

OCTOBER 2020

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A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR TECHNOLOGY IN EDUCATION

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MOMENT IN RACIAL HISTORY. WHAT WILL
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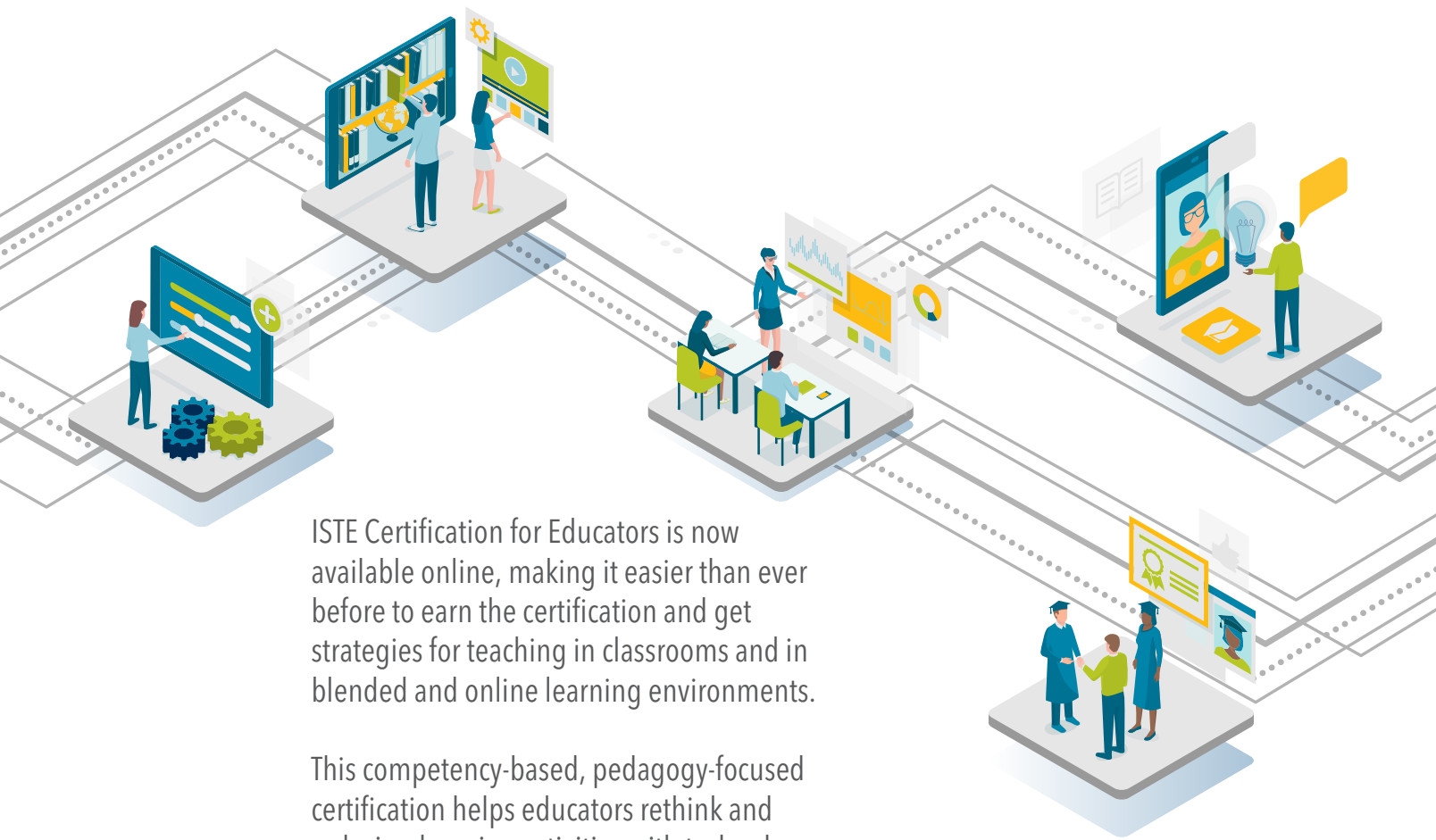
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October 2020
Volume four Issue two
A quarterly magazine

4 ABOUT US

7 FROM THE ISTE CEO

Richard Culatta
Times are changing and
we're evolving!

8 MEMBER VOICES

LeeAnn Lindsey, Ed.D.
Have digcit conversations –
because our kids are listening



10 INTERVIEW

Kimberly Eckert
Award-winning teacher is
passionate about empowering
learners, diverse educators

28 COVER

Teaching anti-racism

We've reached a watershed
moment in racial history.
What will educators choose
to do with it?

20 FEATURE

The parent connection

Bringing families along on
the edtech journey

26 WHAT WORKS

Computational thinking plays
a big role in learning about
moral development

35 STANDARDS SPOTLIGHT

The empowered learner is
a learner with agency



39 RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

Research provides a road map
to making the ISTE Standards
a reality in schools

43 GLOBAL FOCUS

Jon Neale
A community-first approach
to digital integration

44 MEMBER PROFILE

Jorge Valenzuela
He found his purpose as a
national education advocate

48 COMMUNITY VOICES

What are some great ways
to engage kindergartners
in online learning?



EMPOWERED LEARNER

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ISTE sets a bold vision for education transformation through the ISTE Standards, a framework for students, educators, administrators, coaches and computer science educators to rethink education and create innovative learning environments. ISTE hosts the annual ISTE Conference & Expo, one of the world's most influential edtech events. The organization's professional learning offerings include online courses, professional networks, year-round academies, peer-reviewed journals and other publications. ISTE is also the leading publisher of books focused on technology in education. For more information or to become an ISTE member, visit iste.org. Subscribe to ISTE's YouTube channel and connect with ISTE on Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn.

Our vision. ISTE's vision is that all educators are empowered to harness technology to accelerate innovation in teaching and learning, and inspire learners to reach their greatest potential.

Our mission. ISTE inspires educators worldwide to use technology to innovate teaching and learning, accelerate good practice and solve tough problems in education by providing community, knowledge and the ISTE Standards, a framework for rethinking education and empowering learners.

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About Empowered Learner. *Empowered Learner* ISSN 2573-1807 (print), *Empowered Learner* ISSN 2573-2137 (online) is published quarterly by the International Society for Technology in Education, 621 SW Morrison Street, Suite 800, Portland, OR 97205, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Portland, Oregon, and at additional mailing office. Send address changes to the ISTE membership department at 621 SW Morrison Street, Suite 800, Portland, OR 97205, USA.

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ISTE



FROM THE ISTE CEO

Richard Culatta describes the changes coming to your member magazine.

Times are changing and we're evolving!

By Richard Culatta
ISTE CEO

In 1979, ISTE began offering our first member magazine, a humble newsletter called “The Oregon Computing Teacher.” Over the years, our magazine has evolved many times, becoming *The Computing Teacher*, *Learning & Leading with Technology*, *entrsekt* and now, *Empowered Learner*.

Throughout these evolutions, the format and style have been updated to match the needs of educators, but the quality has always remained high. In fact, ISTE’s member magazine has received multiple awards over the years for the quality of the articles and its design.

Today, we find ourselves at another moment when evolution is needed.

For the last year, our team has been weighing the pros and cons of continuing to produce a print-based magazine. I personally love the beautiful layout of the magazine, as well as the experience of finding it in my mailbox four times a year. But there are also some significant drawbacks to the print format.

First, production requires topics to be finalized months ahead of printing, making it hard to adjust to up-to-the-minute mem-

ber needs. Second, printing our magazine increases our environmental footprint at a time when we’re committed to being responsible stewards of our natural resources. Third, the print format limits our ability to provide interactive content just as ISTE is increasingly using video, audio and other interactive media to share inspiring ideas with the members of our community.

For these reasons, I’m excited to share that starting in January 2021, *Empowered Learner* will transition from print to a fully digital experience. Based on feedback from members thus far, we’re confident a digital format will serve member needs in a timely, engaging and effective way, allowing us to embed videos, podcasts, webinars and other multimedia content along with articles.

As we evolve to this new format, we’ll be very interested to hear your input and feedback. We look forward to taking this next step along our continually evolving journey to provide the best materials possible to support your ever-changing teaching and learning needs. Please share your suggestions for the all-new digital *Empowered Learner* at iste@iste.org. 

“We look forward to taking this next step along our continually evolving journey to provide the best materials possible to support your ever-changing teaching and learning needs.”

MEMBER VOICES

LeeAnn Lindsey, Ed.D., explains that digital citizenship lessons can start with a simple conversation.



PHOTO BY PHOENIX HEADSHOTS

Have digcit conversations – because our kids are listening!

By LeeAnn Lindsey, Ed.D.

Do you remember the public service announcements from the mid-2010s that featured different scenarios of parents (sometimes awkwardly) talking to their children about underage drinking?

If this doesn't ring a bell, search for "Talk. They Hear You PSA" on YouTube (bit.ly/32BPIho). These PSAs were created by SAMHSA (samhsa.gov), the government agency that focuses on substance abuse and mental health services. The campaign's message to parents was that you don't have to have all the right words or know all the answers. Just start talking – because just having the conversation is what matters. Our kids are listening.

In my role as a digital citizenship enthusiast and consultant, I frequently field questions from both parents and educators about how to prevent kids from seeing harmful or inappropriate content online, how to keep them locked into (or out of) certain apps and how to get them to stop obsessing over their phones.

I know those who ask are looking for advice that will make them feel more com-

fortable about kids having access to the world (the good, the bad and the ugly) at their fingertips. My response to many of these questions mirrors the parenting advice from the SAMHSA PSAs. You don't have to have all the right words or know all the answers. Just start talking – because having the conversation is what matters. Our kids are listening.

Why is conversation so important?

Conversations promote reflection. When we invite students to talk about aspects of their digital lives they might not otherwise think about, we help them strengthen their "digital awareness." Some research suggests that increased awareness can promote more ethical decision-making (bit.ly/3eNdw4g). Therefore, one important strategy is to engage students in collaborative dialogue prompting them to connect their digital actions with the way they think and feel (physically and mentally) so that they can become more intentional digital decision-makers.

When students build understanding with peers and a teacher or mentor, they can learn from one another and begin to develop their own personal terms of service. Reflective conversations can pave the way for students to become better digital citizens.

What should I talk about?

Talk about your own experiences thinking through digital decisions. Talk about the times you've gotten it wrong and learned from that experience. For me, it could be about that one time I saw a news article that upset me and then shared it with my social media network and tagged my legislator. I later realized the article was several years old (oops!). I learned to check the date of publication before sharing with my network (and especially a political figure)!

I could also tell students about my ongoing struggle to put down my phone in the middle of the night when I can't sleep, and ask if they, too, struggle with this.

Seriously, our students love hearing about when we got it wrong. It helps them realize that we, too, are learning how to navigate the digital landscape. It also helps to build a side-by-side relationship through which we can share and learn together. Remember to share success stories too!

Ask questions about their experiences navigating digital life and how it impacts them. Inquire about how they feel and where they might need guidance.

Today, a growing number of kids use and own devices (bit.ly/3joPMaj). In fact, our Gen Z students have not experienced life prior to social media and the internet. Sometimes adults wrongly assume that our youth know it all when it comes to technology. The reality is that being a digital native means they are comfortable tapping and swiping – it does not mean that they understand digital rules of engagement. Conversations can help us develop a symbiotic relationship with our students where they assist us with navigating a tool or an app, and we help them

navigate the personal and social aspects of their use.

In a world of ever-evolving technology that allows for infinite connectedness, digital citizenship education (digcitcommit.org) is critical. Instead of relying on blocking and locking, and telling them they *can't*, we can help our students develop digital decision-making skills they can apply now and in the future. We can do this by modeling the behaviors we want them to adopt and, most importantly, by talking to them about their digital lives.

Because having the conversation matters. Our kids are listening! 

LEEANN LINDSEY, ED.D., IS THE FOUNDER AND PRINCIPAL CONSULTANT FOR EDVOLVE (EDVOLVELearning.com/services.html), AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR FOR THE MARY LOU FULTON TEACHERS COLLEGE AT ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY AND CO-CHAIR OF ISTE'S DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP PLN. SHE SERVED ON THE CORE LEADERSHIP TEAM FOR THE 2016 ISTE STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS AND THE 2017 ISTE STANDARDS FOR EDUCATORS. YOU CAN FOLLOW LEEANN ON TWITTER (@SUNDEVILLEEANN) OR VISIT HER WEBSITE (EDVOLVELearning.com) FOR MORE #DIGCIT MUSINGS.

“Seriously, our students love hearing about when we got it wrong.”

INTERVIEW

Educator Kimberly Eckert on what diverse students and educators need to thrive.

KIMBERLY ECKERT

AWARD-WINNING TEACHER IS PASSIONATE ABOUT EMPOWERING LEARNERS, DIVERSE EDUCATORS

By Julie Phillips Randles

As a child growing up on a Louisiana bayou, Kimberly Eckert understood that an education was her ticket to a different life. Books and learning were right up her alley, but her dream parted ways with the Hallmark Channel ending: Eckert didn't want that path to lead her away from her roots. After all, her flight wouldn't make things better for the generations to come.

So Eckert, with a degree in social work from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana, in her hand, landed a position with a nonprofit group called Best Buddies. She was assigned to promote social inclusion among children with and without intellectual disabilities in schools across Louisiana.

That's when she determined she could make a bigger impact as a classroom teacher.

"I really wanted to focus on empowering people," she has explained of her career change. But she knew that completely shifting professions left her at a major disadvantage when it came to entering the classroom as a teacher. "I was a fish out of water. I didn't have a foundation of traditional training. What I did have is a lot of passion. It's hard to get me discouraged."

So she buckled down with the books again to earn a master's degree in special education, along with teaching certifications in special ed, English and as a reading specialist.

Today, as a teacher for Brusly High and Port Allen High Schools in West Baton Rouge Parish, she can access the rocket fuel she needed to impact those in disadvantaged circumstances.



Kimberly Eckert says when we commit to providing high-quality access and authentic experiences to all students, they'll blow us away with their abilities and creativity!



What I could change was the impact it had on their lives, how they coped and ultimately surmounted adversity.

In 2018, she was recognized as the Louisiana Teacher of the Year, which came with life-changing perks. She was given a seat on the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and was the first recipient of Louisiana's Public Interest Fellowship, which included state funding to spend a school year implementing an education initiative.

She used the resources to pioneer the national Educators Rising program in the Pelican State – a program to introduce promising high school students to the possibilities of turning their talents toward the classroom. Eckert strives to ensure at least half of her recruits are students of color to reflect the 58% of West Baton Rouge's Parish schools, and serves as a spokesperson on the Be a Teacher LA campaign.

It's a vital goal, as studies show that teachers of color have been leaving the profession at higher rates than white teachers since 1991. That's nearly three decades of attrition Eckert aims to turn around, and she walks the talk by developing tailored induction, coaching and professional development for new teachers and paraprofessionals.

Recently hired to lead educator development at the Louisiana Department of Education, Eckert will teach her classes virtually and keep working with teacher groups after hours, all with an eye on piloting and supporting new work from the state level while continuing to have influence at the classroom level.

It's no wonder she continues to earn respect from her colleagues. She was named a national finalist for NEA's Social Justice Activist of the Year, assists with the Diverse and Learner Ready Teacher initiative through the Council of Chief State School Officers, is a Stand for Children's LEAD Fellow facilitator, a fellow through Understood.org, and an expert teacher through the National Center for Learning Disabilities.

She is also a 2020 finalist for the prestigious Global Teacher Prize that recognizes an exceptional teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession.

YOU PLANNED TO BECOME A SOCIAL WORKER BUT INSTEAD RETURNED TO SCHOOL TO BECOME A TEACHER. WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THE PROFESSION?

I think the most striking question to start with is why wasn't I attracted to the profession to begin with? Neither of my parents received a high school diploma, and when my academic, creative and leadership skills were identified, I was discouraged from becoming a teacher every time I mentioned it might be a good path for me.

Teachers and friends told me different variations of "you're too smart to be a teacher" or "you can do so much more than that." I knew I wanted to empower others and bring about positive social change, so I chose to become a social worker. Interestingly enough, not a single person discouraged me from this. That profession, though also super vital and demanding, often pays professionals even less than teachers. It appears, though, that it carries more respect.

I spent a lot of time working in schools and working with people with issues related to our inability to truly support mental health and what boiled down to completely inequitable access to education. I decided for me, I wasn't changing the world fast enough and that I needed to be with people at a point where I still had more time to build relationships, empower them with education, and reach them while they still believed me when I told them how tremendously invaluable they are to our world.

Teachers have this unique, pivotal opportunity. I'm still a social worker every day. Now I just get to reach more people at the critical moments that start the ripples of life's more epic waves.

YOU INCORPORATE PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING AND TIME FOR PASSION PROJECTS INTO YOUR WORK WITH ALL STUDENTS, INCLUDING SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS AND LEARNERS WITH NEURODIVERSITIES. CAN YOU POINT TO SOME OF THE WAYS YOUR STUDENTS HAVE USED TECHNOLOGY FOR PROBLEM-SOLVING AND CREATION?

For the first half of my career, I served exclusively as a special educator and reading interventionist. Most of my students were considerably older than their peers, felt with 100% certainty that school wasn't for them, and absolutely hated the stigma carried by needing me as a special education teacher. Because of this, I was determined to help my students not only progress academically, but to become part of such awesome experiences that they would leave me proud, confident and feeling like we were all better for our time together.

In the earliest years, we spent a lot of time focusing on reading, lack of access to age-appropriate/culturally reflective books, etc. Together, we wrote a grant to purchase loads of books of their choosing and launch

a schoolwide book review blog where students read and reviewed books, then posted reviews and recommendations to our blog. This was back before blogs were even cool!

According to their abilities, they were able to use voice-only recordings, videos, typed or dictated reviews, and we ended up with so many students outside our class borrowing books and looking up their recommendations! One of my proudest moments was when a team from the state department came to observe my reading intervention and walked out mistakenly thinking they'd entered an honors class. That's the type of education all kids deserve!

Through the years, I developed more as a teacher and my teaching expanded into larger, inclusive classrooms – at a bare minimum *every* child I teach (regardless of ability or prior computer access) now develops and maintains their own websites with content ranging from journals to podcasts to videos.

From there, endeavors are more individualized. I've had classes use technology to design and publish their own

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PHOTO BY BAYOU ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY



All of my students are incredible, and when we commit to providing high-quality access and authentic experiences to all of them, they'll continue to blow us all away!

literary magazines, incorporating countless technologies; learn to code; design video games; create school and community polling to assess needs; use social media to lead Twitter chats on everything from equity in education to implicit bias to teens coping with COVID-19; raise money for scholarships and charities; create panels, awareness campaigns, social commentary and, oh my goodness, the list goes on.

All of my students are incredible, and when we commit to providing high-quality access and authentic experiences to all of them, they'll continue to blow us all away!

HOW CAN EDUCATORS HELP STUDENTS USE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE THEIR COMMUNITIES?

I think perhaps one of the biggest mistakes we make in education is that we fail to communicate to students what our communities actually need and that they are more than capable of delivering it. Students are the solutions to every problem, even those we have yet to identify. But they can't just figure this out on their own. How many of us can?

We take for granted that because students are digital natives, that technology use is part of their "programming." This just isn't true. As with any tool, it's used most effectively when we're allowed to learn about it and explore its possibilities. An underdeveloped tool is unwieldy, often either a distraction or a decoration. I take the time to model and teach my thinking about tools, embedded with content.

In my classroom, I invest a lot of time encouraging students to identify needs in our school and community, their own strengths and passions, and from there we spend a lot of time designing solutions. When students have a clear understanding of their own desired outcomes, they start to see technology as one of many tools to help them navigate and bring about change – even change that might be small and personal.

I incorporate mini-lessons about the power of technology and how we can essentially harness it at every opportunity. I consistently allow them to interact with and create content using their technology, and we discuss its potential for positive impact. We talk about outcomes and why certain technologies are best for bringing them about.

I incorporate and encourage problem-based learning. I have a process for supporting students through their navigation of identifying challenges, gaps and solutions, and make sure they know it's a process, but one they can work through. They already live in the real world and I'm not their only teacher. The more authentic experiences I can allow them to safely navigate in class, the more their confidence builds to tackle any problem outside of class.

YOU'VE REFERRED TO THE 2019 "IF YOU LISTEN, WE WILL STAY" REPORT FROM TEACH PLUS AND THE EDUCATION TRUST THAT OUTLINES SOME REASONS THAT TEACHERS OF COLOR LEAVE THE PROFESSION, AND WHAT IT WOULD TAKE FOR THEM TO STAY. WHAT POINTS FROM THAT REPORT RESONATE WITH YOU TODAY?

In the 2019 "If You Listen, We Will Stay" report, one of the most powerful recommendations for me was that schools should be places that affirm a teacher's humanity and racial identity so that they can be their most authentic selves. For far too long, schools have been places that prioritize conformity and assimilation to ideals from a distant, toxic past – a past that has proven again and again to be damaging to students.

Students become adults who remember all that made them feel disenfranchised in school, leading them to hold a career in teaching as about as attractive as pushing a heavy ball uphill, while being constantly told they're doing it wrong.

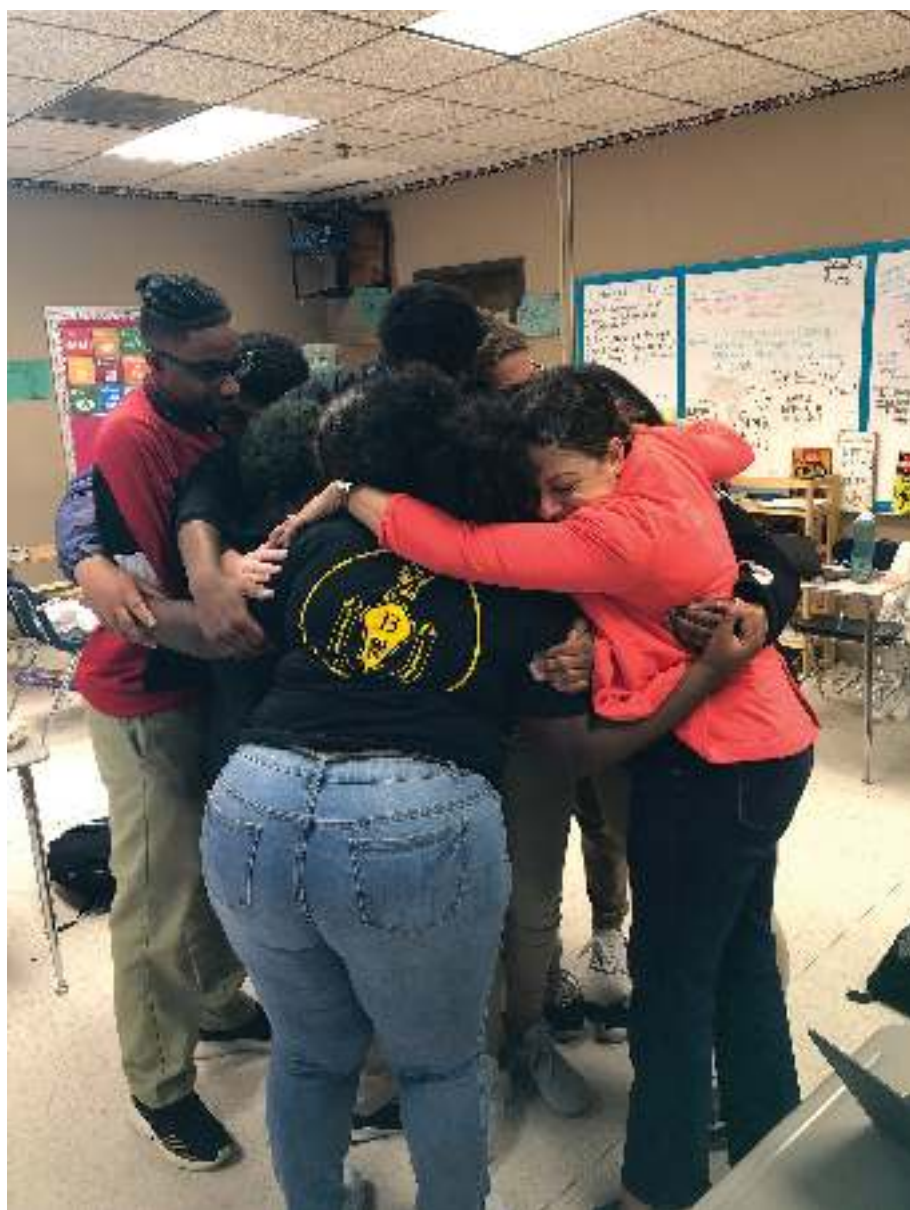
Why would any of us want to become part of a profession that demands so much, yet discourages all that makes us vibrant, unique and more powerful in our ability to connect with and welcome students? We should be inviting in and recruiting teachers because of the strengths their diverse experiences bring, not asking them to completely ignore this and pretend that their perspectives don't exist.

WHAT DO SCHOOL LEADERS NEED TO BETTER UNDERSTAND ABOUT SUPPORTING DIVERSE EDUCATORS?

Perhaps the first thing school leaders need to better understand about supporting diverse educators is that they have to decide to support them, specifically, and then set out to do it on purpose. Currently and historically, the majority of educators fall into the category of middle class, Christian, cisgender,



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I've seen diverse educators thriving in any space where they feel safe, uniquely valued, heard, given space to make mistakes and grow, and allowed to self-advocate for and challenge things that aren't working without feeling that doing so will be a mark against the entirety of their race, culture, sexual orientation, faith, gender, etc.

white female. Obviously, diverse educators are affected in very different ways by perception, implicit or explicit bias, and the often unique, tacit expectations and pressure placed on them.

Since differences are often shut out, diverse educators can feel isolated, voiceless, that they carry additional burdens as a standard expectation (such as having to further educate all adults around them), and feel there are few opportunities to advocate for themselves or students without rocking the boat or being seen as problematic.

If school leaders decide to recognize these truths at the onset, they'll find themselves in a better place to listen, invite conversations, lead for engagement and inclusivity, and become an ally for all teachers – just as our classrooms are at their best when we become an ally for all students, so, too, is the profession itself.

WHERE HAVE YOU SEEN DIVERSE EDUCATORS THRIVING?

I've seen diverse educators thriving in any space where they feel safe, uniquely valued, heard, given space to make mistakes and grow, and allowed to self-advocate for and challenge things that aren't working without feeling that doing so will be a mark against the entirety of their race, culture, sexual orientation, faith, gender, etc.

I believe the first several of those attributes are super normal and fair expectations for each of us as human beings and educators entering into such a human-focused profession. That final factor is one in which diverse educators carry an obscenely disproportionate burden.

TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT THE GROW-YOUR-OWN TEACHER INITIATIVE YOU STARTED IN LOUISIANA. WHAT IS PARTICULARLY POWERFUL ABOUT A TEACHER WHO COMES FROM THE COMMUNITY THAT THEY SERVE?

In facing a global teacher shortage of around 69 million by the year 2030 according to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, recruitment of new teachers is a matter of utmost urgency to me, especially considering that it takes years to become a great teacher, and that we often lose teachers long before that evolution takes place. In Louisiana, like much of the world, we're facing major issues within our teacher pipeline in that fewer and fewer people are actually entering into it.

Some of this is because, according to polls by PDK International in 2018 and 2019, more than half of parents and even teachers actively discourage talented teens from becoming teachers. This reflects a major troubling issue in terms of appeal for a profession even though it's our only hope to ensure the other global goals.

As a whole, we do next to nothing to purposefully recruit, and we often attract new teachers with a warped perception of what it actually means to be a teacher to begin with. They enter the profession often unaware of and unprepared for the realities that exist in our highest need areas: rural, urban, special education, math, science, areas affected most by poverty, etc. Coupling lack of realistic preparation and cultural competence with our failure to also recruit for diversity, we end up with a workforce that is often not "learner ready."

In my community, we sought many different ways to address this need, and knew we needed to start sooner in terms of seeking out promising talent, exposing them to the realities and brilliant opportunities in the profession. We wanted to tap into the amazing student voice and sense of activism of Gen Z and welcome them into learning about education from a place of impact, hope and empowerment, with the hope that by helping them see all the things teaching could and should be, we would elevate our profession and attract them because of

their unique abilities to have global impact through a classroom.

With some variance, 60% of teachers work within 15 miles of where they graduated. This means they would start their preparation understanding their unique communities, adding their experiences and advocacy to larger conversations, and feel a stronger sense of connection to the outcomes for the students in that community.

Of course, hiring and expertly training a variety of talented professionals from anywhere and any background is smart and necessary! But if a community has a chance to carefully cultivate its own pipeline and help reduce or eliminate barriers to becoming a teacher, this will undoubtedly lead to powerful outcomes.

AS EDUCATORS, WHAT ARE SOME STRATEGIES WE CAN USE TO BETTER CONNECT WITH OUR COMMUNITIES TO MULTIPLY OUR IMPACT ON STUDENT SUCCESS?

I've learned over the years that our communities want to be a part of our classrooms. Oftentimes, they're just waiting to be asked. When we set out a clear vision of what we want for our learners then reach out and ask for time, expertise, resources, mentorship, etc., our communities won't let us down.

What is also fundamental is that we directly take charge of the narrative about our classroom and schools, then use every opportunity to highlight both methods and magic. For most, people think having had a teacher makes them an expert at what it

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With some variance, 60% of teachers work within 15 miles of where they graduated.



PHOTO BY J. SPLAND PHOTOGRAPHY

INTERVIEW

takes to teach. The best of us make it all look so easy.

That's why it's so important to share out the success, ongoing training, intentionality, barriers, opportunities and humanity that make each of our classrooms really flourish. The better our communities understand how much goes into our teaching and how enormous the impact we're having, the more inclined they'll be to want to take part in

that success and see us for the highly skilled, learning experts we truly are!

WHAT ARE SOME POSITIVE, AND PERHAPS PERMANENT, CHANGES OR REALIZATIONS YOU'VE SEEN COME OUT OF THE SWITCH TO ONLINE LEARNING DURING COVID-19?

I hope that a permanent, positive solution that has come out of this is what so many already knew: That we should have already been doing far more to ensure that we made family engagement and access to information a priority. I think we now see that allowing open house, events, principal or teacher conferences, forums, tutorials, etc. to exist virtually (and in addition to face to face) is just powerful best practice.

Teachers are the experts of content and teaching, where families are the experts at their children. Offering every possible opportunity, and then some, to ensure families feel like truly valued members of our team is critical. Everyone sees this now.

I also think we were forced to face and deal with the appalling inequity in access to technology head on, and now many districts are receiving and applying funding to ensure all students have devices and the internet. This gaping divide was seen for years, and now all eyes are turned to it.

It's one thing to hear far-off, seemingly nebulous factoids that "not all schools are equal." It's another thing to learn that your kid's school is teetering on the under-resourced end of the scale.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS POLICYMAKERS CAN DO TO NARROW THE EQUITY GAP THAT WIDENED DUE TO COVID-19?

An excellent place to start would be attending to the systemic failures that perpetuated the equity gap to begin with. Inequities in funding; a shortage of highly skilled, highly trained educators; inadequate resources; a lack of diverse and learner-ready school communities; low expectation



PHOTO BY BAYOU ROSE PHOTOGRAPHY

for students; implicit bias; and outright institutionalized racism.

Until we get to a place where we're having conversations about these things, asserting ownership of the problems and solutions, then implementing supports and policies that directly address reality, we won't close any gaps.

However, policymakers should never engage in these conversations without actual, living, breathing, education professionals being present. Ever. We must insist that the voices, expertise and experiences of teachers and school leaders are at the forefront of every conversation surrounding school policy.

It's completely absurd that the highly skilled professionals actually carrying out the most vital work in schools are largely absent in decision-making. Truly, nothing about this gap is new. A sudden realization that it might affect your kid is, perhaps.

Policymakers should seize this moment to ensure all students no longer fall victim to our collective apathy and willful ignorance. We know what's wrong. We know how to fix it. It's just hard. But as all teachers know, we can do hard things.

HOW DO WE BEST MAINTAIN A SENSE OF A VIBRANT LEARNING COMMUNITY WHEN WE ARE SEPARATED FROM EACH OTHER SO MUCH OF THE TIME?

This question excites me! At all times, we need to never lose sight of the fact that the most vibrant parts of any learning community are the students themselves!

Year after year, when I facilitate workshops involving technology for teachers, I always encourage them to focus on the classroom culture and outcomes they're striving for, then work backward to select the right tools to accomplish that.

Never has that been more sound. If we redouble our commitment to place students at the center of their learning, create learning

experiences interlocking content, empower them, and allow for curiosity and learning, then it just becomes a matter of selecting the right tools to support those commitments.

While I may not be able to give my students hugs or solid high fives, I can still build in collaboration, student-to-student interaction, student voice and choice, feedback, agency and all the things that are central to my class. I've even mastered the virtual, air high five. 🙌

“

Offering every possible opportunity, and then some, to ensure families feel like truly valued members of our team is critical.



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THE PARENT CONNECTION

Bringing families along
on the edtech journey

By Jennifer Snelling

Herman Perez has twin sixth graders in Texas' McAllen Independent School District. He's used to seeing them hop on the school-issued iPads for homework. Last spring, when the pandemic hit and McAllen closed, the Perez twins picked right up at home where they left off at school.

Perez attended a virtual session through the school district, learning how to help his kids with iPads and apps they would need to continue school from home. "There was communication daily with their teachers," he says. "We went from doing school one way forever to, OK, we're going to do it differently today."

Due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, remote and blended learning is a reality for the Perez twins and families around the world. While Perez was not exactly anti-technology before remote learning, he thought of it more as a supplementary tool. "Now, it's a necessity," he says. "It's not just a neat little add-on."

Even before the emergency distance learning experiment took place last spring, technology use in schools was rising. Fueled by the hope of transforming education into a more student-centered and inspired experience, 59% of high schools and 63% of middle schools reported that all of their students had access to non-shared devices, according to a 2018 report by the Consortium for School Networking (bit.ly/3g6Yw2N).

Today, increasing numbers of educators see the benefits of tech-enabled learning. Unlike Perez, many parents are not on board. It remains to be seen whether the experience with online learning will bring new insight into the potential of technology or inspire a backlash.

THE PARENT CONNECTION

Now, more than ever, parents worry that substituting a device for face-to-face interactions will cause social skills to suffer and a loss in information retention.

The hurried transitions to remote learning undertaken without much preparation, planning or intentionality may provide fodder for skeptical parents. Those parents, many of whom were forced to use tech as a babysitter or watch their teens sink hours a day into TikTok, may be ready to revolt.

Before online learning became commonplace, parent viewpoints varied widely. Research in 2019 by Jessica Kamp and Ja'Corie Maxwell from the University of Oklahoma found that many parents feared teachers were using technology as a substitute for best practices in the classroom. The study found parents were worried about the early age at which students were exposed to technology, the increasing amount of screen time and the adequacy of monitoring of that technology.

Some parents understood that the emergency transition to remote learning would not address many of these concerns.

Still, the Los Angeles Unified School District released results of a survey of almost 7,300 parents in one of six sub-districts (bit.ly/30TUKmS). While three-quarters of the respondents said the district did a good or excellent job “managing the situation of school closures caused by the coronavirus,” 46% of respondents felt that distance learning had been somewhat or extremely unsuccessful for their family. Only half felt “very confident” they have the equipment and “technological know-how” to help their child successfully participate in distance learning.

Now, more than ever, parents worry that substituting a device for face-to-face interactions will cause social skills to suffer and a loss in information retention. If technology is no longer an optional part of school, how can educators enlist parents as partners in making education exceptional?

Safety first

Perez's twins started school in McAllen ISD before the district had it all figured out. When Ann Vega, McAllen's director of instructional technology, arrived five years ago, she found a mess. Each student had their own Apple ID, and there was not nearly enough supervision. Fourth graders were downloading Snapchat. Parents were, understandably, frustrated.

Now, McAllen students are allowed to download only district-approved apps from the McAllen ISD app store. The district also has outside filtering so that a student using Wi-Fi from, say, Starbucks on a school device is routed through the district's filtering system. If parents suspect their student is watching something they shouldn't, the district can run a report that shows searches or everything watched on the district device.

“As we've gotten better at managing those devices, parents have become more confident in allowing kids to bring the devices home,” says Vega.



To keep parents up to date on how the district uses and monitors technology, Vega makes informational videos and posts them on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Every August, the district holds a professional development seminar for teachers called Technovate that focuses on how to use the tools. Last fall, the district invited parents, and 350 attended.

Acknowledging parental safety concerns can go a long way toward building trust.

Amelia Archer, a teacher at Purley Church of England Primary School in Berkshire, England, holds annual tech nights for parents. She starts by discussing risk.

“The internet is not always safe, but neither are the roads,” Archer writes in an ISTE blog post. “I share with parents that the way to help children navigate roads safely is to ensure they are taught properly and have the opportunity to practice under guidance. In the same way that keeping children away from roads would severely constrict their freedom, keeping them from internet access would also be to confine them.”

Archer’s tech evenings include an introduction, a hands-on session where parents can use the same tools their children use in school, asking parents to do simple coding activities, create a Padlet or undertake a math challenge.

Show what tech can do

The idea of digital devices at school may conjure images of the distracted kids parents see at home. Addressing that concern head-on and transparency about how devices are used in the classroom can make a big difference. The grand finale of Archer’s tech evenings is student work. She shows off to oohs and aahs what students are creating with the tools.

Cathy Yenca, a math teacher at Hill Country Middle School in Austin, Texas, says seeing is believing for many parents. “Share what tech can do! The pedagogy, the

good strategies we use, and good teaching should stand alone without tech,” she says. “The beauty of having tech is the ability to monitor students’ thinking in the moment and have that inform my next instructional move, as well as help students become more metacognitive in their own thinking.”

Yenca, also known as the blogger Mathy-Cathy, says distance learning has increased her appreciation of edtech. Teachers at her school had eight years of experience with their devices and tools, and students were already comfortable using devices before the quick transition. So they were more fortunate than others who had to scramble to catch up.

She emphasizes that good learning is a very social activity. Regardless of whether students are in a classroom or connect through technology, tech can gather and organize what students are thinking anonymously through formative assessment; digital breakout groups can allow students to collaborate with peers; and AI-powered software can determine how much each student understands before taking the next academic step.

While the emergency transition worked well for Yenca and other teachers whose families were familiar with their edtech philosophy and usage pre-COVID, it was not a great experience for many other families.

Carl Hooker, author of the ISTE book *Mobile Learning Mindset: The Parent’s Guide to Supporting Digital Age Learners* (bit.ly/3jI0tos), says parents will be on board this fall if they see best teaching practices are still happening through the screen. This means asynchronous, project-based assignments where students can deeply explore a topic or create something using mixed media.

On the other hand, parents will appreciate some synchronous learning to take pressure off and ensure that students maintain a relationship with teachers and fellow students.

“At the end of the last school year, many schools were finding a sweet spot with a mix of class meetings and one-on-one time,” he says. “If you want to keep screen time warriors at bay, you have to be intentional about how you are using it and why.”

How do I...?

Amelia Archer spent the week before school closures in the UK meeting with a stream of parents with devices in hand so she could personally show them how to install and access Google Classroom. “Some brought in laptops, others tablets or mobile phones,” she says. “But I even had one parent bring me a calculator!”

Clearly, some parents started without any knowledge at all about technology. A survey by Learning Heroes (belearninghero.org/research) showed a gap between what parents said would be “extremely helpful” and the resources available. For example, 39% of parents said having a hotline or online chat function to ask questions about helping with online learning would be helpful, but only 12% said their school has such a service. And 80% of parents say a text is the most effective method of communication, but only 28% said this is how educators contact them.

Ninety percent of teacher headaches this past spring were caused by helping parents and kids with logins. Hooker said he recommends creating a one-page cheat sheet with all the logins to share with families.

In districts that are not 1:1, it’s important to make things easy for families using various devices. Some students in Canada’s Toronto District use cell phones as their primary device, so the district offered a course for teachers in designing tasks, documents and sharing from mobile devices.

“It’s important to realize that families are on a spectrum of digital fluency,” says Jason Trinh, assistant curriculum numeracy and secondary science teacher in the district.

THE PARENT CONNECTION

Educators should reach out to families to find the mode of communication that works best for each family.

“We have a wide spectrum of knowledge, devices and competency. Our district focuses on using tools that are versatile in every platform. Google Classroom works on every device, so there are no barriers. We also have a lot of rural areas with intermittent access, so we ensure the tech we use has off-line capability.”

Trinh produces single-page instructions to use technology like Google Meet and other common tools. The district holds webinars for families and educators about digital platforms, offers a direct tech support line to families and hosts regular office hours for teachers assisting families with tech issues.

Addressing equity

Digital fluency is not the only equity issue among families, of course. Families with

education and resources may have an easier time adapting to new technology use by their child’s teacher. Reaching all families, including those whose parents work long hours, don’t speak English, or have less experience with technology, may mean differentiating the mode of communication. Educators should reach out to families to find the mode of communication that works best for each family.

Trinh says using email, text, social media, mail and phone can ensure that parents who are too busy to check social media or don’t regularly check email will still get the information. Make sure electronic information is mobile friendly, and share recordings of any live information sessions to reach those who can’t attend.

Translating for non-native English speakers is non-negotiable for achieving



more equity. This can be done easily by demonstrating how to use the translate document feature in Google Docs, using text translation such as Talking Points (talkingpts.org) or providing subtitles for all videos.

Don't let relationships suffer, even at a distance

In study after study, the relationship of the teacher to the student is the most critical factor for parents. The top concern for 59% of the parents responding to the Learning Heroes study was their child's lack of in-person connections.

"The thing we have to remember is that relationships are the key thing," says Trinh. "Students may not remember your lesson on triangles, but they remember their interactions with you. Parents look to teachers to build that positive relationship, which is, of course, more challenging in a remote phase."

If parents feel technology is used as a substitute for their child's relationship with their teacher, they will remain skeptical of edtech. Some of this fear can be addressed by daily video contact with students, both as a group and as individuals.

For Archer, daily interactions with her students during remote learning both helped break down the workload into manageable chunks and facilitated a sense of connectedness with the teacher and each other.

"In this way, students have been able to continue learning – and having daily interaction with their classroom teacher – even during lockdown," she says. "I think this has also served to draw parents into their children's learning, too."

Let students lead

After gaining parent trust by reassuring them of technology's safety, demonstrating what tech can help their kids do and keeping a

personal connection with students – even if it's only by video – it's time to let students teach their parents!

Archer did this by asking students to lead iPad workshops for senior citizens in the community. Students showed the seniors how to unlock the photographic, video and communication potential of their devices.

"The workshops offer lonely people an opportunity to meet with our school youngsters, facilitate genuinely useful learning for both parties and help to rectify the misconception that digital devices are solely for gaming and entertainment purposes," she says.

Craig Kemp, an educator and edtech consultant who lives in Singapore, says hearing about tech from a kid's perspective can make a big difference. As a classroom teacher, Kemp organized a social media session where kids answered parent questions about social media usage. The only rule was that they couldn't be at the same table as their child. The session feedback was extremely positive, and the demand was high for follow-up sessions. While the first session was dedicated to social media, the discussions naturally moved into technology as a tool. The sessions now involve all aspects of technology that students feel are relevant. Students lead the development of the sessions, which happen every other month.

"Parent education sessions are critical," says Kemp. "If you don't have their buy-in, they won't be able to support you on this journey. You won't get them all, but the ones you will get will share their voice across your community and build over time. Start with what they want to hear and know."

Parents as education partners

The Learning Heroes poll found that two-thirds of surveyed parents were more involved with their child's education during the pandemic than ever before. Parents

have always been part of the learning team for a child, and that has never been more critical than now.

For that reason, offering parents professional development that's similar to what teachers get can be helpful. Not only can such sessions help parents understand the value of edtech, they can also help bridge the knowledge gap. This is especially true of parents with young children who need help navigating platforms.

PD can be especially useful, says Trinh, if it comes from the teacher. Educators are often just becoming familiar with these new tools themselves, so learning together can be a bonding experience. It can also be an opportunity to model perseverance and a growth mindset when those inevitable glitches happen.

"Parents now realize technology is going to be a part of education," says Trinh. "It's always been a team between parents and teachers, although we had lost sight of that. Now, we need to foster those relationships and empower parents and guardians to engage in learning in a different way. There is an opportunity to be brought closer together while being further apart." ❖

FROM HER HOME IN THE NORTHWEST, JENNIFER SNELLING (@JDSNELLJENNIFER) WRITES ABOUT EDUCATORS USING TECHNOLOGY TO EMPOWER STUDENTS AND CHANGE THE WAY WE LEARN.

Computational thinking plays big role in learning about moral development

By Jerry Fingal

In teaching 10th graders about the law, Katrina Traylor Rice starts with the basics: How do we know what's right and what's wrong?

In her Introduction to the Law and Speech Communication class, she posits that judges and lawyers must have a well-developed sense of ethics and integrity in order for the justice system to operate fairly.

Rice guides her students as they peel back the layers on right and wrong. One of the first questions: What is morality?

"Of course, the quick answer is that it's doing the right thing," she says. "Well, how do you know that what you're doing is the right thing? And what about in those situations where there might be two right things to do, or where there's two wrong things to do?"

She poses ethical thought problems to her students in real time using polling software.

"As students completed the survey, we could see their responses on the presentation screen," she says. "This was especially interesting when our students were split on a moral dilemma because we could see that they were split right away, and then we knew that was a good jumping-off point for a discussion on that particular dilemma."

How students address those ethical quandaries require them to tease out the moral questions involved and apply their own sense of right and wrong.

"It helps them understand that you have to think everything through," she explains. "It shows how much consideration you have to give any dilemma to understand the outcome, the consequences and the impact that it has on people."



ILLUSTRATIONS BY KATRINA TRAYLOR RICE

The students also see how historical figures such as Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks defied society's rules in the name of justice.

"They do understand that this is what we want in our society, not just people who follow the rules or follow along, but that if there are unjust things happening, we need people to try to actively change those things if we want to move society forward," she says.

Rice's students might be learning about the law but they're also practicing computational thinking, which requires breaking down a problem into its component parts. In doing so, they're addressing the ISTE Standard for Students, Computational Thinker 5c: *Students break problems into component parts, extract key information and develop descriptive models to understand complex systems or facilitate problem-solving.*

"The goal is that the students are able to extract the key ideas of the topic of moral reasoning," she says. "That's going to look different for every project, which is fine, particularly since we get to watch all the projects and see all the different ways the students were able to extract information and then share it back with us."

The second part of Rice's morality unit calls on students to tap their creative powers.

Students come up with a morality tale that they bring to life through an artistic endeavor, such as a video, comic strip, dramatic monologue, puppet show, rap song or a children's story. Rice offered students 20 creative options, but they could also choose something else.

Although not all projects have a tech component, technology opens up the possibilities for what they can create, she said.

"By giving them the option of creating a social media page, they were able to engage with platforms that are familiar and comfortable for them. They effectively became 'social media influencers' that advocated for morality as opposed to selling products. Some students used the iPad to create documents like pamphlets or brochures that they could easily share with students."

The projects often involve issues students face in their lives, such as standing up to bullies or peer pressure to not be a snitch or feeling like an outcast for taking an unpopular stand.

"It shows me how they're applying and extracting the ideas of moral reasoning and development and applying it to the experiences they currently have," she says.

Why it works

It forces students to think deeply.

Part of the project requires students to consider where their sense of morality comes from. Their parents? Their peers? A fear of punishment? And that requires them to come to conclusions that apply only to them.

They also see that being on the wrong side the law can be the right side. They see how historical figures such as Susan B. Anthony, Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks defied society's rules in the name of justice.

The concepts apply to their own lives.

The projects often involve issues students face in their lives, such as bullying or taking an unpopular stand.

"They're taking what they are learning and thinking about how it impacts their daily lives and how they're making decisions."

It offers a chance to exercise creativity.

Projects have included videos in which classmates play the roles, a recitation of a series of poems, a Monopoly-like game with squares that pose moral questions and social media pages in which social media influencers promote high moral reasoning instead of consumer products.

"One thing that's really great is that when it's time to watch presentations, you're watching so many different presentations," she says. "It's not just PowerPoint after PowerPoint after PowerPoint." ❖

JERRY FINGAL IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND EDITOR SPECIALIZING IN EDUCATION, BUSINESS AND FINANCE.





TEACHING **ANTI**-RACISM

We've reached a watershed moment in racial history. What will educators choose to do with it?

By Nicole Krueger

When high school junior Jadyn Page first watched the video of George Floyd's death at the hands of police, she sobbed for 20 minutes. Then she got angry. Then she took action.

The Ohio student organized a socially distanced Students Against Racism Forum in a local park. Kids of all ages approached the open mic to share their stories. Teachers and administrators from Heath City Schools took notes. A panel of local allies answered questions.

"It's not enough to say, 'I'm not racist,'" said panelist Dr. Talya Greathouse, a family practice physician at Licking Memorial Hospital. "It needs to be, 'I'm *anti*-racist.'"

Across the United States, students and educators are not just speaking out against racism – they're taking action to fight it. It's a watershed moment in history, as COVID-19's disparate impact on people of

color dovetails with brutal images of Black people killed by police. Generations of trauma, much of it inflicted by white educational institutions, has boiled to the surface in a wave of anti-racism protests, sparking conversations that, for many educators and leaders of color, are long overdue.

"I think that this moment is a wakeup call for many," says consultant Cheyenne Batista, who advises districts and other organizations on dismantling inequities. "For those of us who have been on the receiving end of injustice or lived a lifetime in the margins, a lot of this conversation is not easy, and a lot is not new. It's a reckoning, a moment to consider the ways in which white dominant culture has had an impact on students, curriculum, day-to-day practices, family engagement and social-emotional learning."

It's also a chance for educators to scrutinize their own biases, as well the biases

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We don't want the only way that teachers get to know their kids to be through the academic work they do.

embedded in the institutions they serve and the technology they use, to root out systemic racism and determine what role education can play in building an anti-racist society.

“We need to unlearn what we’ve come to learn about schools and curriculum,” Batista says. “Any elements of education students experience – from the structure of the curriculum to what we’ve come to understand is strong pedagogy to the ways school schedules are designed and grades are assigned – are really informed by an institutional culture so baked in we can’t imagine otherwise. With COVID-19 forcing us to reimagine school schedules, curriculum and pedagogy, it’s a real opportunity to unlearn what we’ve come to learn.”

The task is massive, and not everyone agrees on where to start. Some believe it needs to happen from the top down, beginning with eliminating district policies that perpetuate a systemic culture of racism.

“We have to replace racist policy with anti-racist policy,” says Rann Miller, director of the 21st Century Community Learning Center, a federally funded after-school program in New Jersey. “We have to make schools a space where whiteness isn’t the default. It requires white educators to be un-

comfortable, and I’m not sure they’re ready to be uncomfortable.”

Others believe change needs to happen at the individual level first.

“What is hard for people to understand is that it’s about what happens in a classroom,” says Patricia Brown, technology specialist for Ladue School District in St. Louis, Missouri, and a member of the ISTE Board of Directors. “People want to say it needs to be a systematic change within the district, but what needs to happen first is people need to look at their own internal biases and their own experiences and think about how they’re treating the student right in front of them.”

COVID-19 and the digital divide

Before the pandemic forced schools to transition to remote learning, education consultant and former principal Wiley Brazier V was already spotting some glaring problems with education technology that could disproportionately affect students of color. It started when his son’s work didn’t show up in his teacher’s online learning platform.

“I’m a tech guy. I said, ‘That’s not us, that’s you.’ I’m sitting there with him, watching it, taking pictures and screenshots and texting them to the teacher. After all of that, he was still having issues in the system. Finally, after a month of this going back and forth, for some reason it just fixed itself.”

No matter how many safeguards are in place, he says, technology can still fail. When it does, how many students of color have tech-savvy adults who can advocate for them – especially in a remote learning environment, where they’re largely cut off from counselors, principals and other adults they could previously have turned to?

“Let’s say, for instance, I’m not a tech guru. Or I’m a student and I don’t have a parent who’s vocal like that. Now that we’re



PHOTO BY ALLISON SHELLEY FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION: IMAGES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN ACTION

doing school virtually, what supports are there for those kids? I'm just highly concerned about that," Brazier says.

When it comes to racism, technology can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, mobile devices and social media platforms can be powerful tools for capturing and exposing racist behavior, empowering students and parents of color to widely share their experiences with racism. On the other hand, they can also play a role in perpetuating the problem. Social media algorithms surface increasingly extreme content, sometimes leading users down a rabbit hole of racial extremism. Biases unintentionally programmed into artificial intelligence can lead to disastrous consequences for people of color. And educators such as Brazier fear the disconnect from face-to-face interaction is jeopardizing the ability to empathize – a critical factor in combating racism.

"When you take away the physical presence, it can leave a void for teachers to be able to get to know kids on a more personal level. You may not get the level of inquisitiveness that will happen naturally in a classroom. We don't want the only way that teachers get to know their kids to be through the academic work they do."

On top of that, digital equity issues continue to plague families of color. As COVID-19 shut down schools across the globe, the digital divide between privileged and underprivileged students became glaringly obvious. Disparities in technology access left schools scrambling to deliver devices and Wi-Fi connections to children of color and low-income households. In California, for example, a parent poll by The Education Trust–West found that 42% of families of color lacked sufficient devices at home to access online learning, and 29% were concerned because they didn't have a reliable internet connection.

"Black students may or may not have access to the internet," Miller says. "They may or may not have access to computers.

They're less likely to have the ability to log in and do the work. And particularly for older students, and this is across the board, high school students have not really been signing in. So there's definitely a disconnect on top of the racism that has fueled the way in which we educate Black students in this country. Students are coming back to the school year, and maybe even next year too, at a deficit, and it's not anything of their doing. Racism has created these conditions, and COVID only makes it worse."

But it's not just technology access that's creating a deficit for students of color. Education consultant Desiree Alexander refers to the digital use divide, an equity gap that isn't about devices and Wi-Fi so much as the disparity in access to teachers who are trained to teach effectively with them. There's a big difference between digitized worksheets or drill-and-practice testing versus creative projects that harness technology for deeper learning – and students are more likely to encounter the latter at predominantly white schools.

"We are creating digitally illiterate students, and we think we're doing good because we're giving them 1:1 laptops," she says. "You can give me a laptop or a phone or an iPad, but if I don't learn how to use them for both education and business, then they're just placeholders. Districts say, 'We don't have a digital divide because we have a Wi-Fi bus.' That's great, now who's teaching them how to use it, to go deeper with it and to create with it?"

Miller worries about how far the opportunity gap will widen for Black students after the challenges they faced while learning remotely. How many Black students will be held back without being given the opportunity to improve? How many rising Black ninth graders will be barred from honors courses when they return to school in the fall? And how many will be disproportionately punished for perceived unruliness after missing months of school?

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Students are coming back to the school year, and maybe even next year too, at a deficit, and it's not anything of their doing. Racism has created these conditions, and COVID only makes it worse.

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I think if you try to ‘fix’ your students, you’re going to fail.

To counteract the effects of the digital divide, which have been amplified by COVID-19, it’s critical for teachers to become aware of the internal biases that often unfairly place the onus on students of color to overcome the equity gap.

“A lot of times, people have what I call a myth that there’s an academic achievement gap” when it comes to students of color, Brown says, “To me, that is looking at our students in a deficit model, as if the students are the reason for this gap. I think there are opportunity gaps. There are access gaps.

“I think if you try to ‘fix’ your students, you’re going to fail. Students are not the problem. Students are not the deficit. We need to look at the systems and the programming and the strategies that have been put in place and think about how we can change

that so the adults are changing their behavior and not looking for students to do that.”

Creating anti-racist classrooms

While the Black Lives Matter movement swelled in outrage over the killing of George Floyd, students began leveraging social media platforms to call out racist behavior among their peers. Videos of fellow students using racial slurs or engaging in cultural appropriation surfaced and went viral, forcing many educators to examine the educational environments that had allowed such behavior to flourish.

“What our students encounter on a day-to-day basis in a lot of schools and a lot of classrooms is trauma,” Brown says.



PHOTO BY ALLISON SHELLEY FOR AMERICAN EDUCATION:
IMAGES OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN ACTION

Just how deeply is racism embedded in schools? Students, parents and educators report seeing it everywhere, from curricula and pedagogies biased toward white students to inequities in technology availability and tech-enhanced instruction to disciplinary and testing policies that disproportionately impact students of color – all of which can hamper their ability to fulfill their academic potential.

District policies such as bringing police into schools, for example, contribute to a racist environment by unfairly targeting Black students, Miller says.

“Black students are negatively impacted when police are in schools. There are videos of police abusing Black students, and civil rights data shows Black students more than anyone else are arrested in school.”

Disciplinary policies also have a disproportionate impact on Black students, who are far more likely to be suspended or expelled than white students, according to the National Center for Education Statistics.

“A lot of school districts are engaging in discussions about restorative justice instead of immediately suspending a kid so students don’t lose time from the classroom,” says Miller, who would also like to see schools do away with standardized testing, which decades of research have proven detrimental to Black, Latino and Native American students, as well as students from some Asian groups, according to the National Education Association.

Not all of the necessary changes require district-level intervention.

“There are several things teachers can do in the classroom to provide a culturally diverse environment, from the posters on the wall to the books on your shelves to the stories you highlight,” Brown says. “It’s about being very intentional about what you choose and why you choose it – not just going with that cookie-cutter curriculum but digging deeper and finding ways to connect with students.”



Before teachers can create classrooms that foster anti-racism, however, they first need to confront their own biases and become culturally fluent.

“The No. 1 training we need is bias training,” Alexander says. “If you can’t look at yourself and recognize your own bias, none of this is going to work. You are biased; it’s part of being human. Trainings provide a safe space to sit and look at that bias and then take it a step further to determine how it’s affecting your actions. How am I making decisions according to my bias, and how is it hurtful to my students?”

But the effort can’t end there. Anti-racism isn’t something schools can teach only during Black History Month ([bit.ly/30dclHk](#)) or as a response to current events, Miller says. It needs to be embedded in the fabric of the district.

“If we’re always doing it as part of our everyday curriculum and instruction and strategy, it just becomes part of what we do,” Brown says. “Look at the makeup of your students and think about how to incorporate different voices, perspectives and lenses; it’s just a natural thing you should do anyway. No matter what the makeup of your students

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If you can’t look at yourself and recognize your own bias, none of this is going to work. You are biased; it’s part of being human.

is, whether it's a full class of white children or children of color, those lenses and areas of learning should still be diverse in how you present that information to students."

Teaching with an anti-racist and culturally responsive viewpoint can put teachers, especially white teachers, in a vulnerable position as they grapple with their own biases – sometimes publicly. But Alexander encourages them to lean into the vulnerability.

"We all have to start somewhere," she says. "You're not going to suddenly become a Black Panther overnight. You're going to make mistakes, and you can tell your students, 'I may make mistakes because of my privilege, and I need you to call me on it.' Being honest with students and giving them license and permission to call you on stuff – teachers feel they can't do that. They feel they'll lose their perceived control. It's about giving up that perceived control and saying, 'Hey, let's go through this journey together.'" ❏

NICOLE KRUEGER IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND JOURNALIST WITH A PASSION FOR FINDING OUT WHAT MAKES LEARNERS TICK.



Resources for teaching anti-racism

For educators who want to teach students to look past their biases and develop an anti-racist mindset, the following resources can help:

Teaching Tolerance: Discover lesson plans, teaching strategies, instructional and professional learning with an emphasis on anti-bias and social justice. [tolerance.org](https://www.tolerance.org)

National Museum of African American History and Culture: Access tools and guidance to help facilitate conversations about the history of race in America. s.si.edu/301FmWo

Teaching for Change: Find professional development, curriculum and curated resources to help build a more equitable, multicultural society. teachingforchange.org

Project Implicit: Expand your awareness of stereotypes through online tests designed to help you identify your implicit biases. bit.ly/3hAPtY8

The Children's Community School: Engage young children in dialogue about race and diversity with the help of this infographic, created by a Philadelphia preschool. childrenscommunityschool.org/justice

The 1619 Project: Teach older students about the history of slavery through essays and literary works by black writers. nyti.ms/3g5Djq6

The empowered learner is a learner with agency

By Kathleen McClaskey

What does it mean to be an empowered learner? Of all the ISTE Standards for Students, the first standard, Empowered Learner, is perhaps the most intriguing and the most misunderstood.

This standard is defined as: *Students leveraging technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving and demonstrating competency in their learning goals, informed by the learning sciences.*

But what does taking an active role in choosing, achieving and demonstrating competency mean, and what does it look like in the physical or virtual classroom? Does it

mean students decide exactly what to study and how to show what they've learned?

Well, yes and no. It means the learner has the ability to take any competency, explain how they will demonstrate achievement and then show their understanding by choosing a way they can best express their mastery by using tools (or not using tools).

This description of the Empowered Learner standard is the *what* and that begs for the *how*. How can we empower each learner to leverage digital tools to develop agency in their learning using the learning sciences?

Before I dive into the how, let's first define what agency is and why it matters, and then let's take a look at how we can empower learners to leverage technology to support their learning.

What should we promise each learner? The answer is "agency." In the simplest terms, agency is "the power to act."

Agency empowers each learner to take ownership of learning, to have voice and choice with the understanding and ability to take action around their learning. Agency flourishes in learning-centered environments where the culture is built on trust, respect and mindfulness.

For a young learner, agency is evident when the learner can articulate a learning target and explain how they will show mastery. For older learners, agency is present when they design a project based upon their interests, choose the tools and resources for the design, plan and collaborate with peers, and present a self-assessment of their project.

How do we use the learning sciences to empower the learner?

In the research report, "Designing for Learning Primer" from Transcend Inc., the factors that impact learning are:

Identity: This is how individuals make meaning of their unique combination of personality, physical characteristics, group membership, values, beliefs, attitudes and life experiences. Identity development is at the core of adolescent social and emotional development.



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To help each learner develop their identity and how they learn, the first step is to develop a Learner Profile.

Variability: This describes the way learners bring a unique array of knowledge, strengths, challenges, preferences and experiences in how they access and process information, the way they engage with content and concepts, and the way they express what they know and understand.

Cognition: This involves the set of processes by which individuals take in both new and familiar stimuli from the work around them, process these stimuli into memories and retrieve these memories to inform day-to-day decisions and actions.

Motivation: This means the willingness to start, put in mental effort and persist even in the face of challenges.

Let’s focus on identity and variability. We know that we learn best when we have a deep understanding of who we are and can use this to maximize our learning. We also know that we learn best when our unique learning needs are identified and resources

and supports are aligned with these needs. We need to empower the learner to develop a deeper understanding of their own strengths and challenges in learning so we can help them to develop the skills using digital tools to support their own learning. It begins with each learner developing a Learner Profile.

What is a Learner Profile

To help each learner develop their identity and how they learn, the first step is to develop a Learner Profile. By using the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), we can empower the learner to understand and share their specific strengths and challenges in how they access and process information, how they engage with content and concepts, and how they express what they know and understand. This is called the UDL lens of access, engage and express.

HOW I LEARN			
UDL LENS	STRENGTHS	CHALLENGES	PREFERENCES & NEEDS
ACCESS	- I can visualize what I hear. - I connect to ideas I already know.	- I often do not understand what I read. - I have trouble focusing.	- I need to use a text-to-speech tool for reading. - I prefer to use video for understanding.
ENGAGE	- I like to lead others. - I work well with others.	- I don’t like doing difficult tasks. - I have a difficult time organizing a project.	- I need tasks to be broken down into smaller tasks. - I prefer to work with a partner.
EXPRESS	- I draw what I am thinking. - I like telling stories orally. - I am a good presenter and speaker.	- I have trouble putting thoughts to paper. - I find note taking is difficult.	- I need to use a note-taking tool. - I prefer graphic organizers to help me organize ideas.

My Learner Profile

With that deep understanding, they can now take ownership of their learning by sharing their personal learning story in an open conversation with their teacher. From that conversation, they can create a Personal Learning Backpack, which will include the tools and apps along with the skills so they can support their own learning.

Personal Learning Backpack

Consider the unique learning strengths, challenges, preferences and needs of a learner you may know and the digital resources and supports that are aligned with these needs. A common example would be a learner with a challenge in independently reading at grade level. Whether in the classroom or an online environment, this learner would need to have access to the materials in a digital format and they would need a text-to-speech tool like texthelp's Read & Write, along with the skills to use that tool independently. The tool and the skills become a part of their Personal Learning Backpack.

This process allows learners to share what they understand about their own

learning, and maybe for the first time, reveals the social and emotional side of their learning. This new insight, along with testing data and competencies met, offers a fuller picture of who the learner is.

Let's take a closer look at the Empowered Learner indicators and how this process supports two of the indicators.

1a Students articulate and set personal learning goals, develop strategies leveraging technology to achieve them and reflect on the learning process itself to improve learning outcomes.

1c Students use technology to seek feedback that informs and improves their practice and to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways.

WHO I AM

I am really good at math. For fun, I like to play video and board games. When I am not in school, I like to go snowboarding. One special thing about me is that I like acting. What I am most proud of is my skill in playing chess. I want to make a difference for animals in animal shelters.

My cultural background: Italian and Irish

Words that best describe me: Curious, imaginative, independent, artistic, friendly, optimistic

My interests and aspirations: I am interested in soccer, baseball and history. I am talented in storytelling, public speaking, drawing, connecting the dots and mental math. I am passionate about fishing, and I aspire to have my own business one day that helps animals.

Adapted from Chapter 4 of How to Personalize Learning (Bray & McClaskey, 2017)

MY LEARNER PROFILE		MY PERSONAL LEARNING BACKPACK	
UDL LENS	Strength or Challenge, Preference or Need	Tools, Apps or Resources	Learning Skills and Strategies
ACCESS	I have a difficult time reading.	Text-to-speech (TTS) app: texthelp Read & Write	I want to learn how to use this TTS app so I can independently read book and digital materials, highlight notes, understand the content and adjust speed of reading.

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This process allows learners to share what they understand about their own learning, and maybe for the first time, reveals the social and emotional side of their learning.

Personal Learning Plan

Let's say a learner wants to work on an *access* challenge involving reading. The teacher and learner will talk about the steps to achieve that goal. This becomes the Personal Learning Plan. As the learner works on the goal, she has weekly check-ins with her teacher. Once she gains the skills around the tool, she reflects on how using this tool has impacted her daily learning practice.

A unique time and opportunity

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted students in so many negative ways. But this difficult time also presents a unique opportunity to empower learners in acquiring

the skills, knowledge and practices to support their own learning using digital tools and resources so they can become lifelong learners.

This should be our promise for every child: Empower learners with agency! 

KATHLEEN MCCLASKEY (@KHMMC) IS CO-AUTHOR OF *MAKE LEARNING PERSONAL* AND *HOW TO PERSONALIZE LEARNING*. SHE IS THE FOUNDER AND UDL PERSONALIZED LEARNING CONSULTANT OF MAKE LEARNING PERSONAL, CEO OF EMPOWER THE LEARNER AND AN ISTE MEMBER FOR OVER 30 YEARS. LEARN MORE AT KATHLEENMCCLASKEY.COM.

PERSONAL LEARNING PLAN

ACCESS GOAL

I want to learn how to use a TTS app to support me in reading books, online resources and classroom materials in addition to taking notes.

Evidence of reaching my goal: Demonstration of independent reading and note taking of assigned reading.

STEPS

1. Set a schedule to work with a tutor or parent to learn the TTS app.
2. Read textbook, assigned novel or online content using the TTS app.

Date Achieved:

Reflection on achieving my access goal: After learning how to use the TTS app, it became so much easier for me to understand what I am reading, along with having access to all my remote learning materials and books.

RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

*Brandon Olszewski, Ph.D.,
shares the outcomes of research
into bringing the ISTE Standards
to more classrooms.*

Research provides a road map to making the ISTE Standards a reality in schools

By Brandon Olszewski, Ph.D.

Since their initial release in the 1990s, the ISTE Standards have set a high bar for educators and education leaders around the world who are seeking to evolve traditional models of teaching and learning. Generally, the goal for educators has been to offer students experiences that give them agency in the content and format of their learning, and provide learning opportunities grounded in authentic, real-world examples.

In this vein, the ISTE Standards provide a road map for redefining teaching and learning. For example, the Empowered Learner standard in the ISTE Standards for Students reminds us that it's helpful for students to participate in defining their own learning goals and processes. This is a powerful reminder on many fronts: that learning goals and objectives should be central to any learning process; that the approach to

reaching such goals is malleable and can vary based on learners and their contexts; and that practices informed by the learning sciences (such as providing feedback that's specific, actionable and understood) can be instrumental in reaching learning goals.

One perplexing problem has been how to make the standards a reality in schools. ISTE Standards guide books and ISTE Certification for Educators offer onramps that



RESEARCH CONNECTIONS

help, but educators have also been asking fundamental questions about how much access to technology is required before you can start to see the impact of the ISTE Standards on the classroom. Do you need to be 1:1? Do your students need home access? Do you need to use technology tools every day? Do you need particular kinds of devices?

New research supports the conclusion that it's much more about what you do *with* the technology that you have than *how much* technology you have to work with. This conclusion provides a concrete basis for how to make the ISTE Standards a reality in schools.

My colleague, Helen Crompton, Ph.D., and I recently published an article in *Computers & Education* (bit.ly/3eShatG) shedding new light on these issues. This article was the first targeted effort at demonstrating valid, reliable measurement of the standards and the ways that technology access, use and systems shape their implementation in the classroom.

This research supports the following ideas:

1. Rather than focusing on the amount of technology access you currently have, it's more important to focus on *how you're using* the resources and access you have to support the standards in the classroom. The statistically significant relationship between use of digital applications and the ISTE Standards in our study supports this conclusion. So when it comes to digital age learning for your students, what you do with the technology you have is more important than your level of access.
2. The ISTE Standards are a powerful tool to transform classroom instruction from a teacher-centered model to one that's centered around students and

their interests. There are ways to validly and reliably measure this, thus giving teachers concrete ideas for how to change the teaching and learning experience. The methods we used in our research support this conclusion.

3. Finally, a takeaway for leaders is that even in schools that have less access to resources, if you commit to applying the ISTE Essential Conditions (bit.ly/2Xo8Qfl), you can make major progress on implementing the ISTE Standards. In fact, we found that, statistically, it mattered much more whether or not your organization was focusing on improving its capacity to lead educational technology initiatives than whether you're a 1:1 school, whether you have a high free and reduced-price lunch student population, or whether or not you're a public or private school. This doesn't mean that equitable access (including devices) doesn't matter, but rather that if you focus on the conditions that support digital age learning today, you can make an immediate impact.

CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

When it comes to applying these findings to the classroom and school, we need to think concretely and get away from the idea that to address the standards, teachers must "use technology." Instead, let's focus on what teachers and leaders can do today to inspire practical change.

DON'T WAIT FOR MORE TECHNOLOGY ACCESS TO GET STARTED

It's not unreasonable to think, "Once I get those new laptops, I'll be able to do so many new things with my students!" But don't wait for that. Instead, start somewhere,

perhaps with one standard, and build from there. Take a lesson you already love and reshape it with the standards in mind. The ISTE Standards for Students videos (bit.ly/31meos0) are great resources that give educators ideas on how to provide students new ways to construct knowledge, use deliberate design processes or apply computational thinking procedures to solve problems more effectively. These can all have an impact even before you have as much technology available as you would like.

CREATE SIMPLE, STUDENT-CENTERED GOALS

Standards resources like booklets and videos help educators understand generally what the ISTE Standards look like in practice. That's inspiring, but doesn't always translate to simple, concrete ideas for your classroom with your students. The research we conducted shows that you can develop bite-sized indicators about the standards to guide teaching and learning. The implication here is that, rather than trying to work on all the standards at once, you can start by developing simple indicators for student-centered learning that you work toward, such as offering students the opportunity to set and reflect on personal learning goals (standard 1a).

A NOTE FOR LEADERS

Education leaders balance many priorities and often have to navigate complex waters around funding and technology program implementation that involve many stakeholders. An implication of this research for leaders is that, rather than waiting on macro-level transformation (such as a new bond-funded tech initiative or completely rebuilt tech plan), you can take a look at the ISTE Essential Conditions and consider where you can start today. Which of the conditions is a most urgent need? Can you

bring together some voices to improve support for just one of these? The challenges your students bring to school from home aren't going to change quickly, however, you can systematically improve the level of support for teachers seeking to transform learning with technology.

THE LIMITATIONS

Of course, a long journey begins with a single step, and while I'm excited about our research, there's no delusion that we've answered big questions definitively. One limitation of the study is that it relies on teacher self-reporting. Although reporting the specific technology access you might have on any given day may be fairly easy to do, there's more gray area around reporting whether or not teachers "design learning activities that require my students to use technology to strategically collect, evaluate and use information" (one of the questionnaire items). That can lead to some unintended variability in the reported data.

Further studies might use other data collection methods, such as direct observation, to establish the presence of the ISTE Standards. Additionally, future studies may

use a more sophisticated set of items describing the indicators, thus leading to nuances in the structure of the standards.

OPEN QUESTIONS

We've just started measuring digital age skills and dispositions, and there's tremendous potential. We're still working to improve how to most effectively and easily measure the ISTE Standards. We also don't have research yet that considers how the student-centered impact they can offer plays out in a culture more or less dominated by high-stakes testing. But we believe our initial research is a solid next step toward educators and researchers working together to develop ways to advance the conversation around the role of technology in transforming education. ❏

BRANDON OLSZEWSKI, PH.D., IS ISTE'S DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH. HE HAS EXPERTISE IN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH, PROGRAM EVALUATION AND SOCIAL SCIENCE METHODOLOGY AND THEORY.

CONNECTIONS:

To quote Liz Kolb's bestselling ISTE book, *Learning First, Technology Second*, this new research helps validate the idea that learning must supersede technology. Crompton and I found that it wasn't the level of technology access that predicted exhibition of the standards, but rather, how teachers used technology that counted.

We don't yet have valid, reliable indicators of the standards in common practice. For decades, the education community has relied on standardized tests as the primary (if not single) mark of academic success. What if we had good measures of Knowledge Constructor that were easily assessed? Further, could researchers look to practitioners for examples that one could build new research upon? This would essentially turn the traditional research-to-practice model on its head. How would you, as a teacher, measure the standards in a way that would be apparent and reasonable to anyone who walked into your classroom?

The learning sciences are an underused treasure trove of ideas for making teaching more effective and efficient. They offer educators and leaders simple, evidence-based ideas around many of the common practices already at work, including scoring student work, setting learning goals and guiding assessment and feedback. If you haven't dug into the learning sciences yet, check out ISTE's Course of Mind initiative (courseofmind.org).



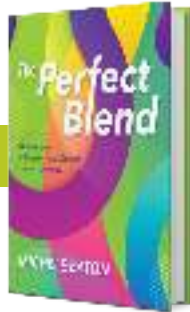
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GLOBAL FOCUS

Jon Neale shares how communitywide digital training supports his school's vision.



A community-first approach to digital integration

By Jon Neale

In recent years, Halcyon London International School has received accolades for the way it leverages the power of digital technologies to support and transform learning experiences. The secret to our success? Putting learning before technology.

The school believes that without targeted training for educators, the acquisition of new hardware will seldom bear fruit. From surveys to focus groups to staff meetings, we assess the digital skills of the teaching community using a variety of methods periodically during the year. Equipped with this data and the wider vision of the school, the digital learning leader (DLL) crafts a program of accessible-to-all opportunities to develop skills and understanding.

One way we do this is by encouraging the teaching staff to book one-to-one “tech-ins” with the DLL. These sessions are for teachers across the curriculum and often involve co-planning. They are ideal for making sure that the learning goals – not the tools – drive the discussions and decisions.

To extend the professional learning and model our ed-over-tech approach, the teacher and the DLL co-teach lessons. Co-teaching is especially important when the teacher is using a digital tool for the first time because it helps keep the focus on the learning.

We also run weekly twilight workshops and bimonthly learning showcases, where

all staff (teachers and administrators) are encouraged to take a few minutes to share a tool that has worked well for them and in their own context. Key elements of this are sharing the why, the impact and ease of integration. Much like sessions for teaching colleagues, the DLL hosts small-group workshops for those on the administrative team. A significant benefit of hosting these online is that we were able to record the workshops and keep them as a permanent resource for our staff.

We are a 1:1 school and recognize that the tools at our disposal are extremely powerful. In much the same way that we wouldn't let anyone jump into a car and wish them luck without training, we aim to do the same as we strive toward communitywide digital fluency. We don't want any digital car crashes!

In recent years, we have also opened up workshops to parents who get hands-on with the same tools that students use in the classroom. These 90-minute classes focus on technology as a force for creativity. We've found these sessions can aid coffee-table discussions at home and help develop a greater insight into what happens in our classrooms and beyond.

Supported by videoconferencing and in-house explanatory videos, we were able to successfully continue all of these efforts during distance learning due to the coronavirus

pandemic, and would feel confident doing so again if needed.

In our role as a Google Reference School and Apple Regional Training Center, we open up our doors to the wider education community to host workshops, whole-day events and shorter more focused visits. 

JON NEALE IS THE DIGITAL LEARNING LEADER FOR HALCYON LONDON INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN LONDON.

Co-teaching is especially important when the teacher is using a digital tool for the first time because it helps keep the focus on the learning.

MEMBER PROFILE

Jorge Valenzuela found empowerment in becoming an education advocate.

Jorge Valenzuela

He found his purpose as a national education advocate

By Nicole Krueger

Working as an instructional specialist in Richmond, Virginia, Jorge Valenzuela knew his mission was to help other educators elevate their work. But it wasn't until he spoke in front of the U.S. Senate that he discovered his purpose in life.

In 2017, not long after participating in an expert panel for the Senate's Career and Technical Education (CTE) Caucus, he got a call from the office of Sen. Tim Kaine (D-VA) asking for a statement to include in a press release about the CTE Excellence and Equity Act, a bill to help fund more relevant CTE courses in high schools.

"At that moment, I thought perhaps my work was meant for more than what I thought it was," Valenzuela says.

Since then, his career has veered off in unexpected directions. Now an education coach and adjunct professor for Old Dominion University's Department of STEM Education & Professional Studies, Valenzuela continues to travel to Washington, D.C., every year to advocate for educators and students.

"Going to Washington makes me realize I have a purpose. I was inspired by visiting Washington and realizing that people there need educators to tell them about what's happening in the classroom. Otherwise, they won't know how to allocate funding," he says. "It was empowering."

Growing up an English language learner in the New York foster system, Valenzuela felt like he didn't have many talents in life. But he did have teachers who drew out his academic inclination and motivated him to work hard in school. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in computer software engineering, scoring a contract for a networking job with an IT firm. When his favorite auntie suggested he'd make a good teacher instead, he decided to try his hand at summer school.

"When I went into the classroom on the very first day and stood up in front of the kids, I felt like I belonged there. I felt like I was meant to be a teacher," he says.

At first it seemed he'd been destined for the classroom. While obtaining a master's in school

Your story ; to be cont



Jorge Valenzuela believes the purpose of education is to make opportunities accessible and equitable for all students.

MEMBER PROFILE



“We need to understand culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed teaching and restorative justice.”

administration, he realized he’d rather remain a teacher than become an administrator. So when Richmond Public Schools approached him about becoming a curriculum specialist for the engineering program he taught for, Valenzuela resisted.

Eventually, however, he did the math. He could keep teaching 150 kids a year, or he could provide professional learning for 40 other teachers, each of whom was teaching 150 kids.

“That’s a bigger impact,” he says.

From there, his impact kept expanding. He taught workshops. He became an author, penning the ISTE book *Rev Up Robotics*, and began writing about his teaching philosophy, which is grounded in the learning sciences and combines academic, career and social-emotional learning.

“I feel that the art of teaching is unique to every individual,” he says. “Every individual has their own way of how they plan and how they teach and put their own spin on things. But teaching is also a science, and I believe very strongly that all teachers need to understand the science of teaching. They need to understand the learning theories and theoretical framework that informs how they plan and teach those lessons.

“I believe that my gift is in connecting all these things in a coherent way so educators can understand it.”

Since the pandemic began, Valenzuela has branched out his coaching business, Lifelong Learning Defined, to help educators integrate

equity and social-emotional learning into their lesson plans.

“To do equity right, we have to take into account what kids are really going through, based on what’s happening now. We need to understand the effects of the trauma that systemic racism has caused for kids. We need to understand culturally responsive teaching, trauma-informed teaching and restorative justice. If we don’t understand the right language and data, we can do more harm than actual good.”

He also continues to advocate for Latino students at the national level.

“Because I am from a disadvantaged population, it’s not enough for me to have success in my career. That’s not the purpose of education. The purpose of education is to make opportunities accessible and equitable for all students,” he says.

“I think that everyone needs a purpose in life. If you take on the thing you like to do the most – for me, teaching and learning – you can become an expert at your passion. But passion is selfish. It’s for you. If you’re able to flip that into a way to help other people, you’ve made a purpose for yourself.”

NICOLE KRUEGER IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND JOURNALIST WITH A PASSION FOR FINDING OUT WHAT MAKES LEARNERS TICK.

EMPOWERED LEARNER

Statement of Ownership. Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685). 1. Title of Publication: Empowered Learner. 2. Publication No.: 2573-1807. 3. Filing date: August 15, 2017. 4. Issue Frequency: Quarterly. Number of Issues Published Annually: 4. 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$49 for members, \$100 for nonmembers. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not Printer): International Society for Technology in Education, 621 SW Morrison Street, Suite 800, Portland, OR 97205. 8. Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters of General Business Offices of Publisher (Not Printer): for business name and address refer to #7. 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of the Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher—ISTE, 1530 Wilson Blvd Suite 730, Arlington, VA 22209; Editor—Julie Phillips Randles, 524 Rye Court, Roseville, CA 95747; Managing Editor—Diana Fingal, Director of Editorial Content, 621 SW Morrison Street, Suite 800, Portland, OR 97205. 10. Owner: Refer to #7. 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None. 12. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months. 13. Publication Name: Empowered Learner. 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: July 2017 (Volume 1 Number 1). 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation. Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months. 15a. Total Number of Copies (net press run): 16,528. 15b. Paid Circulation. 15b1. Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies): 14,136. 15b2. Mailed In-County Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies): Zero. 15b3. Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS: 1,881. 15b4. Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS: 24. 15c. Total Paid Distribution [Sum of 15b]: 16,041. 15d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail) 15d1. Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541: 200. 15d2. Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541: Zero. 15d3. Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS: Zero. 15d4. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means): 2. 15e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution [Sum of 15d]: 202. 15f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e): 16,243. 15g. Copies not Distributed: 285. 15h. Total (Sum of 15f and 15g): 16,528. 15i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100): 98.76%. Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date. 15a. Total No. Copies (net press run): 16,255. 15b1. Mailed Outside-County Paid Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies): 13,159. 15b2. Mailed In-County Subscriptions Stated on PS Form 3541 (Include paid distribution above nominal rate, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies): Zero. 15b3. Paid Distribution Outside the Mails Including Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid Distribution Outside USPS: 2,584. 15b4. Paid Distribution by Other Classes of Mail Through the USPS: 29. 15c. Total Paid Distribution [Sum of 15b]: 15,772. 15d. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (By Mail and Outside the Mail) 15d1. Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies included on PS Form 3541: 235. 15d2. Free or Nominal Rate In-County Copies included on PS Form 3541: Zero. 15d3. Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes Through the USPS: Zero. 15d4. Free or Nominal Rate Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or other means): 2. 15e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution [Sum of 15d]: 237. 15f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e): 16,009. 15g. Copies not Distributed: 246. 15h. Total (Sum of 15f and 15g): 16,255. 15i. Percent Paid (15c divided by 15f times 100): 98.52%. 17. This Statement of Ownership will be printed in the October 2017 issue of this publication. 18. Name and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Tiffany Montes, Senior Director of Finance, International Society for Technology in Education. Date: August 15, 2017. I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).



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COMMUNITY VOICES

This question was asked and answered in ISTE Connect (iste.org/connect), home of ISTE's Professional Learning Networks.

What are some great ways to engage kindergartners in online learning?

For kindergarten, I am focusing on patterns, sequencing and loops. **GoNoodle** (gonoodle.com) has some fun dance pattern videos that both the students and parents enjoy. I have used LEGOs to create patterns and then asked the students to copy or debug my pattern, the same with sequencing and loops.

*Kathleen Flores, PK-5 computer lab teacher
Yorkshire Academy, Houston, Texas*

I love being able to provide the littles an opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge in a way that allows them to be creative and have a voice! For a weekly planner, I would suggest Wakelet. My kindergarten teachers absolutely love it.

Here's my **Wakelet** list of apps (wke.lt/w/s/7AcPC4) that can be used in the early elementary classroom. I chose these apps because of their versatility in the classroom, because they can be used in various subject areas and they are easy to use.

*Iris Randle, instructional technology coach
Buffalo Public Schools, New York*

I just wanted to share these resources that I found this week with new, appropriate activities. **Barefoot** (barefootcomputing.org) has an elementary computing curriculum and **Wonder Workshop** just released a robot-less mission (thewonderchallenge.makewonder.com/).

*Amy Eagle, technology integrator/teacher
The Leffell School, White Plains New York*

I really love using tools that encourage technology combined with hands-on learning. Seesaw allows students to take pictures as they use hands-on materials. If possible, send home math and science manipulatives along with a device.

If your students are using iPads, here are some apps that encourage students to practice speaking and listening skills, along with opportunities for creation:

Sock Puppets (apple.co/32lvbbi)

Chatterpix (apple.co/3214V0o)

iMovie/Apples Clips (apple.com/clips/)

For reading, **Storyline Online** (storylineonline.net/ apps) has an app now.

*Kristin Harrington, digital learning specialist
Flagler County Schools, St. Augustine, Florida*

Hello Ruby (helloruby.com) is a cute and age-appropriate way for younger students to learn about computers, technology and programming. It is a three-book series supplemented by exercises, activities and videos including paper interactive printables. Unplugged coding activities are also a fun entry into coding concepts for younger students like this one for the book **If You Give A Pig A Pancake** (bit.ly/2WQTf7O), this one using plastic cups (bit.ly/3jFRUun), or this dance party (bit.ly/3jCe68G)!

*Darshell Silva, librarian
Davisville Middle School
North Kingstown,
Rhode Island*





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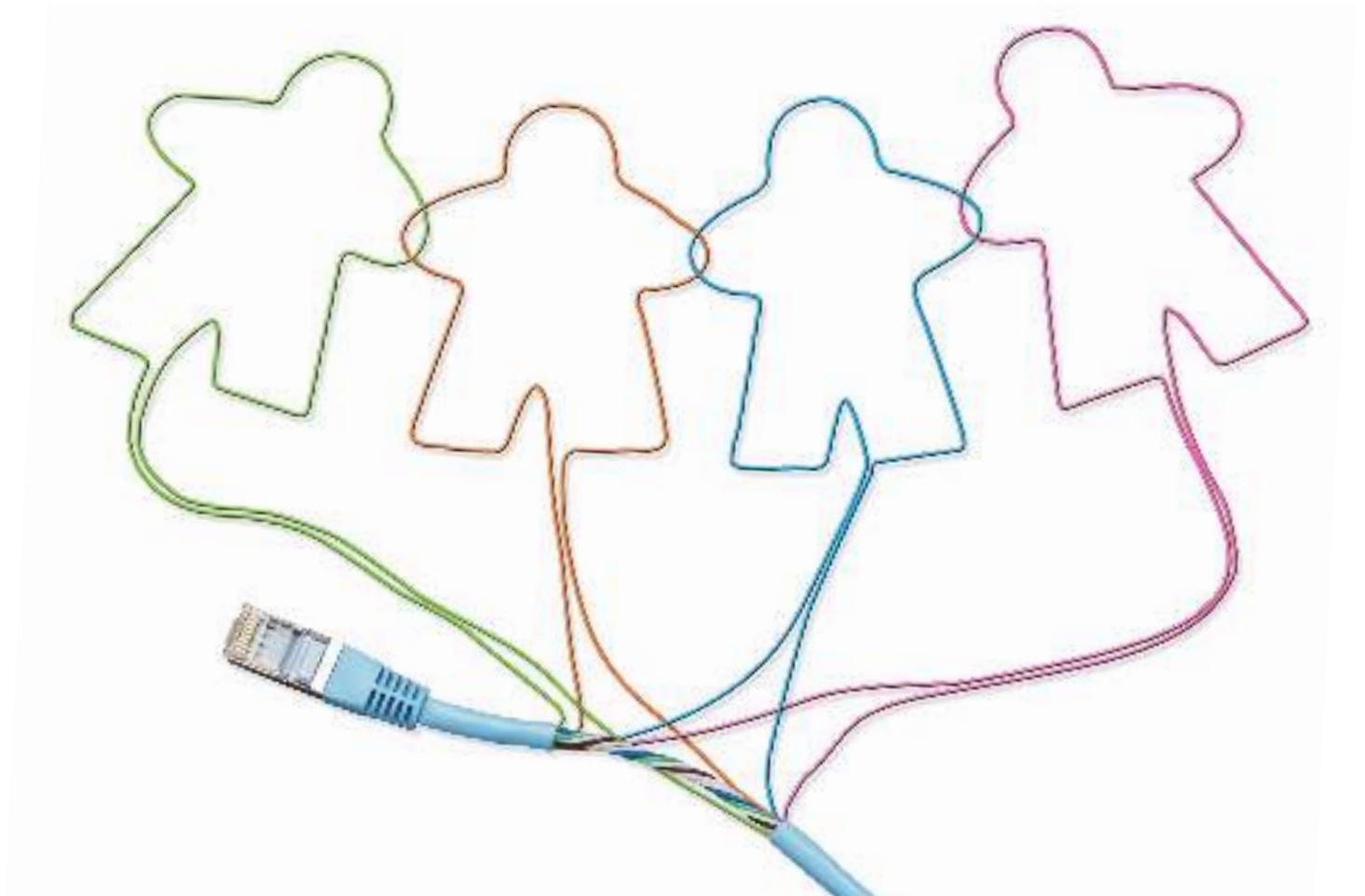


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