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School librarians can save democracy

BY EILEEN BELASTOCK

Regardless of one's political views, there seems to be consensus on one political reality: America is dangerously polarized. According to Michelle Luhtala, Library Department Chair at New Canaan High School in Connecticut, in a recent edWebinar, "The future of democracy presents a case for the critical need for school librarians in every school."

School librarians are essential to help students gain equitable access to high-quality inquiry instructional experiences for all learners—not just for the future of education but also for the future of democracy.

The problem

Luhtala suggests that political belief polarization may emerge because of people's con-



flicting confirmation and desirability biases, which leads them to interpret new evidence as a confirmation of one's own existing beliefs and theories.

Two-thirds of U.S. adults get their news from social media, and 42 percent think that the news they're getting is 100 percent accurate. Fifty-eight percent of college students get

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What the pandemic has revealed about digital equity

BY STACEY PUSEY

Before COVID-19, home internet access for all students was a goal—one that some districts even thought they had achieved. But the pandemic and forced distance learning have exposed a plethora of inequities in schools that many district leaders now see as issues they must address. In the edWebinar "Digital Equity Strategies for Learning Beyond the Classroom," school leaders talked about how they are managing digital equity in the COVID-19 era and what they see as the critical next steps.

First, the pandemic exposed what Dr. David Miyashiro, superintendent of the Cajon Valley School District (CA), called the

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5 ways COVID-19 made me a better teacher

BY JEANNE CAREY INGLE, PH.D.

Don't tell anyone, but I think the COVID-19 crisis might have made me a better educator.

Over the past 3 months I have taken my fully on-ground, in-person classes and put them completely online, done all my advising and research mentoring virtually, and I think I might be doing the work a little better.

Don't get me wrong—I miss teaching my students in person and I can't wait until we get back to some semblance of normal. But normal won't be this fall, and possibly not even in the spring of 2021, so I decided, as I prep for the fall, to look at my teaching and see what went right this past semester.

1. Variety is the spice of life! I started off

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their news from social media; however, they read news differently if they're consuming it for their recreational life than if they're re-consuming it for their academic life.

In contrast, educators observe that school-age students read the news the same way as they do for their social life for their classes. They come into the process saying, "I already know what I'm going to say, I just need to find the resources and write it." These biases defeat the purpose of inquiry-based learning and distort interpretations of news and fact-based research.

The solution

According to Luhtala, "We have a problem or at least the perception of the problem that democracy is in jeopardy." The internet is both the world's best fact checker and the world's best bias-confirmer, often at the same time. So, when we see the news, we have to read it with our brain and not our hearts, and we have to teach our students to do the same.

Democracy dies in darkness, so critical thinking is essential for democracy. As educators, it is incumbent upon us to teach critical thinking to even our youngest students. School librarians and classroom

teachers have the responsibility to teach skills that ensure students distinguish news reporting from editorials and letters to the editor, be critical viewers of web-sites, and use resources ethically.

Call to action

Critical thinking is a crucial component of democracy. It is imperative that educators promote inquiry, teach critical thinking, cultivate news literacy, protect privacy, and embrace best practices. We need to teach students to internalize the inquiry process where they're questioning everything and being critical and rational about their consumption of news.

Besides classroom teachers, school librarians have the responsibility, capacity, and training to teach inquiry-based learning. The challenge is that school librarians' positions are being reduced or eliminated. Hence, school leaders need to understand the critical role that librarians have in ensuring that future participation in the democratic process.

The internet, online learning environments, and edtech software are not replacements for highly qualified, certified school librarians. These skilled educators need to be supported, valued, and retained to ensure that democracy is saved.

About the presenter

Michelle Luhtala, Library Department

Chair at New Canaan High School in Connecticut, was one of five school librarians named as a "Mover and Shaker" by Library Journal in 2015. She is the winner of the 2011 "I Love My Librarian" Award and the Library Association's 2010 Outstanding Librarian Award. The New Canaan High School Library won AASL's National School Library Program of the year in 2010. Follow Michelle on Twitter @mlluhtala.

Join the community

Emerging Tech for Schools and Libraries is a free professional learning community on edWeb.net where school librarians, teachers, and administrators can explore all the ways to integrate technology and 21st century learning into school library programs.

This edWeb broadcast was sponsored by Mackin Educational Resources. View the recording of the edWebinar at <https://home.edweb.net/webinar/emergingtech20200722/>.

Eileen Belastock, CETL is the Director of Technology and Information for Nauset Public Schools, MA, and also works with edWeb.net to write articles on their professional learning edWebinars. You can follow Eileen on Twitter @EileenBelastock.

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slow, but after a few misstarts and mid-lecture melt downs, using a variety of technology made me more effective and creative. Zoom, Screencast-o-matic, Flipgrid, Padlet, Google Docs, and more—I use it all, and that seems to really work.

At the beginning I thought my students wouldn't want to meet for a full class period. I kept wondering who would want to look at my head for 2 hours. Then I realized that my head is not the issue (at least not for my class)—that the issue is creating a space where we

can interact with content in real time.

I use Zoom for class check-ins and short "lectures" where I share my screen and break the class into small groups. Screencast-o-matic is great for doing narration of some short PowerPoints or Google Slides. The important note here is keep it short—virtual presentations should never go longer than 15 minutes and shorter is better. I also loved using Padlet or Google Docs for in-class feedback or quick ideas, especially following a small group breakout and Flipgrid to share great answers to homework or give students a chance to reflect on the material.

2. Don't stop moving! I am an ex-

elementary teacher, so I am very comfortable with brain breaks—taking a few moments out of the class to breathe, regroup, and then return to work. There's a lot of research that supports brain breaks for kids, but they work just as well for college students.

Go Noodle is a free resource that I used often in my class for mindfulness breaks (super helpful when you're a little stressed about the worldwide pandemic) and movement breaks (equally helpful during a 2-hour zoom session). Check out their mindfulness videos—my college sophomores and juniors LOVED their 3-minute Chin-Up.

3. Let students engage as them-

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selves. My students are wise and smart. I allowed them to use part of our class time to do a Class Share to tell us what they were watching, reading, or listening to and how that was either a. helping them understand our course work better; or b. helping them cope with life better.

These brief opportunities for students to lead the discussion (they knew the date they would share and had a 10-minute time limit) allowed my students to make connections and share how what we were doing in class applied to their world. Students also voted (using Poll Everywhere in our Zoom chat) on how to organize our class or on discus-



sion questions for breakout rooms. To build community and engagement, I did things like wear your favorite t-shirt day, wear our school colors day, and—the most popular—bring your dog, your cat, your ferret and/or your child to class day. It all worked to make a stressful situation often very, very joy-filled .

4. Make time. This was the most important thing I learned: the time I spend with my students has value and I need to build that into my teaching.

I used a variety of opportunities to connect and stay connected to my students. Twice a week I held open virtual office hours. In my classes that met more than once a week, I took class meeting time to create dedicated virtual office hours for that course. I let my students know that I would come early to every synchronous meeting on Zoom and I stayed late after every session. I also made myself available through the app Remind, where students could easily text me with questions or concerns about coursework.

This took time, but I never had a virtual office hour without a student stopping by—I can't say that was true for my at-school office hours pre-COVID. Some of my best teaching happened during these virtual meeting and I'm


going to make them a part of courses from now on.

5. Social media works for me. I used social media to keep the discussion going even after my courses were over. I use Instagram and Twitter to share with my students the latest in educational research and the latest in public discourse about education.

I think it is my responsibility as an educator to make my students aware of what our field of study has to say about

current issues, but also the variety of resources that are available for them. For each class I teach, I create a hashtag of the course number and tell students to search for it and share and respond. It's a great way to connect my students to the larger world, but also to model responsible social media use. My favorite part of this has been that my former students have started their own active professional social media accounts and share some of the great work they are doing in their communities.

I refuse to let COVID-19 defeat me as an educator. I think it is my job to find a way to teach my students. It's not easy and sometimes it's clunky (the first few weeks were nothing short of ugly), but we're all going through so much that it just seems like I should see my work as an educator as a vehicle to support and empower my students—to make their lives better and to model for them what showing up really means.

COVID-19 made me stop and really think about what I teach, what's important, and see this as a way to make things even better. Find the good in the work that you do, and feel free to share with me on Twitter @careyingle and on Instagram @teachingandlearningw-dringle. 

Jeanne Carey Ingle, Ph.D., is an associate professor at Bridgewater State University (MA). She is relatively new to higher education after working for many years as an urban elementary school teacher. She teaches courses in elementary education, inequality in education, educational technology and English learner education. In addition, she coordinates student teaching experiences and undergraduate research programs. Her research includes teacher experiences during remote emergency teaching, best methods for supporting English learners, increasing access to undergraduate research for marginalized groups and using immersive technologies to prepare pre-service teachers. Follow Jeanne on Twitter @careyingle and on Instagram @teachingandlearningw-dringle.

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false positives of 100 percent home internet access. As a 1:1 district, his administration had previously recognized the need for universal access so that students could work as well from home as they do at school.

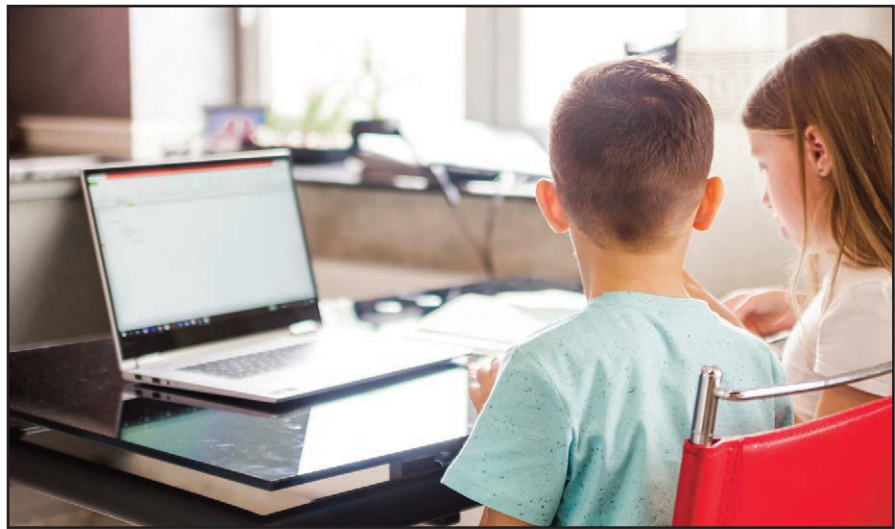
Part of the initiative included working with a local cable provider to offer discount access for families in need. Once the students were working from home, though, students who normally completed all work were missing assignments because they were using the Wi-Fi from local businesses or spending extra time at school.

Similarly, Dr. Steven Webb, superintendent of Vancouver Public Schools (WA), found that the district needed to rethink the idea of Wi-Fi hotspots. While families could drive students to school and sit in the parking lot to gain internet access, it's not an ideal learning situation. Again, pre-pandemic, they started working with the community members to deploy hotspots so students could continue their classwork without sitting in a vehicle.

In addition, the current reliance on distance learning—and the potential to need it again—has opened many families' eyes as to why schools are spending so much on edtech. Although all of the presenters had tech programs prior to the crisis, they weren't all met with enthusiasm.

Dr. Donna Wright, director of schools for Wilson County Schools (TN), said they learned that digital access and literacy are a community issue and that they need to address all of their stakeholders to help them understand the goals of their edtech initiatives. At Dr. Wright's school, for instance, they not only created student guides for distance learning, but they created parent guides as well. Her district is giving the parents the support they need to become digital learners.

Likewise, Dr. Miyashiro said they accepted, in some households, that the school-issued device would be the only



one in the house. So, some of their learning programs come with parent licenses so that everyone can take advantage of the resources. This approach mirrors the district's two-generation approach to poverty where they not only try to get the kids to see their potential, but also the families.

Of course, the most alarming part of this school year is that no one was prepared for the impact of COVID-19. As schools prepare for the 2020-2021 school year, the presenters have had many opportunities to listen to their stakeholders. Now is the time to listen about how they perceived the past months—what worked with distance learning, what didn't, what other needs could the school address, etc. With all of the back-to-school plans, administrators are also preparing to go into quarantine again, and they need input on how to make sure all students are moving forward.

The presenters reiterated that distance learning cannot replace in-person interaction and that technology cannot replace teachers, but with some planning now, edtech can help them achieve an equitable environment for all students.

About the presenters

Dr. David Miyashiro currently serves as Superintendent of The Cajon Valley Union School District (CVUSD). Dr. Miyashiro completed his doctoral stud-

ies at UCLA. He was named 2016 Superintendent of the Year by ACSA (Association of California School Administrators), Region 18. Cajon Valley's vision of "Happy Kids, Engaged in Healthy Relationships, on a Path to Gainful Employment" and its signature career development program, "The World of Work," has garnered both national and global recognition.

Dr. Steven Webb is Superintendent of Vancouver Public Schools, Vancouver, Washington. In 2019 Vancouver Public Schools received CoSN's Community Leadership Award for Digital Equity. Dr. Webb holds a doctoral degree from Seattle University. He is a member of the Horace Mann League, Digital Promise League of Innovative Schools, and the American Association of School Administrators. He served as the 2017-18 president of the Washington Association of School Administrators. Dr. Webb has been recognized with several awards, including the 2018 National School Public Relations Association's Bob Grossman Leadership in School Communications Award, and was a finalist for AASA's 2016 National Superintendent of the Year. He is a frequent presenter at state, regional and national conferences and a published author in professional journals. Dr. Webb is a hands-on leader who has visited hundreds of classrooms at 37 school sites, worked the various jobs of

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Transformations: Learning with COVID-19

How to ensure home broadband access for every student

How can families ensure their children have the home broadband access necessary to truly learn online?



BY DENNIS PIERCE

When the coronavirus pandemic forced students into remote learning this past spring, many telecommunications companies stepped up to offer free or deeply discounted home broadband access to families who couldn't afford it. Now, those temporary offers have largely expired — and yet remote learning seems likely to continue in at least some capacity when school resumes this fall.

This raises key questions for K-12 leaders to resolve: How will students from low-income families connect to the internet to learn from home if they can't attend school physically this fall? What role can school systems play in ensuring home broadband access for all students, given the budget crisis many districts will be facing next year?

The simplest solution would be for the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to lift the restrictions barring E-rate recipients from using their networks to extend broadband service into students' homes. However, this scenario isn't likely to happen, according to John Harrington, CEO of the consulting firm Funds For Learning (FFL), which helps schools successfully apply for E-rate discounts.

In an interview, Harrington said that FCC Chairman Ajit Pai believes the agency doesn't have the legal authority to lift this rule. Instead, he said, K-12 leaders must look to Congress for help — and Harrington urged leaders to contact their senators and representatives to lobby for more federal aid to support home broadband access.

In May, the U.S. House of Representatives approved a second

coronavirus stimulus bill, known as the Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. The bill would provide \$90 billion in additional money for K-12 schools and colleges, as well as \$1.5 billion for an Emergency Connectivity Fund administered by the FCC to pay for WiFi hotspots and other home connectivity solutions to help with remote learning. (As of press time, the Senate had yet to take up the bill.)

The HEROES Act is a good start, Harrington said — but it doesn't come close to meeting the need for home broadband access across the United States.

According to a report from Common Sense Media, some 15 million to 16 million students (about 30 percent) lack either high-speed internet access or a computing device to learn from home — and 9 million students lack both. What's more, as many as 400,000 teachers face the same barriers in teaching from home.

Using federal Census data, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) estimates that 9 percent of U.S. families can't afford home broadband access, FFL says — which works out to 7.15 million U.S. households. Equipping these households with a digital device, broadband service, and internet security would cost an estimated \$7.5 billion altogether, FFL calculates.

Working with the Schools, Health, and Libraries Broadband Coalition and the State E-rate Coordinators Alliance, FFL has drafted a proposal that would close this gap. The plan, called the Remote Learning During COVID-19

Initiative, calls for \$5.25 billion in federal funding for schools and libraries to provide broadband access for families who can't afford it.

The funding would be distributed according to the E-rate formula, with schools and libraries contributing a portion of the cost themselves based on National School Lunch Program data. More than 1,900 individuals and organizations have endorsed the proposal, including the American Library Association and personnel from hundreds of school systems.

Although the proposal hasn't made it into a House or Senate bill yet, Harrington said he's heard interest from lawmakers on both sides of the political aisle. He urged K-12 leaders to sign the letter endorsing the plan or at least contact their federal legislators to raise awareness of the need for home broadband access to support remote learning — and to think about contingency plans if Congress doesn't act before the new school year begins.

"The 'homework gap' is a misnomer," he noted. "It's no longer just about homework. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed how essential home broadband access is for students to learn."

The former editor of eSchool News, Dennis Pierce is now a freelance writer. He has spent the last 20 years as an education journalist covering issues such as national policy, school reform, and educational technology. Dennis has taught high school English, math, and SAT prep. He graduated cum laude from Yale University. He welcomes comments at dennisp@eschoolmedia.com.

How districts can use data now to plan for the fall

Start the year strong by leveraging existing and new metrics to identify performance gaps and increase performance

BY JANELLE CACH AND RIELLE GRANT

As schools rushed to move face-to-face classes online, the unique challenges faced by students attempting to learn remotely came to the surface. The enormous loss of instructional time caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to widen performance gaps in public education.

The early warning indicators that districts typically use as predictors of performance and engagement—such as attendance, suspensions, and summative assessment scores—are not data points districts are currently tracking. Knowing that, how should you be thinking about student performance? What new or additional data points are critical for understanding how students are engaging remotely?

There's still relevance in your historic data

While you may not have data from this spring, you likely have historic data from past benchmark assessments to see student performance trends in previous screening windows. You can start to get a sense of where students were and where they should be at this time. This historic data can provide great insights into populations of students that typically have performed below district benchmarks so that you can make critical decisions on how to support them once schools reopen.

New data metrics to consider

Another interesting metric to consider is Distance Learning Engagement. Keeping track of which students have come to pick-up paper packets, which have engaged with online learning tools, and which students teachers been able to consistently reach or those who

they've struggled to maintain contact with—can all provide context. Distance Learning Engagement may also be a predictive indicator for teachers as they're preparing for formal instruction again this fall.



In addition, you have access to formative and normed assessments. While there are considerations to keep in mind when thinking about testing at home, know that there are ways to still get a pulse on student learning gains and gaps. A number of assessment vendors are starting to offer at-home assessment options, like Renaissance's Star Assessments.

Ensure you're equitably serving all students

Once you've considered which new metrics to add, it's essential to disaggregate by key groups such as English Learner status, SPED status, gender, ethnicity, and grade level to ensure students are receiving equitable support and engaging with instruction while at home.

We encourage that you also consider the level of technology and internet access at home in understanding the full picture of performance and a student's

ability to engage in distance learning. Storing this data in your student information system will help as you make plans for the different support you will need to provide students if distance learning resumes again this fall.

Districts have leveraged Schoolzilla for these reasons, and when school districts open in the fall, it can help them prioritize how they think about how they support the unique needs of all students, ensuring they are receiving an adequate amount of support, touchpoints, resources, and more.

Actionable ideas for fall

Over the past few months, many people in education have been focused on the immediate task at hand: teaching and supporting students remotely. Upon their return, it is critical that students receive as much time as they can get in the classroom, and that their instructional time is focused. Teachers can provide differentiated instruction while offering support to every learner. The early data is going to be essential for identifying where students need direct support. Teachers need to focus on those specific areas where students are lacking, and they need the discretion to do so from their school districts.

The upcoming school year might look a little different than years past, but there is an urgency to catch students up, and the need to see student growth is more pressing than ever before. Having a data analytics or progress-monitoring tool that is aligned to your strategic plan will help district and school leaders implement best practices and intervene with the students that need their support most.

eSN

Janelle Cach and Rielle Grant are Partnerships Leads at Schoolzilla.

10 ways assessment reform can help guide a new era in education

States are challenged to find assessments that present an accurate picture of student learning in order to direct resources to those who need them most

BY DR. AALIYAH SAMUEL

The spread of the coronavirus transformed our education system overnight. With school districts completely caught off-guard by the speed and severity of the outbreak, the U.S. Department of Education announced flexibility for states to cancel their annual summative assessments and accountability ratings for the 2019-2020 school year.

As the start of a new school year rapidly approaches, it is still not clear what form schools will take. Prioritizing the creation of a healthy environment where students can continue to learn should be paramount. In this unpredictable environment, education leaders have expressed interest in assessment and accountability flexibility. However, as policy makers determine what that flexibility looks like, they should consider the consequences of pausing testing for another year.

Now more than ever, states must find a way to assess student learning. Failure to capture where students are this fall and how they are performing relative to grade-level expectations at year's end may result in an inability to direct resources to students who need it most, further exacerbating deep and long-standing inequities within our communities and school systems.

Calls to consider additional flexibility are warranted, but there are more constructive ways for policy makers to lead assessment and accountability reform. As such, here are 10 ways states and the U.S. Department of Education can expand learning opportunities and better serve the education community.

State policies

Invest in remote proctoring: It is likely that hybrid learning is here to stay, and educators may not be able to



administer tests in the typical classroom setting. The transition to online proctoring offers a chance for educators to overcome the limits of in-person testing environments and address student learning needs with timely, accurate, and relevant student achievement data.

Build in equity and accessibility: Education leaders have an opportunity to refine how standardized assessments are used to address systemic inequities in learning opportunities. Assessment systems that provide cohesion across measurement, rigorous standards, and high-quality curriculum can create efficiencies that will enable teachers to spend more time engaging students and expanding instructional offerings that accelerate learning.

Support innovative assessment: Comprehensive assessment data must be available to teachers, students, and families. Districts can work with states to rethink how statewide summative test designs can also support instructional leadership, scaffolding, and differentiat-

ed pacing through competency-based or through-year assessment models.

Be intentional about growth and proficiency: States must consider how much growth is realistic over the course of next year and how to weigh proficiency and growth altogether. Students could return in the fall having lost as much as a year of learning, and state leaders should consider the fairness of using proficiency standards for accountability purposes. This does not mean that proficiency should not be measured or that the goal of reaching or exceeding proficiency should change, but rather that it will realistically take time to get students back on track.

Build transparency with seasonal learning trajectories: Interim assessments used to measure school effectiveness illustrate seasonal learning patterns attributed to the traditional school calendar. Using data patterns to explore student progress related to strategic inputs is one avenue for state leaders to

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build transparency, communication, and trust into their school systems within an evolving context.

Use long-term growth for school improvement goals: Student growth data is an important step in determining the impact of spring school closures on student achievement and identifying future interventions. Even though many states lack spring 2020 data, they can measure student growth over two years instead of one by using their spring 2019 and spring 2021 test data. The two-year approach is applicable for different growth models


10 ways assessment reform can help guide a new era in education

Encourage research partnerships: The U.S. Department of Education can incentivize states to collaborate with research institutions that are identifying optimal methods for addressing the challenges of distance and hybrid learning. Statewide research partnerships are useful for rapid design, exploration, and innovative testing features that can eventually be scaled.

Refrain from providing blanket waiver opportunities for spring 2021 testing: While it is clear that the coron-

avirus will continue to impact schools learning over time, address federal accountability requirements, and are transparent for educators and parents.

A new path forward in education

The education system in the U.S. is on the edge of a precipice, and decisions made by policy makers today could affect the lives of generations of students across the country. Within the seemingly insurmountable challenge of reconsidering our traditional back-to-school routines lies an opportunity to reimagine systems of assessment and accountability. We can use this time to address long-standing educational inequities and remove systemic barriers that are inherent within our assumptions about measurement, achievement, ability, and schooling. By doing so, we, as an education community, can establish a new era for education instead of returning to business as usual. 

The education system in the U.S. is on the edge of a precipice, and decisions made by policy makers today could affect the lives of generations of students across the country.

and can also be disaggregated by student subgroups, an important feature for understanding how the collective trauma of a global health pandemic affects different student communities.

Federal policies

Fund assessments aligned with distance and hybrid learning: States and districts can use next year as an opportunity to explore innovative assessment systems that meet the new bounds of distance and hybrid learning. In the wake of other disruptions to learning, researchers have discovered that innovation and stamina are key to getting students back on track and reaching their highest potential. Achieving a systematic approach to high-quality innovation requires targeted investments in infrastructure that supports distance and hybrid learning across the teaching, learning, and assessment systems.

avirus will continue to impact schools into the 2020-21 school year, teaching and learning will still take place, and we should not assume now that schools will be closed in spring 2021. Blanket waivers from ESSA and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act are dangerous and unnecessary next year and beyond. The federal government should work with individual states to apply a continuum of targeted flexibilities regarding the accountability and assessment provisions, maintaining integrity to the spirit and intent of the law while also ensuring historically underserved students remain protected.

Incentivize reduction of test redundancies: The growing needs of students and inconsistent school environments require summative assessment to move closer to instruction. The federal government can elevate states whose assessment systems capture student

Dr. Aaliyah Samuel has experience in policy development and implementation at the local, state, and national level. With expertise from early childhood through higher education, Aaliyah leads a team driving an ambitious state and federal education agenda focused on systems-level change. Prior to NWEA, Aaliyah was the Director of Education at the National Governors Association. In this role, she informed state policy agendas, assisted with developing cross systems approaches to create policy solutions to support children and families, and drove strategic planning efforts. Aaliyah holds an undergraduate degree from Tuskegee University, a master's from University of South Florida, and specialist and EdD degrees from Nova Southeastern University. In 2019, she was appointed as a Fellow to the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

5 cybersecurity life skills to teach year-round

As the digital world evolves, cybersecurity life skills are more essential than ever—here are some major lessons to impart upon students

BY RYAN CLOUTIER

If a student from your school had someone knock on their front door, ask for personal information and offer to give them a treat in exchange for that information, what would happen? It depends on the child, but what you know for certain is that your district or school has been teaching stranger danger since that child was in kindergarten, so the odds are good that the interaction would raise a red flag for the student.

Why is it, then, that students are posting videos and photos on TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat without any concern that their school name or home address is displayed prominently in the background?

The reason is simple: we – parents and educators alike – aren't adequately teaching our kids cyber life skills designed to protect them online.

Life skills are relative – and ever-evolving

Simply put, life skills have always been relative to the time of society. When sabre toothed tigers roamed the earth in 10,000 BC, humans were taught to watch them because their lives, literally, depended on it. When automobiles became more commonplace in the early 1900's, we had to teach children to look both ways before crossing the street.

Historically, when there have been major changes to the daily norm, we have adjusted our life skills to accommodate those changes – except over the past 20 years. Despite what is arguably the most significant change society has ever undergone – the advent of the internet – we've done very little to adjust to the massive technological changes over the past two decades or to properly prepare our children for how the innovation can and will impact their lives. Technology is wonderful in the ways that it's wonderful. But, without educa-



tion and guidance, it moves very quickly into truly dangerous territory.

Cyberbullying education isn't enough

While schools are putting devices in the hands of students as early as kindergarten, and many families are doing so at an even earlier age, we generally are not giving kids the instruction or guidance on how to manage their health and wellbeing, time or security online.

While there have been proactive pockets of parents and educators who were ahead of the curve and informed themselves about both the pluses and minuses of technology, no one could have anticipated the universal adoption of smart phones or the addictive power of social platforms targeted at kids.

One area we have seen schools target heavily with regard to technology is cyberbullying. And while this vicious type of interaction between kids needs to stop, it really is something that schools are already familiar with and have programs in place to handle it.

What's even more important is to educate kids about how to protect themselves online, how to identify red flags and when to ask for help when the

broader, global online community (yes, including their classmates) is held in the palm of their hands.

Cybersecurity life skills to teach

As consumers ourselves, we know that privacy is important. I contend, however, that privacy is an end game and that there are other cyber life skills we need to teach more urgently that will help get us to privacy.

Let's take a look at five areas that we can really dig into with students that will make a difference in terms of how they conduct – and protect – themselves online.

Cybersecurity Life Skill #1: Digital is real: The physiological responses humans experience when they are in danger – increased heartbeat or breathing, etc. – don't translate well to the online world. We have to teach kids how to identify risk without those cues and understand that the digital world is the real world. There is no separation between what they say and do on TikTok and what they say and do in their living room.

Cybersecurity Life Skill #2: Healthy skepticism: It sounds dramatic,

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but it's not: children today are subjected to military and nation-state grade psychological warfare. From the ads they are served to the click-bait headlines that flash across their Pinterest boards, students are being fed propaganda, and it's our job to teach them now to stop, think critically, and question why they are seeing what they are seeing. One simple tactic that can be adjusted, depending on the age of the child, is to imagine how they would react if the situation they face online were happening in the physical world.

Cybersecurity Life Skill #3: Trust but verify: Just like we teach students to cite sources in a bibliography, we need to educate them that everything online needs to be verified. Is what you're seeing on your social platform confirmed in a trusted media outlet? An aside-political propaganda is not just for adults. Nation-state influence is also targeted at children who have influence over part of their parents' voting decisions, in addition to being a long-game

for when those students can vote.

Cybersecurity Life Skill #4: Digital ethics and information warfare: "Don't look at your neighbor's paper" is the first time we teach students about ethics. We have to translate this to the digital realm and help them be aware of sensitive content so they don't mistakenly take photos that have mom and dad's mortgage statement in the background or that capture an older sibling in a swimsuit as he or she walks by. Additionally, students must learn to be selective about who they share personal information with. Online, a "bad guy" doesn't always look like a bad guy – it can look surprisingly like a harmless "fellow student."

Cybersecurity Life Skill #5: When to tell: Kids have to know when to ask for help from an adult they trust. Kindergarteners should tell a parent if they are ever invited to a chat room. A middle- or high-schooler needs to get help when conversation turns to sexual advances or requests for inappropriate photos. The guidance changes year to year, but recognizing something has gone too far and asking for help is ageless.

Cyber security life skills are every bit as important as learning to read, write, or add. They should be taught as soon as a student is given a device to use, and they need to be reinforced every year. We can scale the lessons according to age and grade level, but the principle is the same: today, we live our lives online and have to take precautions to protect ourselves in the digital world.

Instructors know how to reach their students, so teaching these lessons will vary school to school according to their student population. The most important thing is to prioritize cyber life skills and make them part of the ongoing curriculum. **eSN**

Ryan Cloutier, CISSP, is the principal security consultant at SecurityStudio, which works to fix information security industry problems through simplification. A passionate cybersecurity thought leader Ryan is an advisor on the Consortium for School Networking (CoSN) Cyber Security Advisory Panel and can be reached at rcloutier@securitystudio.com.

A plan for teaching coding and robotics from home

Coding and robotics can be just as engaging when students learn from home—all it takes is a little planning and some creativity

BY JOE SLIFKA

When our school shut down in March, initially, it was for a two-week period. I thought, "Well, this isn't too bad, we can do a few coding activities from Code.org or maybe put together some Google Slides presentations for when we return."

Then, two weeks turned into the end of April and my plan had to change.

As the technology teacher in our district, I felt I was adept at communicating with my students online (we are a Google Apps for Education school, and

I've been a Google Classroom user since its beginnings), but I knew others in our district weren't quite as tech savvy. I put together a few tutorial videos on how to use Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Zoom for our staff members to use to reach out to their students.

As April turned into May, the likelihood that we would be returning to school dropped substantially. Virtual graduations, meal deliveries, and Google Meets became the new normal—a phrase I quickly came to despise. As

I'm sure many of you educators out there would agree, we concluded our school year, but it felt like we never really finished.

Since then, we've had virtual staff meetings, listened to our elected leaders try to make informed and well-intended guidelines and recommendations, and witnessed some amazing acts of humanity. As more information becomes available, it is clearer and clearer that plans need to be made for the "just in case" scenario occurring again during the

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2020-2021 school year.

Teaching coding, robotics, and CAD this school year requires a bit more planning this summer than I am accustomed to doing. Our district will continue utilizing the Google Education Suite (Classroom, Meet, Chat, Docs, etc.) for communicating with our students. The


LaBrae, when I approached our superintendent and shared with him my vision of expanding our course offerings and taking our afterschool robotics club to the next level. After researching solutions, I concluded that the TETRIX MAX solution from Pitsco Education was the next logical progression for our district due to compatibility with the LEGO system as well as the capability to scale up our build projects.

multiple motors, servos, distance sensor, line finder sensor, and the blinking LED lights of the PRIZM controller into a single learning station. If we start the school year in a face-to-face scenario, I plan to have the students build the PLM so that I can show best building practices using the TETRIX system, cable/wire management, and creating a wiring guide.

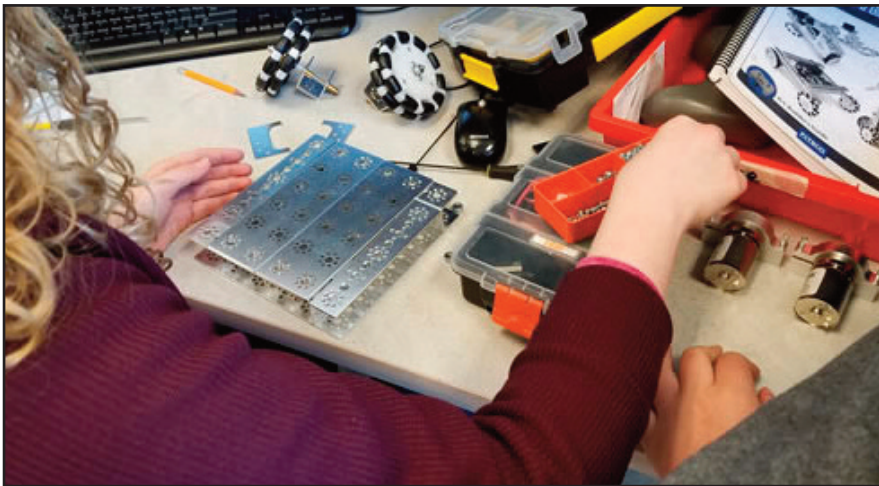
The PLM will serve as a springboard to coding, as many of my HS students will be first-time robotics students and will be using the text-based programming in the Arduino IDE for the first time. If our district moves forward with a hybrid approach of in-person and at-home learning, or if a resurgence occurs and forces schools to close again, students will be able to continue working and creating their code at home.

Once students feel they have successfully completed the code, they can either email the file to me or upload it in an assignment in our Google Classroom page. Then, I will be able to take their program and demonstrate the code on a PLM I will bring home with me, and I can share the results via video chat.

As we progress out of the PLM and into building the RangerBot basic driving robot from the Engineering Mobile Robotics Curriculum Pack and the BeeDee design from the Coding Essentials Curriculum Pack, students will be able to create programs for the challenges from the curriculum packs, and I can again demonstrate with them their solutions on identical fields I plan to have both in my classroom and in my basement here at home.

We are also looking to get our hands on the new Tello EDU drone kits available now from Pitsco, though I am not sure my dogs will be big fans of them buzzing around the house as my students take their coding skills to the skies! 

Joe Slifka is the technology teacher for LaBrae Local School District in Leavittsburg, OH. He is passionate about integrating robotics in his daily lessons and helping students become creators through technology.



If our district moves forward with a hybrid approach of in-person and at-home learning, or if a resurgence occurs and forces schools to close again, students will be able to continue working and creating their code at home.

folks at Code.org have really done a fantastic job at creating a comprehensive coding curriculum for students, so I want to continue utilizing that to introduce coding in my “virtual” classroom.

The physical component

However, learning to code was always reinforced for me with a physical component, which is why I absolutely love teaching robotics—seeing my program in action with a robot driving forward and moving an object just made more sense to me and my kinesthetic learning style. Kinesthetic learners feel the same way.

I had been teaching using the LEGO Mindstorms EV3 system in my junior high classes my first three years at

At the beginning of this past school year, I was elated to learn that my district would be purchasing PRIZM controllers, as well as the new TeleOp Modules, for each of our TETRIX MAX kits. This ushered in a whole new level of capabilities for our robotics classes. When word got out that we were using PlayStation 4 controllers in class on our robots, we had teachers and students alike peeking their heads in Room 929 to ask if they could try them out!

Coding and robotics online

So, what will teaching robotics and coding look like in 2020-2021? My plan is to introduce my students to the PRIZM Learning Module (PLM), a rectangular station I created that utilizes

15 skills students need for success — and how to teach them

Some skills aren't easily taught, but they're essential as students leave school and enter the global workforce

BY KATRINA SALAZAR

21st century skills. Social and emotional learning skills. “Soft” skills. Whatever you choose to call them, there is a set of skills that are essential for success in school, work, and life — and yet teaching and assessing these skills in a formal, structured way can be challenging.

According to a report from McKinsey & Co., the global workforce will undergo a dramatic shift as a result of automation. The need for basic cognitive skills will decline by 15 percent over the course of this decade, while skills that can't easily be replaced by computers — social and emotional skills such as leadership and empathy, and higher cognitive skills such as creativity and critical thinking — will be in high demand.

These are the skills we should be teaching in schools if we want to prepare students for the jobs of the future: skills that make us uniquely human, that differentiate us from machines. The ability to solve complex problems, adapt on the fly to rapidly changing circumstances, and dig deeper when the going gets tough, among others.

Honing these skills not only positions students for success in the workforce; it also prepares them to overcome adversity in school and life. It makes them more complete human beings who are able to thrive in any number of situations and cultivate rich, rewarding relationships with others.

Schools often struggle to teach and assess these foundational skills. However, working with researchers at Kansas University's Achievement and Assessment Institute, we've developed a framework for doing just that. What's more, we can teach these critical skills in a way that deeply resonates with students — by having them play popular video games like League of Legends or Overwatch.

Gaming is actually a fitting platform for students to learn the core skills for success. Many of the attributes they'll need to excel in school or the workforce — teamwork, problem solving, and so on — correlate with success in the game world and other arenas.

We've identified 33 discrete skills that we can teach, measure, and develop through game play. From this list, we chose 15 of the most relevant skills that apply to gaming, and we've grouped them into five different categories. They are...

Leadership

- **Assertiveness:** Expressing one's feelings and needs directly, while maintaining respect for others.
- **Decision making:** Judiciously evaluating all available information to arrive at an optimal way of thinking or acting.
- **Resource management:** Taking inventory of, tracking, and actively being aware of available resources in order to be better prepared.

Teamwork

- **Collaboration:** Working together with others to achieve a goal desired by all.
- **Conflict resolution:** The reduction of discord between individuals or groups through the use of active strategies such as negotiation, bargaining, or compromise.
- **Adaptability:** The ability to adjust one's emotional response in an optimal manner for a given situation, successfully recover from disadvantageous circumstances, or adjust positively to change.

Communication

- **Active listening:** A process of listening to another person closely and

attentively, and asking questions as needed, to understand the other person's message and emotions.

- **Empathy:** The capacity for understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another.
- **Friendliness:** The quality of appearing likeable and trustworthy to other people and demonstrating caring and respect for them.

Problem solving

- **Creativity:** The ability to produce and develop original work, theories, techniques, or thoughts.
- **Critical thinking:** The process of conceptualizing, analyzing, synthesizing, and applying information in an objective manner in order to arrive at a conclusion or form a judgment.
- **Goal setting:** The process of identifying something you want to achieve and methodically planning the steps you can take to attain this goal.

Character

- **Grit:** The ability to persist in the face of difficult challenges, resulting in successful goal attainment.
- **Ownership:** Taking responsibility for one's actions or contributions to a particular outcome.
- **Self-control:** The ability to control oneself mentally, emotionally, and behaviorally, especially in difficult or oppositional situations.

When we introduce these skills to students, we typically start with the skills related to character. We talk about what “character” means within the context of gaming: how students pick the character they're going to be in the video game, and how each character has

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certain skills, strengths, and weaknesses. To succeed within the game, students have to understand their character's attributes and also those of the other characters they're playing with. This is how we get them to think about their own personal skills and attributes, and we talk about what "character" means outside the world of gaming.

Once students have an understanding of the skills that correlate with success, they break into teams to play a game. Immediately after the game is over, students are asked to rate themselves and their teammates on how well they applied these various skills within the game.

This self-reflection is very powerful, and it has a huge effect on how students approach the game the next time they play. It's fascinating to see how quickly their behavior changes from one game to the next as they consciously try to apply certain skills.

We use a series of algorithmic models



to measure each student's skills and track their growth over time, based on their own and their peers' assessments — and we're seeing tremendous growth in the skills that matter most for success.

At Jane Addams High School in Los Angeles, students initially mistook assertiveness for being rude. Through successive game playing, they had a massive breakthrough, realizing that rudeness and assertiveness are two different things. "I feel as if I did even better at this game and was able to assert myself even more without being rude," one student wrote in a self-reflection.

In the Lennox School District, an urban district outside Los Angeles, 95

percent of students in a pilot project improved key skills. In a striking display of ownership, one fourth-grade girl who was the leader of her team lost her self-control during game play and wasn't able to direct her team. At the end of the game, she stood up and said, "I just want to apologize to my team because I forgot to be positive, and it lost us this game. I know we can do it, and I'll be more positive next time. Thank you guys for supporting me."

Focusing on grades and test scores alone is a very one-dimensional way to assess students' abilities; it doesn't provide much insight into how we can help them flourish. Schools need to become proficient at teaching and measuring the skills that underlie success in any endeavor. These 15 skills are an excellent start, and gaming marks an ideal platform for learning them. **eSN**

Katrina Salazar is the CEO of weThink, which helps schools teach and assess the skills required for students to succeed in all walks of life.

Getting There: Innovation in Education

Feedback and flexibility: Two keywords for one district's goal for fall

BY KEVIN HOGAN

As the newly-installed Director of Student Information at Barrington School District in suburban Chicago (IL), a district with 9,000 students and 13 schools, Phil Hintz has an added challenge to an already impossible situation—discover unprecedented solutions in an entirely new environment.

In this conversation with eSchool News, Phil details how the district is reinventing itself through data collection, making tough logistical decisions, and inspiring both faculty and parents to stretch their imaginations when it comes to instruction.

ESN: What a year to be the new guy.

PH: Five days in! it's a different role that allows me to do different things than I've done before. For the past 14 years, I was in the CTO role and had to manage all of the technology. Now I'm only managing an aspect of technology for the school district, which is pretty awesome.

ESN: So how is planning going?

PH: We already sent a survey to our parents in the spring asking them, "How do you feel about going back to school? What are your thoughts?" And from that survey, we realized that about 80 percent of our parents want their kids to physically be in school.

So next week we'll send another sur-

vey that fine-tunes the question. If you have multiple kids in your family, are some of those kids going to stay home? Maybe you have a child with special needs or special health concerns, and you want to hold them back but your other kids can go. Or maybe there are younger children you want to hold back.

Then we can start to plan transportation. We need that decision process so we can plan our routes. Who's going to be riding and not riding? How many buses are we going to need in service all the time? Those two pieces of information are critical right now for us.

ESN: Sounds complicated.

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Combining distance learning with interactive, hands-on STEM

Hands-on STEM experiences aren't impossible when learning goes virtual—it just takes a little creativity to help engage students

BY ROBERT LOW

One of the many challenges with distance learning is finding ways for students to engage in active and interpersonal learning experiences that increase their understanding of STEM. These types of activities are especially important because they can make abstract scientific concepts more accessible, and engage diverse learners in using engineering processes that are helpful for 21st century careers.

During a recent edWebinar, Jill Olson, the Director of Operations and Professional Development for EiE, a curriculum developed by Boston's Museum of Science, provided a framework for integrating hands-on, interactive STEM projects with distance learning.

Citing the work of Lev Vygotsky, Olson noted the importance of engaging students in discourse that helps them link thought to language and make new connections as they learn. She also explained how providing structured learning activities, in which students can draw on concepts, tools, and processes, helps the students make sense of educational experiences and build knowledge.

Creating a generation of problem solvers

While using remote technologies for learning has limitations, Olson pointed out that students can still be provided with information and projects and then work together in small groups online, sharing ideas and collaborating before reporting their findings to the entire class.

To organize and facilitate this process, Olson recommends using the Engineering Design Process (EDP), a sequence that includes asking, imagining, planning, creating, and improving



in order to achieve a goal. In addition to being something the students use, this can also be a process that teachers use and share with their students, in order to develop meaningful STEM experiences.

The EDP is a supportive and equitable process for students because there is no single right answer, and the development of many possible solutions is supported. This enables students with different approaches to see themselves as successful in their own way. The EDP also removes stigma from failure by making it a natural and important part of the learning process.

Implementing effective STEM activities

To develop remote STEM projects that meet students' learning needs, Olson first recommends deciding which lessons and projects will work well remotely, and which ones need to be adapted or omitted. This will require mindful, strategic choices that include consideration of which materials students may have access to, and how the materials can be managed or stored over time.

A related consideration is the at-home environment in which the stu-

dents do their work, as some or many students may have to share their space and devices. Explicit scheduling and instructions are therefore essential and should include how students can ask the teacher questions, how students should interact with each other during small-group work, and where and how students should turn in their findings.

A sample project Olson mentioned was developing a system to transport an object from one place to another. This could result in something as simple as sliding a toy on an inclined plane from a chair to the floor, or creating a pulley system to transfer food from one house to another.

Depending on the age of the students, Olson strongly recommends that they all use an engineering notebook or journal to record their thoughts, analyses, and reflections. Whether on paper or online, writing about their work over time provides opportunities for students to connect their thoughts to language, and make what they have learned more meaningful.

Through interactive, hands-on STEM projects, students are developing 21st century skills that can prove useful in higher education and successful

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PH: These are tough decisions. If a parent says, “I don’t want to send my kid to school in person. I want virtual instruction instead.” Then we, as a school district, are going to say, “Well, your child is not going to be in Ms. Johnson’s class because she’s teaching all the in-person kids. You’re going to have teacher XYZ because they are the virtual teacher.” So we’re going to run a kind of blended schedule, where the kids who have opted out of in-school face-to-face instruction will still get a full instruction by a teacher. It will just be virtual. So while this is giving flexibility to either being remote or being in-person, there will be restrictions in terms of which faculty. Not every classroom is going to have a camera in it.

ESN: How do you see instruction differing between these two scenarios?

PH: There’s an opportunity to have a flexible learning environment in the virtual sense. Just like with in-person instruction, we are always trying to tai-

lor every student’s education to their unique needs. But virtually, we also want to take advantage of the manipulatives and the things that are not typically in schools. For example, shoveling snow gets your aerobic heart rate up. So therefore that could be your PE class. If you’re teaching a math lesson and it requires fractions, a virtual lesson could lend itself to the materials at home, which could be chocolate chips and measuring cups and flour. Hey, we’re going to produce a chocolate chip cookie and that’s part of the lesson, but we’re going to learn math in that process.

ESN: Do you see these things as a stop-gap or is this moment where we truly do reinvent things?

PH: I honestly believe it’s a reinvention, a revolution in some ways. Look at higher education—Harvard just the other day made the determination that all classes will be online and if freshmen want to come on campus, they can but they’re still won’t be physical classes. They’re still going to have to do it virtually, whether they’re sitting in their dorm room or sitting back at home.

I think that’s a positive. We have a unique opportunity to meet the social and emotional needs of students in a different way. And we will be able to supply them with resources, whether it be virtual or in person. We can tailor every student’s education. I’ve always been a proponent of the idea every student needs an IEP. They all need an individual education plan, whether they are special education students or not. I think that this allows for that to happen. We always talk about the differentiation of instruction, but this situation is forcing the issue. **eSN**

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

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careers. These types of projects can also prepare students to become engaged citizens who help to solve the scientific and technological problems our society will continue to face in the years ahead.

About the presenter

Jill Olson is the Director of Operations and Professional Development for EiE of the Museum of Science, Boston. She joined the team in May of 2018. Before joining the Museum, Jill taught English Language Arts to 7th-grade students in her hometown north of Boston. She learned early on the importance of engaging every learner and helping each see their own potential through hands-on, collaborative, inquiry-based classroom experiences. After leaving the classroom, Jill worked in curriculum development and

educational program management. She has supported educators in implementing digital and print products in classrooms and has designed and delivered the Professional Development to support them. She is passionate about improving educator and learner experiences. Jill oversees a team that is committed to providing professional development that directly supports educators in their unique and specific environments.

About the host

Heather Gunsallus joined the Museum of Science in Boston during April 2018. She is passionate about building STEM programs that impact students’ and teachers’ lives, while building lifelong learners of STEM. Heather has 20 years of experience in building teams and products in educational technology. She has extensive experience in building and implementing both print and digital products for

today’s users. Heather has managed product and curriculum development, professional development and sales teams, and was even a classroom teacher. Heather is inspired by the possibilities of our future generation.

Join the community

STEM Learning: Full STEAM Ahead is a free professional learning community on edWeb.net that provides educators, curriculum leaders, and industry members with a place to collaborate on bringing more science, technology, engineering, and mathematics into the classroom. **eSN**

Robert Low has more than 30 years of educational publishing experience, ranging from editing and product management to online advertising and content development. He also works with edWeb.net to write articles on their professional learning edWebinars.

Equity

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the district's 3,400 employees and served on the boards of many organizations in the Vancouver community.

Dr. Donna Wright was named Tennessee's 2020 Superintendent of the Year. She began serving as Director of Schools for Wilson County Schools in 2014. Wilson County Schools is a rapidly growing school district of 19,000 students located outside of Nashville, TN. In the last several years district-wide academic performance has significantly improved; the district is undergoing the largest school building program in the history of the county; a concentrated emphasis on early literacy instruction is a focal point, and college and career readiness is a hallmark in middle and high schools. She has worked in public school education, K-12, and higher ed, for nearly 40 years. The Center for Digital Education and The National School Board Association recognized Wilson County Schools for its innovative use of technology. On May 20, 2020, Dr. Wright and the Wilson County Schools leadership team was named the 2020 winner of the CoSN District Team Leadership Award, which honors a dis-

trict leadership team for its transformative impact on student learning with technology. Dr. Wright holds a doctorate in leadership studies from the University of Tennessee, has earned several awards, including the Women of Achievement Award and the UT Educators Hall of Honor Award.


About the host

Ann McMullan is Project Director for CoSN's Empowered Superintendents Initiative. Ann served as Executive Director, Educational Technology in the Klein Independent School District, near Houston, Texas until September 2013, when she and her family moved to Los Angeles, California. For 16 years Ann led the district team that provided professional development on technology and 21st century instructional strategies to 4,000 professional educators serving 50,000 students. Ann served as co-chair of Texas Education Technology Advisory Committee which developed the Texas Long Range Plan for Technology, 2006-2020. Today, Ann is based in Los Angeles working as a public speaker, writer, and education consultant focused on leadership and planning to meet the needs of today's students. Ann serves on the Project Tomorrow advisory

council and is a leadership consultant with Executive Service Corps of Southern California, serving non-profit associations. Ann co-authored Life Lessons in Leadership, a guide for leaders ages eight to 88.

Join the community

Super-Connected is a free professional learning community on edWeb.net for school superintendents, district leadership, and aspiring district leaders.

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

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CEO Rob Morrow rmorrow@eschoolmedia.com

Vice President, Online Products & Services
Nancy David ndavid@eschoolmedia.com

Managing Editor, Content Services
Laura Ascione lascione@eschoolmedia.com

Creative Director Chris Hopson chopson@eschoolmedia.com

National Director of Sales and Business Development
Stephanie Ciotola sciotola@eschoolmedia.com
Caliann Mitoulis cmitoulis@eschoolmedia.com

Director, Client Services Denise Crowe dcrowe@eschoolmedia.com

Accounting & Vendor Data Director
Lee Calloway lcalloway@eschoolmedia.com

Director of IT Vincent Carlson vcarlson@eschoolmedia.com

Web Comm. Specialist Jeffrey Festa jfesta@eschoolmedia.com

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2275 Research Blvd. Suite 500 • Rockville, MD 20850
Phone: (301) 913-0115 • Fax: (301) 913-0119
eMail: ndavid@eSchoolNews.com
Home Page: www.eschoolnews.com

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Co-Founder Larry Siegelman 1954-2002