLETTIERE, SENIOR DIRECTOR AND GENERAL MANAGER - STATE, LOCAL AND EDUCATION, NUTANIX

This school year is unlike any other. More than 90 percent of households with school-age children are engaged in some form of distance learning from home, while college students are navigating a variety of hybrid remote learning environments. These new learning environments present challenges for educators and school IT leaders alike.

As educational institutions of all sizes are weighing how to keep students engaged while also ensuring their safety, IT departments are faced with a difficult task – how to keep operations running regardless of the learning environment.

Supporting students in the age of remote learning

Today's K-12 and higher education students were born in the internet era and are able to easily adapt to new modes of communication and learning. Knowing this, educational institutions must prioritize investment of remote learning technologies that can keep up with students' abilities and needs. Providing students with this seamless learning environment is dependent on teachers having reliable access to institutional networks from home and the classroom.

Desktop as a Service (DaaS) and virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) solutions enable application access on any device, granting teachers full access to their network regardless of their location. Further, onboarding the technology onto individual laptops takes minutes, instead of hours or days. This ensures that, should there be any additional academic disruptions, schools can swiftly update their hybrid learning

model accordingly, without any negative impact on the academic calendar.

Ensuring security

Educational institutions are sitting on a wealth of sensitive information, from student data to intellectual property and research. According to a study from SecurityScorecard, the education industry has the worst cybersecurity vulnerability of 17 sectors in the U.S., and the increased reliance on digital technologies in the wake of COVID-19 presents further concern.

With teachers and students working remotely, DaaS also provides the layer of security needed to protect educational networks. While the solution runs on personal computers, which have a reputation of causing end-point security issues, DaaS operates as a completely separate application, creating a controlled and secure environment independent of remote workers' personal activity and weak points within their individual networks.

Managing costs

Enabling remote learning and teaching requires unanticipated expenses at a time where many educational institutions are grappling with tight budgets and reduced revenue streams. When looking to alter IT budgets to enable remote learning effectively while also saving costs, IT leaders should look towards their current cloud models.

Public cloud has remained popular across industries, and a new study found that 57 percent of education sector respondents have increased their investments in public cloud services as a result of the pandemic. While the investment is growing, public cloud has been known to cause budget overages, which is problematic during this time of

economic uncertainty. With this in mind, regardless of the model educational institutions currently rely on, IT leaders must evaluate which makes the most sense for their applications in a post COVID-19 world – and the answer may not live within public or private clouds alone.

According to a recent study, 77 percent of public sector IT leaders believe a hybrid IT model is the most effective approach for public sector organizations. With this in mind, investing in a hybrid cloud solution is a way educational institutions can control their spending while also having the flexibility to choose the right workload for each application. The increased flexibility, and potential cost savings, associated with hybrid cloud will allow educational institutions to support their teachers and students as they grapple with the disruption created by COVID-19.

Driving towards the new normal

The future of education is unknown, and the success rate of hybrid and remote education models have yet to be seen. However, as educational institutions look to adapt towards the new normal, they must continue to deliver rich, immersive experiences that hold students' attention, and guide their progress. Technologies like VDI and DaaS, as well as cost-effective cloud models will be necessary to provide learning environments remotely to all end-user devices, ensuring that our future leaders will have the same academic experience as the generations before them – regardless of physical location. 

John Pelletiere is Senior Director and General Manager – State, Local and Education for Nutanix.

Equity

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public officials, business partners, and higher education. His goal is that all of these groups will come together on the same accord to function as a complete community of learners focused on student success and student access to college and career opportunities. Dr. Khalid Mumin is the 2021 Pennsylvania Superintendent of the Year.

In the fall of 2017, Marlon Styles became the proud Superintendent of Middletown City School District. The four years prior, he served as the Executive Director of Curriculum & Instruction for Lakota Schools. His affinity for education has ignited a fiery passion to close the equity gap for all students. He prides himself on finding the good in every person. Mr. Styles challenges others to rise up to strengthen the #MiddieRising culture. Mr. Styles states, "My affinity for education has ignited a fiery passion to close the equity and access gaps that affect schools. I am firmly devoted to finding innovative ways to integrate technology to transform learning experiences that will inspire students." Marlon earned an undergraduate degree from Thomas More College, and a Master's degree from University of Cincinnati.

STEM

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engage with teachers and educators in helping them utilize new online programs. Some companies create virtual conferences dedicated to addressing their needs to best integrate edtech tools into their spring courses.

Now, in the age of social distancing, we must bring the science lab to the student rather than bringing the student to the lab. Taking a high school science class once meant going to a wet lab and sharing expensive equipment and supplies with peers. Online STEM education demands no special equipment, supplies, or physical resources apart

About the host

Dr. Amy Sichel is a nationally recognized educational leader and has served as superintendent of the Abington School District in Abington, PA since 2001 and retired after 18 years of service. She served the district for 42 years as the assistant superintendent, director of pupil services, school psychologist and counselor. Dr. Sichel is a past president of AASA and PASA as well as being named a PA Superintendent of the Year. She was proud to have the opportunity to be recognized nationally for the district's work in narrowing achievement gaps for historically under-represented students. For this work, she has co-authored a chapter in a textbook by Mr. Alan Blankstein and Dr. Pedro Noguera, entitled *Excellence Through Equity: Five Principles of Courageous Leadership to Guide Achievement for Every Student*.

Dr. Sichel is now a repurposed superintendent as Lead Superintendent in the AASA National Superintendent Certification Program®. She has worked with AASA's Leadership Network and the Certification program since the inception with curriculum development and as a mentor. AASA's National Superintendent Certification Program has a rigorous and engaging curriculum,

where superintendents in their beginning years of service and those that want to refresh their skill set, form as a cohort of critical professional friends and engage in leadership development. This work is so important for superintendents as they strive to educate America's children to be career and college ready. With years of experience in education, Dr. Sichel strives to offer premier professional learning opportunities to superintendents and educational leaders with AASA's Leadership Network.

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from a computer and stable internet connection. Learning with the support of their teachers and peers, students can access STEM material in their own homes without the heightened health and safety risks of COVID.

Bringing STEM education online is not about a technology or delivery method, it's about the teaching and the learning. Using online STEM resources to engage students, enable them to regain lost ground using mastery-based learning, and facilitate their progress toward educational goals, will positively impact their academic journeys through graduation, college and beyond. 

Michael Bodekaer Jensen is a serial entrepreneur with a passion for building innovative technology companies that have the potential to change the world. Born and raised in Denmark, Michael Bodekaer's first business venture came to life when he was just 14 years old. Fast forward to 2020, and Michael is the founder of five unique organizations with offices spanning the globe. With the ambition of leveraging cutting-edge technology to improve learning quality and has spoken passionately about it through a Ted Talk. His company, Labster, is the groundbreaking platform that gives students worldwide the opportunity to learn life sciences through gamified education in immersive 3D virtual worlds.

Creative

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books every week. I'm running four virtual book clubs and doing book talks in a way I never have before."

Librarians are even thinking ahead by having students fill out surveys about the books they like to read, so if a student can't be in school due to COVID, the librarian can easily select books to send home.

"We are trying to get physical library books in rotation, and are figuring out logistics and safety," said Washington librarian Traci Plaster Chun. But in addition to getting physical books to students, Chun says librarians are also playing a greater role with families. "We have been supporting parents in this pandemic, which has been a shift. Teachers and parents are working so hard; I feel it's my role to help make

their jobs easier with tech, resources, eBooks, and whatever they need. We know our students, our curriculum, our teachers, and so it makes sense that we jump in. We can personalize for our families."

To combat the COVID-slide, another district is strategizing how to get parents reading more and is planning a book club for Spanish-speaking parents.

For those "virtual librarians," Future Ready Librarian spokesperson and Van Meter Community School District librarian Shannon McClintock Miller is hosting webinars to spark ideas and share best practices across the country because the reality is no one has done this before. But it's an opportunity to define that future job description.

"I think the part of my job that has changed the most is the amount of collaboration I am doing with teachers, administrators and families," Miller

said. "I have always done a lot of collaboration, but now we are planning, creating and teaching together more than ever. And they are so open to all ideas I bring to the table—resources, technology, innovative ideas and projects. A wall has been taken down. It's one of the best things."

Whether in-person, hybrid or remote, one thing has not changed for school librarians is their desire to connect readers with books. While there's no book with answers on how to be a librarian during a pandemic, there is resourceful community of peers who are eager to share ideas and solutions. And when school librarians collaborate, one thing is certain: we will figure it out together! **eSN**

Britten Follett is the Executive Vice President of Follett School Solutions.

SEL

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which can help them calm and regulate their emotions before they act on a trigger in a negative way.

7. Encourage students to be smart about social media. We are realistic — we know that no matter what adults tell students, there is little chance they will stay off of social media. But we can teach them to be smart about using it. We can help them understand that too much media exposure (especially on social media) can increase stress and anxiety. We can teach them how to access reputable news sources like the Centers for Disease Control and World Health Organization to get accurate information. And we can teach them to be safe online. Being smart about using social media can keep students safe and grounded and can reduce negative effects like stress and low self-esteem.

8. Practice deep breathing. Deep breathing works just as well for students as it does for adults. It can have a powerful physical effect in reducing tension

and relaxing the body — and it can have immediate results. Clinical research shows that regular deep breathing exercises affect the heart, the brain, digestion, and the immune system. They can have immediate results and can also be used to reduce the production of harmful stress hormones. Teach students deep breathing techniques to calm down and reduce stress.

9. Teach visualization. Day-dreaming in class is sometimes ok! Visualization involves using mental imagery to achieve a more relaxed state of mind and can be an effective way for students to de-stress. This free lesson plan guides students through the process and has them use visualization to improve reading comprehension.

10. Be a listening ear. Some students don't have an adult at home who they feel they can turn to in times of need. Encourage students to talk to you about their feelings so you can work through any concerns they may have. During remote learning, keep the communication going through email, online chat, text message, virtual meeting spaces, or an old-fashioned phone call.

We are certainly going through challenging and stressful times. Put your social-emotional skills to work and develop a plan to tackle stress before you get overwhelmed. We hope these de-stressing tips are helpful to keep you and your students happy and healthy! **eSN**

*Emily Doerr has worked in education technology for over four years, specializing in the K-12 market. She currently serves as national marketing coordinator for Aperture Education. The daughter of two college professors, Emily developed a love for learning and for sharing knowledge at a young age and has carried that passion with her throughout her career. When not diving into trends and strategizing, you'll find her exploring the world and taking on new adventures. **Note:** A version of this article first appeared in the 2020 Back to School Guide from Aperture Education. Aperture Education provides social-emotional learning assessments, strategies and resources for schools and out of school time organizations.*

Activities

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social distancing. If you can, go for a 20-minute walk and enjoy some fresh air, or take advantage of a free or discounted online workout class. Regular exercise will help you feel more energized and much less stressed.

6. Tap into your support network.

Establishing a good support network is critical to maintaining healthy stress levels, especially when you are physically isolated. Lean on your colleagues for advice, trade ideas, and create mentoring relationships. Friends and family can also provide invaluable support by lending an ear on especially difficult days. You can further expand your network through educator-based online support networks and learning communities. Join one or more, and share in a wealth of knowledge from educators across the country.

7. Stay organized. Being organized is a proactive way to reduce stress. Just think about how much time you waste searching through email or computer files to find what you need, rewriting misplaced work, or trying to manage your calendars. Set an organization plan

— and stick to it to reduce stress, improve efficiency, and be a more effective educator.

8. Meditate. Meditation, or mindful awareness, can have a tremendous impact on your ability to de-stress. Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years and can bring clarity to your thoughts and promote peace and balance. Even a few minutes of meditation can significantly reduce stress. Listen to this SEL Chat Podcast to get tips and tricks for practicing mindfulness and meditation techniques at home during COVID-19.

9. Practice visualization.

Visualization is another effective tactic for reducing stress. To give it a try, sit comfortably and think about a peaceful scene (a beach, the mountains, a favorite spot in your neighborhood). Or, visualize yourself realizing a goal — like finally getting back in the classroom safely!

10. Laugh. Even during trying times, we need to find humor. It will do wonders for relieving stress. According to the Mayo Clinic, laughter promotes a stronger immune system, increases your ability to cope with difficult situations, and can improve your mood by lessening depression and anxiety. Find ways

to laugh every day — share a funny meme or joke with colleagues and friends or watch a favorite funny movie or television show.

We are certainly going through challenging and stressful times. Put your social-emotional skills to work and develop a plan to tackle stress before you get overwhelmed. We hope these de-stressing tips are helpful to keep you and your students happy and healthy! 

Emily Doerr has worked in education technology for over four years, specializing in the K-12 market. She currently serves as national marketing coordinator for Aperture Education. The daughter of two college professors, Emily developed a love for learning and for sharing knowledge at a young age and has carried that passion with her throughout her career. When not diving into trends and strategizing, you'll find her exploring the world and taking on new adventures. Note: A version of this article first appeared in the 2020 Back to School Guide from Aperture Education. Aperture Education provides social-emotional learning assessments, strategies and resources for schools and out of school time organizations.

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CEO Rob Morrow rmorrow@eschoolmedia.com

Vice President, Online Products & Services

Nancy David ndavid@eschoolmedia.com

Managing Editor, Content Services

Laura Ascione lascione@eschoolmedia.com

Creative Director Chris Hopson chopson@eschoolmedia.com

National Director of Sales and Business Development

Stephanie Ciotola sciotola@eschoolmedia.com

Caliann Mitoulis cmitoulis@eschoolmedia.com

Director, Client Services Denise Crowe dcrowe@eschoolmedia.com

Accounting & Vendor Data Director

Lee Calloway lcalloway@eschoolmedia.com

Director of IT Vincent Carlson vcarlson@eschoolmedia.com

Web Comm. Specialist Jeffrey Festa jfesta@eschoolmedia.com

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2275 Research Blvd. Suite 500 • Rockville, MD 20850

Phone: (301) 913-0115 • Fax: (301) 913-0119

eMail: ndavid@eSchoolNews.com

Home Page: www.eschoolnews.com

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Co-Founder Larry Siegelman 1954–2002