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Digital Lessons Learned
How the Online Pivot of 2020 Can Make Teaching and Learning Better Forever

By Kristin Rouleau, Cheryl Abla, Tonia Gibson, and Jeanette Simenson-Gurolnick

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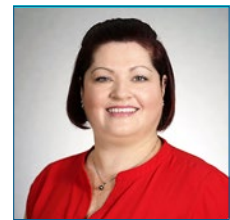
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Digital Lessons Learned: *How the Online Pivot of 2020 Can Make Teaching and Learning Better Forever*

By Kristin Rouleau, Cheryl Abla, Tonia Gibson, and Jeanette Simenson-Gurolnick

The challenges of virtual learning have been well documented during the last year as districts have focused on providing students with devices and internet access, debated developmental appropriateness of virtual learning, engaged teachers in professional development activities about how to design and deliver meaningful online lessons, worried about learning loss, worked to lead and manage change for all stakeholders, and more.

When things feel outside of our control, as was often the case with the shift to digital learning, our human tendency may be to look at the glass as half empty, seeing only the challenges and not recognizing the bright spots hidden in the chaos. The term "learned helplessness" is often used to describe a response when people feel that nothing they do will matter. Educational researchers have found that "in the same way individuals can develop learned helplessness, organizations can be seduced by pervasive pessimism" (Hoy et al., 2006, p. 440). School teams find themselves dwelling on the half-empty glass, believing that nothing they do will matter and that their current circumstances cannot be overcome. In schools where this thinking has taken hold, even the simplest solution—such as adopting online teaching protocols that have been shown to be successful in other schools—tends to have little impact. High performing schools, on the other hand, demonstrate a different attitude, seeing "teachers as capable, students as willing, parents as supportive, and the task as achievable" (p. 440). It's this attitude that the challenges can be overcome that we want to promote, and our experience working with teachers and leaders in this last year has proven to us that amongst the uncertainty and change,

there are bright spots that we will want to sustain for the future.

Don't get us wrong: We aren't minimizing the challenges. We've been working with schools and districts around the world and we know the challenges are real. And we also know that educators and families are invested in making sure students have the best possible outcome of their education, whether they are learning in a school building, on a computer, at home, or with some combination of these. So let's flip the script. Instead of looking at the challenges as obstacles, let's look to what we have learned from these challenges—the new skills, different capacities that have been developed, and the resilience we see from teachers and students every day.

Building on bright spots

We consider ourselves fortunate to work with teachers and leaders around the world who share examples of how they and their students defy the odds, rise to the challenge, and create and engage in effective online learning. We've learned from teachers how to adapt what works in a face-to-face classroom to an online environment. No doubt, you've read plenty of examples about how to build relationships, bring students together to collaborate, and use online apps and tech tools to keep learners engaged. All of this is important, but we encourage you to also think about what comes next: What will you and your students be better prepared to do because you've had the opportunity to learn how to learn online? How has this opportunity of virtual learning provided impetus for improvement? Would you have had (or taken) the time or felt the urgency

to learn and implement new strategies and approaches for teaching and learning?

One of the things we've learned from research about how schools and districts improve is that while context may vary, there are some predictable stages of development on the journey from improvement to innovation that look remarkably similar from school to school (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). The stages apply to schools, districts, and even teams of teachers. Key to the improvement journey is that teachers work together to figure out what needs to be done, what's working, and what bright spots they can build on for future success. The four stages of this journey from improvement to innovation include the following :

Adopt better routines. The key difference between high and low performing schools is summed up in one word: consistency. The first thing schools do as they improve is focus on adopting routines to support the quality of teaching and learning. This includes adopting a learning model, consistent instructional practices, and a well-articulated curriculum—and it's the same whether you are in a brick and mortar school or teaching online. When teachers have a blueprint for learning, they are better able to design and deliver high-quality lessons that advance student learning. Think for a moment about your experience with teaching and learning online. If you are like many teachers we've worked with, your entry to virtual teaching was a bit unsettling. Many of us tried to figure out how to use what we had been doing successfully in our classrooms in this new virtual environment. We quickly discovered

that some things worked while others needed to be adapted, and still others needed to be left for face-to-face instruction. What was key, however, was selecting, implementing, and reflecting on new routines and practices. Teachers we've spoken to describe the importance of establishing those routines for online learning and we have watched as teachers transitioned their in-person routines to their online classrooms: for example, greeting each student by name as they enter the virtual classroom, creating a welcoming environment where students know they belong. The context might be different from what we've experienced in the past, but the need to establish routines and implement them consistently has not changed—and that brings us to the second stage on our journey from improvement to innovation.

Ensure greater consistency. The second stage of improvement grows out of the first; it focuses on ensuring consistent implementation of the new routines in order to assure all students benefit from the high-quality learning experiences teachers design. In our online environments, this has meant continuing to adopt and implement new tools, strategies, and approaches to learning to engage students, measure learning, and stretch students to learn at high levels. As you and your colleagues have learned with and from one another about what works in your classrooms, you have no doubt experimented with any number of digital learning tools; some have been effective while others missed the mark. As we continue to learn—because teaching and learning, as both science and art, is a process of
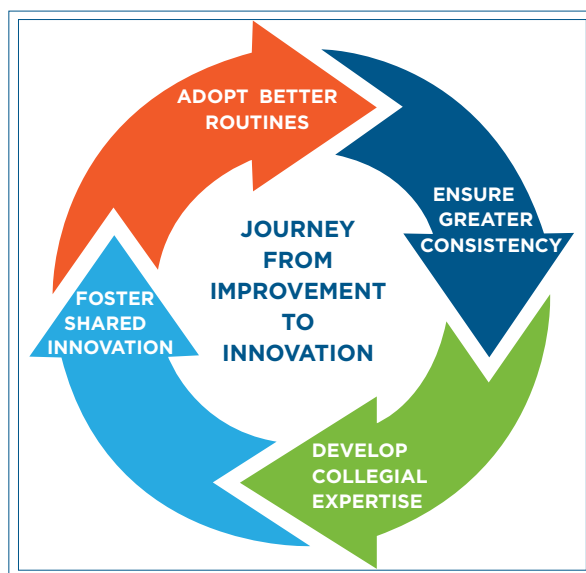
continuous improvement—we ultimately fall into patterns that allow us to implement with consistency, and that's a key to results.

Develop collegial expertise. You may not be in the same physical building with your colleagues—and if you are, your interactions likely look much different than they have in the past—but that doesn't minimize the importance of collaboration. In fact, it's when teachers collaborate and develop collegial expertise that they are able to skillfully adapt their new routines to meet the needs of their learners. Individual teachers adapt lessons, learning activities, and tasks all the time. However, what we've learned is that when teachers come together to solve a common problem of practice by reflecting on what's working, what's not, and what can be improved, all of their students benefit.

One school we work with has had teacher collaboration time on the professional calendar for years. However, it always seemed that something else took priority over attending collaboration meetings. This year, that has changed. Friday afternoon grade-level collaboration meetings have become sacred time; everyone attends and expects to contribute to and learn from the discussion. What changed? As one educator explained, "It's like we are all first year teachers all over again," and the result is that everyone is leaning into their dedicated time for collaboration because they need each other. These teachers have discovered once again that they are better together; they understand that their collaboration time provides space for professional growth, opportunities to bounce questions off of colleagues, and the chance to try things, fail forward, and improve together. In this school, teams that didn't always make time for collaboration now recognize the value of leveraging team members' strengths to plan high-quality lessons and follow up by reflecting on student success with the learning. These teachers have not only embraced developing collegial expertise, but in the process have reduced the variability and increased the quality of their instruction.

Foster shared innovation. It's when routines for teaching and learning are well-integrated and consistently implemented across the school—and teachers collaborate to adapt those routines to meet the needs of their students as an established way of doing business—that the school is ready to move to the fourth stage, *foster shared innovation*. Innovation is about using what works in innovative ways to achieve outcomes we haven't achieved before. This is where curiosity flourishes, and where complex approaches like inquiry-based and personalized learning become the norm. This is where almost every school wants to be, but often we

see schools jump to this stage before having done the work of the previous three stages. It is in fostering shared innovation that your efforts to collectively identify, adopt, adapt, and consistently implement effective routines for teaching and learning pay off. It's much easier to be innovative when you have a foundation of effective practices and a culture of continuous improvement permeating your school.

Think about innovation in the context of virtual learning. Imagine what could be possible: project-based learning *online*. Students as developers of virtual learning tools and approaches, based on their own experiences. Student-initiated, standards-driven curiosity projects *at home.* Flipped classrooms that allow for greater differentiation than ever before. Dare to dream. And consider, if you will, that everything you've learned from teaching in a pandemic, all the new routines and practices, will prepare you to foster shared innovation.

What have we learned from virtual schooling?

Over the last months, there have been plenty of opportunities to learn and discuss strategies and tools for teaching online. And this has been important, because teaching and learning in a digital environment has been new for many of us. We also know that what we've known for years about high-quality instruction still holds true; teachers and students having a clear picture of learning objectives and success criteria is critical regardless of the platform for teaching and learning. The quality and specificity of feedback about progress in learning is essential at all levels. Strategies that support students to develop understanding, and then extend and apply learning, must be thoughtfully and intentionally selected whether teachers and students get to meet face-to-face or through a computer screen. We maintain that good instruction is good instruction regardless of the format for learning. Deep down, we always suspected that was the case, we just

didn't have a chance to try. And that's why so many teachers went first to modifying what worked in their physical classrooms for use in their online classrooms.

So what have we learned that will make teaching and learning better in the long run? In our ongoing conversations with clients during the pandemic, we've seen increased intentionality for planning for learning in a virtual environment. We've seen teachers and schools invest in simple ways to develop relationships and connections between home and school and between teachers and students. And we've watched as teachers have made learning engaging and more accessible for each student in ways we haven't necessarily seen in a widespread way before. These are the things that we will take with us, that will help us to innovate and pursue outcomes we didn't know were possible.

Student engagement and autonomy

Teachers know it's important for students to be engaged if they are to learn. Still, it's relevant to point out that when we speak specifically of student engagement, we are acknowledging that for students to be successful in learning, we must plan for more than academics. McREL defines engagement as a condition of emotional, social, and intellectual readiness to learn characterized by curiosity, participation, and the drive to learn more. In the current landscape, where teaching and learning shifts between online and face-to-face more frequently than perhaps we expected, engaging students as active participants in their own learning may be more important than ever. But what is effective student engagement, and how can teachers engage students effectively in a virtual environment?

Fredricks et al. (2004) identified three types of engagement, all apparent in virtual environments. *Behavioral engagement,* which includes students observing community norms

and participating in activities, plays out in a virtual setting when students interact with teachers and peers, are prepared for learning, and move between large and small group settings as needed. Teachers can promote students' behavioral engagement by balancing structure with student autonomy; just as you might do in your physical classroom, involve students in developing community norms and ways of working together online. Digital media and online communication tools and practices are a "pervasive part of the everyday lives of youth in the United States" (Ito et al., 2013, p. 1). Given this, consider that your students may be better positioned to recommend ways of working and interacting online because for many of them, digital interactions have never not been a part of their lives.

Many teachers report that *cognitive engagement*, closely related to motivation and students' desire and ability to engage in self-directed learning, has been a work in progress with online classes. In one STEM school, teachers have tapped into cognitive engagement by positioning students as content experts. Not only were students charged with selecting a curiosity-driven topic within the scope of the curriculum expectations, they were also taught how to give and receive peer feedback. Beyond researching their content, students were responsible to collaborate with a partner, learn how to prepare and deliver a presentation, and practice giving and receiving specific feedback. When we observed this process in action, behavioral engagement related to the norms for teaching and learning in the class and cognitive engagement were both apparent. It's possible to engage students in self-directed learning from home; clear expectations—and to the extent possible, expectations co-developed with students—provide guidance and parameters that support students to successfully execute interest-driven projects that meet curricular guidelines while at the same time leveraging cognitive engagement. This engagement is perhaps more critical when students are

expected to learn and work independently, a theme we've heard from many teachers.

The third kind of engagement noted by Fredericks et al. is *emotional engagement*, which includes students' feelings of interest, boredom, happiness, sadness, and anxiety. Uncertainty, coupled with stressors for students, families, and school staff, has resulted in emotions that have run the gamut during this time of virtual learning. What we've noticed is that teachers have been especially aware of emotional engagement in their classroom, and in many cases more so than before they moved to online teaching and learning. An example of how one teacher tapped into students' emotional engagement was evidenced in how she prepared students for learning each day. She engaged students in a mindfulness exercise that included quiet music, closed eyes and attention to breathing, and a focus on being prepared to learn. After the class was emotionally centered, the teacher asked students to hold up the different materials needed for learning. In this way, the teacher not only engaged her students emotionally, but communicated the intent of their time together as learners.

At the secondary level, a student-led research project on engagement just before and during the pandemic identified social engagement—the network of relationships each student has with peers, teachers, and other school stakeholders—as a fourth type (Holquist et al., 2020). Focus group participants told the researchers that their motivation (a term they often used interchangeably with engagement) depended heavily on the quality of these relationships, and that these relationships didn't change much when classes went online; the teachers they perceived as helpful (or not) in person were the same teachers they perceived as helpful (or not) online. So the variable clearly wasn't the platform, it was the person.

We invite you to pause here and reflect on engagement in your classroom, with respect to the stages of improvement. What have you done

to engage learners behaviorally, cognitively, and emotionally? Have you provided opportunities for students to pursue self-directed, curiosity-driven learning with a balance of structure and autonomy? What new routines have you adopted and implemented consistently that are working well, that you'd like to retain long into the future? What conversations have you had with your colleagues about student engagement and what have you learned from one another that has enhanced the way in which you engage students' curiosity, participation, and drive to learn more?

Still thinking about how to more effectively engage students? Here are three ideas to get you started:

1. **Identify those aspects of online learning where you want to provide structure and those where student choice will enhance learning and engagement.** You may want to ask students to contribute to making this list. For example, you might establish a consistent routine for students as they enter the digital classroom each day (structure) and share responsibility for how breakout groups operate with students (autonomy).

2. **Provide options for students to work on their own curiosity-driven projects to demonstrate learning.** Be clear about the learning objectives and criteria for success and then let them follow their curiosity to show you what they've learned.

3. **Use the technology at your fingertips to share the real world with your students.** If they're learning about a world or local event or a science phenomenon, share relevant images and videos that elicit a personal, emotional response. For example, if students are learning about the environment, share examples of local issues and ask questions that prompt them to consider how the issue will affect their lives or the lives of animals or plants in the area.

Developing relationships in new ways

Relationships are an essential component of engagement. They form the foundation of support that creates a sense of belonging that encourages students to take academic and social risks in the classroom. When teachers reveal their personality and enthusiasm for learning and develop a persona matched to the needs of their classroom, relationships are easier to develop and maintain (Goodwin & Hubbell, 2013). While developing authentic relationships in an online environment can be challenging, we've seen examples of teacher-student and school-home relationships that are arguably stronger than ever before.

One approach we've seen used across the globe and across grade levels is increased intentionality about one-on-one time for teachers and students. In one Australian school, primary grade teachers make use of short intervals of independent work time to meet individually with students. The teacher spends two to three minutes in a breakout room connecting with each child, checking on learning progress, and attending to behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Over the course of every two or three days, teachers have individual time with each of their students; teachers report that these intentional, scheduled one-on-one meetings have provided greater insight and deepened relationships with students, as compared to the ways they connected with students in the classroom.

At the high school level, we've seen teachers make use of virtual office hours on a regular basis. By setting up regular appointments with students and providing opportunities for drop-in meetings, teachers are demonstrating warmth and empathy—two variables associated with relationships that contribute to increased student learning (Cornelius-White, 2017)—by making personal connections with students. There's some evidence that even when teachers and students don't actually meet one-on-one,

the fact that teachers make the time available and invite students to ask for help and are perceived as sincere in their offers of support, prompts students to feel their teachers will do what is needed to ensure their success (Downey, 2020).

The impact of relationships on learning isn't limited to the ways in which students and teachers interact. When teachers understand students' social and cultural backgrounds, they are better prepared to differentiate curriculum in ways that both reflect and include all learners (McCarthy, 2000). In a traditional approach, teachers often connect with families and build relationships through home visits in which school staff and family members have an opportunity to engage in discourse that helps everyone better understand the child, and both the home and school contexts. With home visits on hold, teachers have leveraged digital communication tools to connect with families; schools that have proactively reached out to inquire about preferred methods of communication—for example, offering phone, Zoom, email, text, social media, and so forth—have found much more success with two-way communication than those schools that have assumed a single communication channel will work for all.

For some adult family members, school relationships are developed through opportunities to volunteer in the classroom. However, when school is conducted in a virtual environment, all components of the school-family relationships must be re-conceptualized, too. And when adult family members are at home while students are attending class from home, those adult family members may be much more aware of what's happening at school than ever before. Research indicates that when parents and other caregivers are provided with information and tools to support learning at home, family engagement increases (Henderson, 2011). It makes sense, then, that when teachers at one school invited adult family members to learn and practice managing

breakout rooms to help facilitate small group learning in their child's classroom, family engagement increased. Likewise, in situations where adult family members are also working from home, schools have leveraged those adults as community experts who can contribute to student learning. In the future, these same community experts can be brought in using digital communication; the relationship has been forged, and even with a return to a traditional classroom, there's little reason not to use the resources surfaced during virtual learning.

Finally, research about why families choose to be involved in their student's school indicates that a welcoming environment is one of the most influential indicators of family involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Further, a study of the influence of teacher-to-parent communication suggested that brief messages home each week seemed to empower parents to support their students and contributed to conversations between parents and students about school (Kraft & Rogers, 2015). Again, while the format for communication and engagement may have changed, the value of these relationships remains.

One school combined these messages home with an effort to demonstrate their welcoming environment; in a short video newsletter shared each week with families, school staff offered a glimpse into their collective personality and enthusiasm for teaching, shared successes from across the school, and offered highlights of learning at each grade. Teachers could expand on this, sending the school video newsletter as well as a short video message of their own. Other teachers we know use voice messaging to send a short personal message to each family once a week; these messages often sound like this:

> Hello, Trumbull family! Just touching base to let you know that Jake has been putting forth a lot of effort in math

this week and I can tell you've been supporting him in explaining how he is solving problems. Thanks for your help! It really makes a difference. Next week we will begin our at-home curiosity projects. I will share information with students and meet with each of them to find out what they're interested in studying. I will let you know next week when I am meeting with Jake about his project. You are welcome to join our conversation. Have a great week. I hope you're all staying safe and healthy.

While these options were available in years past, most teachers we know tell us they are leveraging them far more today and they can tell the difference that makes in the quality of the relationships and the sense of partnership they feel with their students' families.

Think about how you have focused on relationships with students and their families while engaged in virtual learning. What have you done differently? What has remained the same? Have you leveraged tools you've always had in more intentional ways? What have you learned that you will maintain as part of how you cultivate and sustain relationships from now on?

If you're looking for ways to connect with students and their families, try one of these ideas:

1. Use an online polling tool to check in with students about how they're feeling at the beginning of the day or week. Older students can respond using a numeric scale (1 = not so great and 5 = really good!) or select from emotion words like sad, anxious, happy, excited, or confused. Younger students can select from a set of emoji faces showing emotions—just be sure to talk about what each one means before they start using them! Use this information as you determine who to check in with first and which families might need to hear from you this week.

2. Create a list of family members' career interests, hobbies, and special skills. Invite them to share their expertise in your online classroom when it's a relevant example of what students are learning.

3. Join with your department or grade-level colleagues to create a short video highlighting what students are learning and how they're interacting throughout the week. Students can help create the video. Don't overthink this; it's not meant to be an award-winning production. And be sure you show up on camera too!

A focus on learning

One of the persistent points of frustration for many in education—whether teaching and learning in person or online—is the vast amount of content students are expected to learn during their K–12 careers. While many teachers, schools, and districts view standards in an integrated manner and with a focus on essential, enduring learning, many others feel pressured to "check the box" next to each standard in preparation for an end-of-year or end-of-course high-stakes assessment. In the face of limited time with students in many virtual school schedules, many teachers and schools recognized the importance of focusing on critical content, and making sure students learn that content well. Some standards organizations, such as Project AERO (American Education Reaches Out) and the Office of Overseas Schools of the U.S. Department of State, have gone so far as to identify critical content and skills in each discipline. We have observed increased clarity about the purpose of learning for both teachers and their students when they make these hard but essential choices about what to prioritize.

Learning objectives and success criteria are not new. Research is clear that well-articulated learning objectives provide focus and meaning for learning and teaching. When teachers

communicate objectives for student learning, students can more easily identify connections between learning activities and tasks, and what they are actually supposed to learn. They can gauge their starting point related to the learning objectives and determine where they need to focus and where they might need assistance from the teacher or their peers (Dean et al., 2012).

When teachers are not clear themselves about what students are to learn and what successful demonstration of learning looks and sounds like, students are not clear either—and that's true no matter what platform is used for teaching and learning. Case in point: Some of us recently observed online classrooms as teachers delivered the same lessons to their class of students. Lessons—including learning objectives and success criteria that clearly articulated what students would know, understand, and be able to do, as well as how they would demonstrate their learning and assess progress toward the objective—were designed collaboratively by the team of teachers.

Differences emerged during delivery, however. Some teachers clearly described the learning objectives and success criteria as they taught, including prompts for students to reflect on and personalize the objectives themselves. Others skipped over any discussion of learning objectives or success criteria and jumped right into content. The result? As observers, we were clear about where the lessons were headed when teachers took the time to discuss the objectives; each learning activity was purposefully linked to objectives and the lesson narrative was clear. In the cases where objectives were not shared with students, the very same learning tasks felt like a loosely connected set of activities. Without the framework of what students were meant to learn holding the lesson together, it was unclear if the intended learning really had occurred.

Lack of clarity about learning objectives can occur as easily in a physical classroom as online. But here's what we're noticing more and more that we want teachers to take back to their physical classrooms with them: Not only are teachers becoming increasingly intentional about what students will know, understand, and be able to do as a result of a lesson, but they are also much more purposeful about identifying the prerequisite skills and experiences that will lead to success. Because students are working more independently than ever, teachers have recognized that they need to support students in different ways.

Remember the example earlier of the curiosity-driven projects in which students conducted research, prepared and delivered a presentation, and gave and received peer feedback? In many traditional classrooms, the various components of that project may have been assigned to students with a rubric that outlined expectations. Students may or may not have been provided with explicit guidance about preparing and delivering a presentation or listening in order to provide specific, actionable peer feedback. When this project was assigned to an online class, the teacher knew her students needed additional learning and support to be successful. She explicitly taught students what a quality presentation included and how to present in a way that would captivate their audience. She was intentional about assigning students to give feedback to one another, and spent time teaching them about elements of effective feedback. Previously, this teacher may have assumed these students could create and deliver a presentation and give feedback using a simple teacher-designed checklist; she may not have taken time to teach them the skills even though they needed it then as much as they needed it now. This teacher's recognition of the support students would need to successfully complete the project independently resulted in high levels of learning and a set of skills that will serve students well in the future.

Another shift we've observed is that while teachers are intently focused on being sure students learn critical content, they also recognize that online learning without mechanisms for collaboration and feedback is not effective. They are intentionally teaching students how to collaborate online, how to moderate breakout rooms effectively, and how to use various technology tools to communicate with peers, teachers, and other adults. At the same time, we've seen a shift from focusing on tech tools first and learning second, to a focus on learning using the appropriate tools. In one district we work with, teachers work together to plan for learning of essential skills and content using evidence-based practices, which includes purposeful selection of tech tools they will introduce in their lessons. Earlier, the interest was in choosing the tech tools without a clear focus about what those tools were meant to accomplish; now teachers have enough experience with the tech tools to feel confident selecting tools to match the intended learning. Highly effective teachers are intentional about their teaching; they know not only what to do to support student learning but how, when, and why to do it. Lessons learned about intentionality from teaching online will serve students well in every learning environment.

Finally, we've had more conversations with teachers and leaders in the last few months about measuring student learning than we've had in the last year. Teachers have become increasingly flexible about how students demonstrate learning; we've observed more assessments based on the intent of the standards and more discussion about what demonstration of learning looks and sounds like at the intended cognitive level of the standard. Teachers use tech tools to collect formative assessment data on the spot, and then respond to the data to make real-time adjustments to instruction. In the words of one teacher, "It's less one-and-done; we're using assessment as a teachable moment."

Routines and practices for teaching and learning have changed in some ways and stayed the same in others. For example, a focus on learning objectives has always been important, but many teachers have recognized the need for greater intentionality about explicitly teaching prerequisite skills to ensure each student achieves the objectives, especially in situations where students are completing more work independently. Similarly, the value of collecting formative data about student progress in learning is not disputed; the shift in many cases has been that teachers have found new ways to collect and respond to this formative data in real time.

The demands of online school have forced us to rethink how we engage in teaching and learning. And while we know it's all still a work in progress, because learning itself is a work in progress, there are definitely bright spots from virtual teaching and learning that we'll want to hold onto. What practices have you and your colleagues implemented that you want to maintain and apply in a face-to-face environment? How do you respond to student learning needs in new ways? And how will the experiences students have as virtual learners prepare them for the next challenges?

Feeling the need to refocus on learning, but not sure where to begin? These ideas might help.

1. Make sure you're clear not only about what students are meant to learn, but what an accurate demonstration of learning looks like. Define success yourself so you can continually monitor and give feedback as students progress toward the goal.

2. Similarly, engage students in setting their own goals for learning. Have them record goals and the steps they need to take to achieve those goals. Then, they can self-assess progress and reflect on the effort they've expended as they work to accomplish their goals.

3. Pay attention to who is contributing to class discussions and remember that the voices that you hear the most are likely those who are learning the most. Are you talking more than the students? Find ways to get them working in small groups, talking to one another and to you. Are some students talking while others are silent? Use a digital spinner to select students to respond to questions and get everyone talking.

Back to those routines

We started this paper talking about stages of improvement. As you reflect on your practices and experiences with virtual teaching and learning, and the examples we've shared, what routines can you identify that you have developed—or perhaps still need to develop— to support learning? What have you found effective to engage learners online? How have you developed relationships differently and brought families into your virtual school? And what have you learned about what's possible for teaching and learning *because* you are in an online environment? So many teachers we have talked to have shared stories of innovation and examples of trying new practices they didn't even know were possible.

We maintain that through the process of adopting, consistently implementing, and adapting practices to support learning, teachers and schools continue to improve. They're finding strategies that work for their learners— strategies they want to make part of their ongoing repertoire. And when they step back and look at the bright spots and what everyone has learned and is capable of *because* they've been pushed to recreate teaching and learning in a different environment, they just might realize they are ready to innovate and pursue goals in ways they never have before. ■

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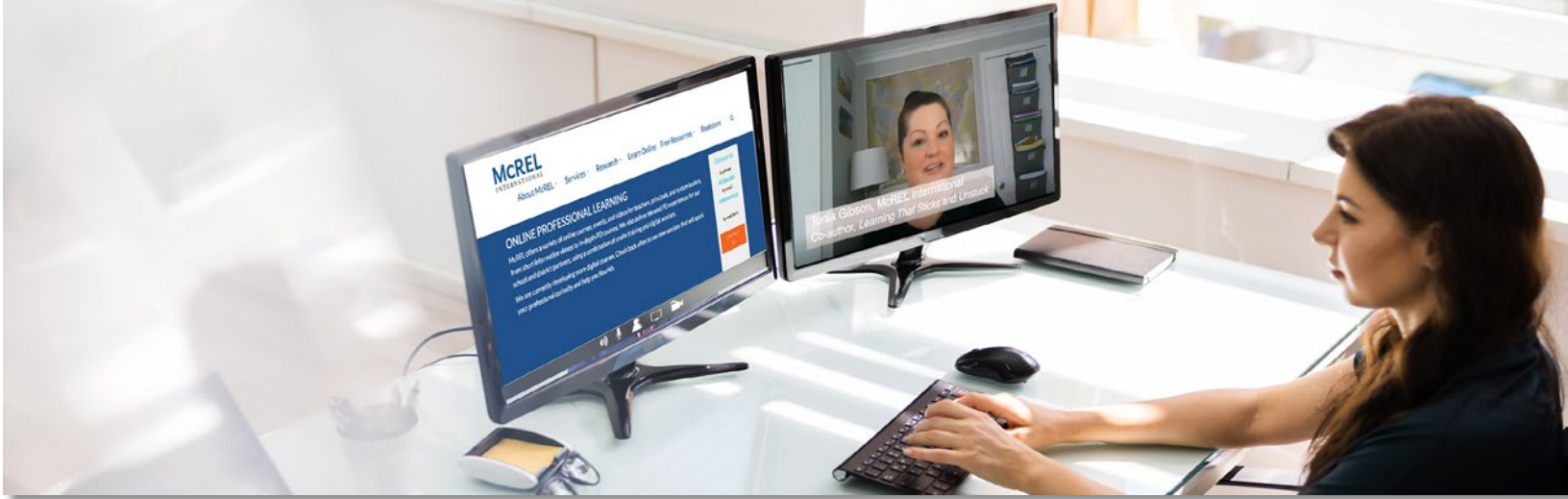
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