

Three Recommendations to Manage the Transition to Remote Learning

COVID-19's impact on education is unprecedented. With nearly every district across the nation forced to shut its doors, education leaders and teachers must transition to remote learning. While this change in circumstances has challenged educators, students, and parents alike, it has also inspired new innovations and insights that are likely to improve education for years to come.

When Santa Fe Public Schools decided to close, the district's leaders quickly formulated a remote learning and professional development strategy to ensure students remained engaged and connected. Fortunately, Dr. Neal Weaver, Santa Fe's Director of Digital Learning, and his team had already put in place the building blocks to make for a relatively seamless transition. They had spent the past several years deploying 1:1 technologies and implementing tools such as CatchOn, a data analytics platform that tracks engagement.

Despite Santa Fe's extensive preparation, Dr. Weaver is the first to admit that no district could have fully anticipated the pandemic's effects on education. To make sure that he and his team are continually adapting, Dr. Weaver continues to monitor and develop the district's eLearning program.

Based on his team's experience, Dr. Weaver has shared the following three recommendations for managing the transition to remote learning.

1 Always think of your initiatives as works in progress

Because communities are being forced to make unprecedented changes, Dr. Weaver stressed the importance of remembering that everyone—administrators, educators, students, parents—is learning as they go.

Therefore, as he and his team developed a professional development program for Santa Fe's teachers around remote learning, he knew he had a limited amount of time to create effective training. "In a one week period, my digital learning coaches and I put together training that should have taken two to three months," Dr. Weaver explained. "I really emphasized to my team that it won't be perfect, but that's ok. It's just so important to keep moving forward and not get stuck."

This agile approach helped the team move with the speed the moment required and fostered an openness to learning, allowing them to evolve strategies in ways that helped the district be responsive to changing student needs.



2

Gather data about how your community actually uses technology

With students no longer on campus, Santa Fe needed another way to track how students were using their devices, so Dr. Weaver and his team took advantage of the power of CatchOn. This data analytics tool let him see how students were actually engaging the district's remote learning initiatives. "Using CatchOn, I can see how many students are logging on and at what time they are doing so," he said. "That lets me answer questions about our programs' success."

In addition to gaining insight into technology use, Dr. Weaver has used CatchOn to be responsive to the community's concerns. Parents, he said, wanted to see some standardization in the apps their children are using. "Thanks to CatchOn," he said, "I've been able to dial in on who is using what and to what extent. It's really interesting to see what actual usage is and what impact it has. That shows us which apps the district really needs to support."

Just as important to keep in mind, Dr. Weaver stressed, is that this is an unprecedented chance to gather important data. For instance, Santa Fe often receives feedback from community members, but it has been impossible for the district to determine what information applies to every student. Using quantitative data, Santa Fe is now able to ascertain for the first time just how many of its students have reliable connectivity, which will help the district develop more effective initiatives in the future. The more districts gather and analyze data about how people actually use technology, Dr. Weaver concluded, the more educators can be responsive to community needs. "Simply put," he said, "data provides a means to guide the district."



3

Rethink your ideas about success to match the new circumstances

Dr. Weaver has found that the changed circumstances have forced Santa Fe to redefine success. "We quickly realized that taking daily attendance in the traditional way didn't make sense," he explained. "Many students aren't able to be at their computers during the day because they're caretakers for siblings or other family members." As a result, the district has expanded its old idea of attendance—students in the classroom at the same time—to include students who must log in and work at night.

To make sure the district's initiatives succeed for all of Santa Fe's diverse population, Dr. Weaver's team has actively engaged the community to solicit feedback. "We've reached out to parents to develop new mechanisms for students to stay engaged that match their circumstances," he said. This process of collaboration helps make schools more responsive to all stakeholders.

Dr. Weaver concluded by stressing that his commitment to community engagement is a means of honoring his first suggestion: every initiative he and his team develop is a work in progress that can be improved by actively collaborating with the community. Because in a district where some students have excellent connectivity and others still require worksheets, there will be no one-size-fits-all solution. Rather, what is necessary are insights and the flexibility to respond to community needs.

CONTACT US TODAY!

For more information about **CatchOn**, contact info@catchon.com.

An **ENA** Affiliate

catchon[®]

ABOUT CATCHON

CatchOn is a user-friendly data analytics tool that compiles real-time data on every device, enabling school districts to make data-informed decisions about the apps and online tools their educators and students are using. In 2018, CatchOn joined forces with ENA, a leading provider of comprehensive technology solutions to education institutions and libraries across the nation. Collectively, CatchOn and ENA leverage their respective resources and expertise to deliver critical services and solutions that help school districts produce positive outcomes in the communities they serve.