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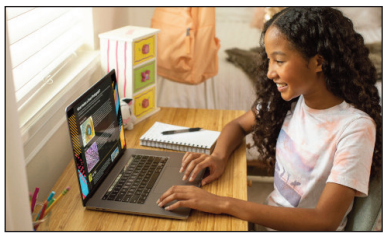

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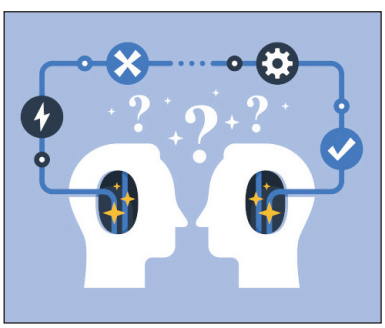

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eSCHOOL NEWS

Technology News & Innovation in K-12 Education

Vol. 25, No. 1 | eSchoolNews.com | January–March 2022

Focusing on key standards to accelerate learning

Dave Gibbons, Ed.D., Curriculum Director, Schuyler Community Schools

While each standard is important and it should not be up to individual teachers which are taught and which are not, the truth is that each year some skills get overlooked or rushed past. It may not be ideal, but there are so many that, as education researcher Bob Marzano once noted, if we taught students to master every standard in each grade, we'd have students in class year-round and they wouldn't graduate until they were in their twenties!

This year, teachers are finding themselves with even more ground to cover. In addition to the standards of the grades they're currently in, many students, particularly those in middle school, need instruction in skills they would have mastered last year without the disruptions associated with the pandemic.

Simply put, many students still need to learn material from last year before they are ready to

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4 ways to bring creativity to math instruction

Jamie MacPherson, Education Specialist, Van Andel Education Institute

Here's a question for you: *"What do you think is the most unpopular subject in school?"* If you thought the safe answer was math, then you'd be right. According to numerous surveys, mathematics is easily one of the most disliked subjects in school, regularly scoring in the bottom three. I can certainly understand the sentiment. As a student, I didn't like math much either.

Now, as an educator, I can see the inherent difficulties to teaching math to K-12 students. Kids often feel that math is both pointless and boring. It usually doesn't play a big role in their daily life and lacks the flare of other disciplines. This can dampen their engagement and cause them to miss crucial knowledge that will ultimately help them in their learning journey.

This begs the question: How do we as teachers infuse curiosity and creativity into our math lessons?

The art of math

Imagine for a moment if we taught art the same way we taught math. We hand students a color-by-number worksheet and tell them which colors to use and where to place them. They turn one in, and we give them another. You can practically feel the imagination drain away just by reading those words. With math, worksheets can serve as helpful practice, but it doesn't accentuate the subject's creative potential or engage student interest.

Student attitude towards the subjects that we're teaching matters. A recent Stanford University study found that "if you have a strong interest and self-perceived ability in

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Standards

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progress to this year's standards. Here's how my district, Schuyler Community Schools, is working to get students up to speed while still addressing the new content they need to learn this year.

Identifying the critical standards

Our district began prioritizing standards years ago. While we certainly don't encourage teachers to skip any standards, we know that students simply do not have the time to attain deep mastery of each one. As we're prioritizing a standard, we look at a range of factors, such as the leverage it provides for future learning, the breadth and depth of the standard, and whether it will be assessed.

The idea is not to ignore standards that have less depth or that students won't be assessed on. The district always expects teachers to touch on each standard, but at the end of the year, our priority standards are the ones that students must understand and master to continue their learning progression.

Nebraska recently adopted the ACT as a state assessment, so we have prioritized standards to account for what it assesses. Students take the ACT in 11th grade, but they can't learn everything it covers during that one year, so we've gone all the way back to our standards from kindergarten to make sure that we're prioritizing standards that align with those later skills.

How to find the most productive focus

Last year, Renaissance released a free resource, Focus Skills, that works similarly to our standards prioritization. Based on learning progressions for each state, Focus Skills reflect the reading and math standards that are prerequisites for future learning. Renaissance has also added Trip Steps, which are the math skills that are demonstrably more difficult than other skills at the same grade level.

These tools help us guide our teachers to spend the most time on skills that are 1) necessary for future learning; and 2) difficult for students to understand. This year, when students have many gaps in their learning, we're also helping teachers identify the skills from the previous year that are most critical for students' current grade, along with the ones they're most likely to need a little extra time with.

Targeting instruction with assessment data and key standards

Once teachers have a detailed picture of what skills are absolutely essential for future learning, what skills from last year are key to understanding this year's curriculum, and what skills their students are struggling with, they can look through benchmark assessments from the beginning of the school year to see where students might have missed some instruction. Teachers can't just stop this year's grade-level instruction to review everything from last year, so we've been trying to find ways to scaffold in the pieces of this year's material that build upon what students may have missed last year.

For example, this year our daily bell ringers have become an opportunity to refamiliarize students with concepts from the previous grade that are relevant to the day's lesson. This doesn't work to introduce a class full of students to a critical concept they may have missed, but it is useful in a class of students who are familiar with a key skill, but who didn't get to learn it as deeply as they might have in a more normal year.

To address those more concerning bits of learning that students were unable to master last year, we've adjusted our schedule. For example, our middle school schedule now includes a 30-minute intervention time opposite student lunch times. Students are assigned according to their needs as shown by their Star Assessment scores, which are compared to our state benchmarks. Students performing below standards level receive intensive intervention, those who meet standards level have on-level interventions, and those who are performing at the secure level get enrichment activities. Each school reassesses students monthly to determine if they're ready to move to new groups.

Our teachers are also doing similar intervention with small groups in their classrooms, just as they would in a normal year.

While 2021–2022 feels different because our students began it behind the starting line, the path to a successful academic year is very much the same as any other year. We will assess our students, target our instruction to where they are, and focus our efforts on the skills that will have the greatest impact on their future success. eSN

This year, teachers are finding themselves with even more ground to cover. In addition to the standards of the grades they're currently in, many students, particularly those in middle school, need instruction in skills they would have mastered last year without the disruptions associated with the pandemic.

Dave Gibbons, Ed.D., is the curriculum director at Schuyler Community Schools. He can be reached at dave.gibbons@schuylercommunityschools.org.

Creativity is important because it motivates students to learn. It spurs emotional development, promotes higher cognitive skills, and is quickly becoming one of the most essential job skills in our ever-changing world.

Math

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math, it results in enhanced memory and more efficient engagement of the brain's problem-solving capacity."

Creativity is important because it motivates students to learn. It spurs emotional development, promotes higher cognitive skills, and is quickly becoming one of the most essential job skills in our ever-changing world.

A few math instruction strategies

Here are a few useful strategies to help your students think differently about math:

- **Prioritize and promote play:** Start by giving students room to mess about. Before jumping into the objective of the lesson, give students the opportunity to explore and examine the objects or data they'll be using. That way, they'll gain more context for when they use them to solve the problem at hand. When kids can think abstractly about something, they gain a better understanding around it.
- **Incorporate creative problem solving:** Another way to practice creativity in math instruction is through open-ended questions. This helps break down linear thinking and creates more opportunities for questions and speculation. For example, try asking a question like, "Generate three different numbers that when rounded to the nearest tenth give you 37.7." This allows students to consider multiple answers from different viewpoints while still staying true to the underlying principle.
- **Cultivate collaboration:** Some of the best ideas come out of collaborative group work.One strategy for fostering teamwork is Build a Mascot. The objective is for students to build a mascot that represents their understanding of what they are learning.State the criteria and constraints around the building and set them to work. Another possibility is to have students take their ideas and communicate them through art. Not only will this build up their skills in math, but it will also help their social-emotional growth.
- **Foster weirdness:** If we want students to think creatively, we need to let them think differently. For math, this means having students solve their problems using tools such as repeated addition or equal groups. Teachers should also try changing the conversation. After working through a problem, offer students extra credit if they can find another way for getting the same answer (ex. 2+2=4, but it's also = 4/1 and 9 – 5).

Moving forward

Math will always be a challenging subject for some, but that's doesn't mean it can't be a lot of fun as well. Don't be afraid to experiment with new strategies or perspectives in your lessons. If you'd like to explore this subject in more detail, be sure to check out Van Andel Institute for Education's free hyperdoc of resources. The more we work to refine ideas, the more opportunities we create for student curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking! eSN

Jamie MacPherson is an Education Specialist for Van Andel Institute for Education, a Michigan-based education nonprofit which strives to empower teachers to build classrooms where curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking thrive. To learn more about Van Andel Institute for Education, visit vaei.org.

5 edtech opportunities that will emerge in 2022

Al Kingsley, CEO, NetSupport

There is a certain perspective that comes from being in the edtech industry for over 30 years, and while I thought I had seen it all, nothing could have prepared me (or anyone else) for a global pandemic. Not only did the pandemic upend our lives, it looks like we will be managing and battling surges and outbreaks of COVID variants for a lifetime or more.

There are significant positives about how we as a society have learned to deal with COVID. Much as the problems in our medical systems, for example, have given rise to better and more efficient care, so can education benefit from rethinking its model.

The problems we've experienced educating students who are learning at home, either full time or in a part time model, spotlight needed improvements (particularly with equity of access) and spark new ways of thinking.

An interesting study was just released by Kuato Studios last month to ground what I think are the opportunities and challenges we face in 2022.

Kuato is an edtech gaming company that surveyed 1,000 parents and 600 teachers in the U.K. and the U.S about how they had adapted to learning, teaching, and technology in general since the pandemic started. Twelve percent of U.S. parents and 11 percent of U.K. parents felt they did not have the critical tools in place (like laptops, internet connections, and tables) before the pandemic. Additionally, roughly 30 percent of U.S. educators and 20 percent of U.K. teachers felt they did not have the supportive infrastructure to conduct online classes before the pandemic. This lapse was even more glaring among historically excluded groups.

Information like that, which Kuato unearthed in its survey, is not unexpected. We've known that a glaring gap in our system is equal access to technology, and thus the learning resources delivered via technology.

Given that, the following are my thoughts about changes and opportunities in our field through 2022, as well as thoughts about where we need to be.

Emerging edtech products of 2022 will need to stay simple to succeed. Complicated products in an already complex environment prove problematic for educators and their families. In a post-pandemic era, the future of edtech solutions is in the swift and stress-free solutions–not platforms bogged down by inaccessible design and inconvenient or overwhelming implementation requiring hours of training.

Technical planning must fit into and be part of existing programs and policies. Technology is not an add-on. It is as important to the overall instructional plan as the instructional component of that plan. As such, planning for the hardware, software, and training needed to operate the tech starts at the beginning of the planning phase. For more on this process, here's an expanded article about digital strategy.

Cloud is not always the answer. Cloud-based and local-area network/wide-area networks (LAN/WAN) are not interchangeable. While tech-savvy administrators and IT leaders have always understood this, the rest of the market is beginning to understand the difference. It is not quite so difficult for IT experts to explain that the cloud isn't always the best fit for the need and that means they can do a better job recommending the right solution for the educational need. It also means more tech solutions will offer both cloud and network-hosted options. We will also see a merging of capabilities between the two. Cloud solutions will have increasingly more functionality and won't always be considered the "light" version of their network-hosted counterparts.

The tinker-to-teach approach is expected. By now, teachers expect edtech to be easy to figure out and usable right out of the box. Tech needs to be simple to initiate and manage and not require complex training for teachers to use it in their classrooms. Of course training is the ideal, but most people expect that they should be able to tinker around, and click on a few tutorials to get up and running with at least the basic operations. Anything requiring hours of training will go unused. It is important to separate training needed for pedagogical understanding from simple technological operation. Professional development for curriculum or instructional planning, even those within technology, still needs significant training, but not the tech itself. That should be easy enough to figure out on one's own.

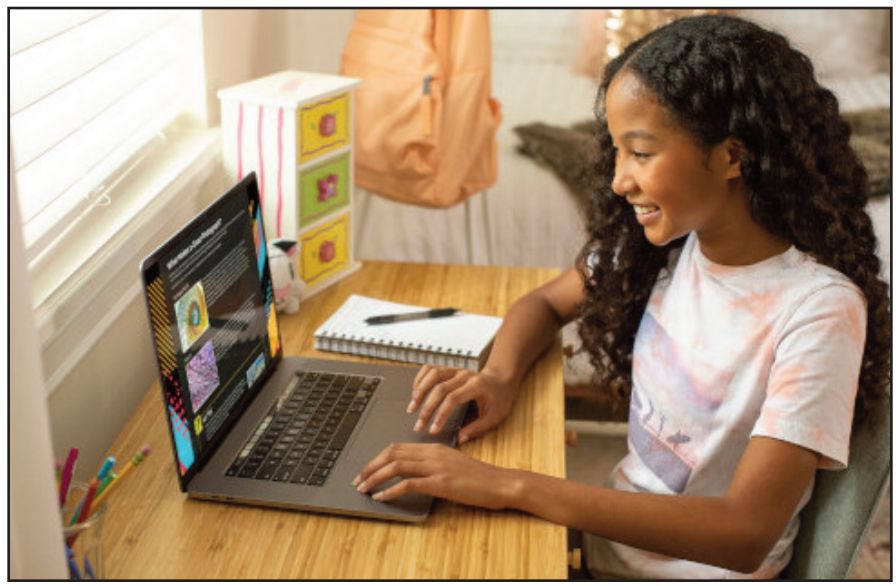
We will emphasize teaching students about their digital citizenship and being responsible for their own safety. The International Society for Technology and Education recommends embedding the importance of digital skills into everyday lesson plans, enlightening children and teens on topics like digital commerce and communication, literacy and law, right and responsibilities, and more. The onus to make sure tech is secure and that a student's privacy is protected still resides with tech developers and school IT personnel to secure their networks. However, students spend just as many if not more hours on non-school devices and networks. Our responsibility and attention to teaching them how to protect themselves cannot be overstated. eSN

Al Kingsley is the CEO of NetSupport. In his newly released book, My Secret #EdTech Diary,Kingsley shares the potential of technology to improve our schools for students and educators. The book is also a look at pre- and post-Covid EdTech, offering practical advice and insights. The book is published by John Catt Educational and is available on Amazon.

How to establish rapport with online students

There are many skills that teachers need to be successful teaching online, but communication is essential in connecting with online students

Robin Winder, Senior Director of Instruction, Florida Virtual School and FlexPoint Education Cloud



My experience with online education began 19 years ago after I took a break from teaching in the brick and mortar setting to give birth to my daughter. When I was ready to get back in the game, several of my colleagues recommended Florida Virtual School (FLVS), which at the time was in its infancy. What really sold me on FLVS was the organization's dedication to meeting students where they are. It also seemed like the next natural step for me, because during my traditional schooling days I was constantly looking to add innovative methods and technology to my classroom.

Within a couple of months of teaching online with FLVS, I witnessed how intentional the instructors were when serving our students' individual needs, and I knew this was the place for me. I remember being in awe of the relationships teachers were able to form not only with their students, but also parents and other stakeholders.

With that in mind, there were several skills I needed to learn, especially when it came to establishing rapport with students. There are many skills that teachers need to be successful teaching online, including basic technology skills like how to use a computer, run a webinar or video conferencing platform, and use a variety of systems. But the most important skill is communication. Specifically, how to actively listen, build relationships, and at many times, be a shoulder to cry on and a mirror to see in. Being an online teacher can be tough, because you are juggling a lot at one time, but the focus should always remain on the student and what they need.

According to the Pew Research Center, 61 percent of teens suffer from increased anxiety due to pressure to get good grades. Much of this anxiety can come from the fear of failing or saying something wrong, and feeling embarrassed or judged. Being in the online setting can help with much of this anxiety already, especially with one-on-one meetings and lessons with students, but there are several other ways to help them feel comfortable so that they share their thoughts with you.

1. Show that you make mistakes too.

Mistakes happen all the time and the world keeps spinning, right? Showing that everyone makes mistakes opens dialogue and encourages students to not be afraid to make errors. I've made many mistakes while teaching.

For example, one time I was giving a discussion-based assessment and I thought my student answered the question incorrectly. I told her to try again, but she was very

adamant that she was correct. I instantly pulled up the lesson to see what she was talking about and saw that I was actually incorrect. I told her, "There you go, we all get it wrong sometimes. I may need you to help me with my next assessment to keep me on track!"

When my student saw me shake the mistake off, it showed her that we're all learning together and that making mistakes is vital to our growth. Plus, in the online environment, some things are just out of your control – like video conferencing glitches or dogs barking in the background. Laugh with your students when these things happen to show them it's no big deal. This is also an easy way to break the ice!

2. Humanize yourself – you aren't a bitmoji behind a screen.

Sometimes student's will think of their online teacher as someone "on the screen," rather than a real person. The way to change that perception is by being personal and telling students about yourself.

Perhaps you tell them that you're a mom, that you love to cook, or that your brother plays baseball. No matter what you tell your students, see if there is a way that they can relate to what you're

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5 instructional practices that drive student engagement

Teachers must build strong, trusting, and collaborative relationships with their students in order to ensure student engagement increases

Mariana Aguilar, Senior Director of Education, GoGuardian

Student engagement has long been an indicator of growth and progress, and in the wake of the pandemic, it will prove essential for academic and social-emotional recovery.

Recent insights pulled from a survey of more than 2,000 identifies instructional practices that enable student engagement, no matter the learning environment.

Using qualitative and quantitative survey data, the following five instructional practices were ranked highest for driving engagement.

1: Teacher-student relationships

With an average score of 4.6 out of 5.0, forming teacher-student relationships was highlighted as the top instructional practice for driving engagement across all grade levels and subjects. In fact, one-third of all teachers identified it as the single most effective practice for driving engagement overall—this is four times more than any other practice.

Strong relationships are foundational to creating supportive learning environments where students feel safe enough to contribute. Several survey respondents emphasized that trust built on stable relationships is the cornerstone for both teacher and student success.

Previous research indicates that students who report positive teacher-student relationships were more likely to report high engagement with their learning, and strong teacher-student relationships have been associated with higher academic performance, feelings of competence, greater attendance rates, and pursuit of secondary education.

Tips for implementing this practice:

- Make an active effort to get to know your students, making time to inquire about their emotional and social wellbeing.
- Provide personal questionnaires, pay attention to the extracurriculars students participate in and their behavior with other students.
- Take a genuine interest in students' lives and passions.

2: Relevant course content

Making course content relevant was marked as the second most important instructional practice for driving engagement across all teachers, with an average score of 4.37.

Knowing students' backgrounds and interests is an essential piece of this. Bringing parts of their personal lives into the learning process is not only motivating, but also improves knowledge retention over time.

Tips for implementing this practice:

- Identify interests of a student, and then connect that to course content.
- Incorporate pop culture, social media, sports and extracurriculars into lessons.
- Provide opportunities for students to connect their learning to everyday life—when the coursework feels meaningful, they are more willing to invest in it.

3: Clear expectations

Communicating clear expectations came in as the third most important instructional practice for driving engagement, with an average score of 4.34 out of 5. This result was consistent across grade levels and subjects.

There is a strong body of evidence supporting the use of clear expectations in the classroom for driving student engagement. One study states that when teachers first take a proactive approach in forming authentic relationships and earning student trust, they can gain a better understanding of what motivates their students, create a learning environment where students are more receptive to these clear expectations, and increase levels of engagement and participation.

Tips for implementing this practice:

- Let students know what is expected throughout the day or on certain assignments—setting this up at the beginning of the school year is crucial.
- Revisit expectations frequently, so that they aren't forgotten.
- Communicate routines, relationships, and expectations prior to beginning instruction, so students have understanding and ownership of what will take place during the school year.

4: Hands-on learning

Practicing hands-on learning follows as the fourth most important instructional practice for driving student engagement, with an average score of 4.27 out of 5.

This was particularly true for educators in specialized subject areas, such as visual & performing arts and computer science & technology.

Additionally, while practicing hands-on learning was commonly identified as an effective practice across all grade levels for its impact on student engagement, this held especially true for elementary school teachers coming in as the second most highly rated practice for its effect on engagement.

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Tips for implementing this practice:

- Provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge in a tangible manner.
- Use music, activities, and movement to engage students in the classroom.
- Bring physical items into the classroom that relate to the subject matter.

5: Linking information and student participation (tie)

Tied for fifth place are two instructional practices: linking new information to prior knowledge and facilitating student participation. Both practices received an average score of 4.18 out of 5.

Linking new information to prior knowledge is important for fostering engagement because it allows students to form deeper connections with the material they are learning. Previous literature showcases the importance of this practice—a cross-cultural qualitative study found that the more time teachers spent introducing new content, the more academically engaged students were in the classroom.

Tips for implementing this practice:

- Open discussions and lessons with imagery or topics that activate students' prior knowledge of a concept.
- Use prior knowledge as a base for new information.
- Find out what students already know about a subject (and related subjects), and then create or modify materials as needed.

Last, but not least, survey respondents indicated the practice of facilitating student participation as having a large or very large effect on engagement. This was consistent across grade levels and most subjects, aside from technology and computer science, visual and performing arts, theology and electives, which ranked this practice lower.

While practicing hands-on learning was commonly identified as an effective practice across all grade levels for its impact on student engagement, this held especially true for elementary school teachers coming in as the second most highly rated practice for its effect on engagement.

Additional research has shown that encouraging students to contribute during class and participate in decision-making has been cited as a core characteristic in classrooms that foster foundational critical thinking skills.

Tips for implementing this practice:

- Verbally encourage and allow students to share thoughts, questions, answers and comments.
- Make sure students know that their contributions are meaningful, and the lesson isn't complete without their participation.
- Participation doesn't always mean speaking in front of the class—give students multiple options for participation.

Key takeaways

Each of the top practices involves actively engaging students in the learning process. For this to happen, teachers must build strong, trusting, and collaborative relationships with their students.

By applying these strategies in the classroom, educators can meet students where they are—driving outputs that address the whole child creatively, cognitively, and emotionally. eSN

Mariana Aguilar is the Senior Director of Education at GoGuardian.

9 social-emotional learning strategies to use in the new year

Lauren Jackson, Instructional Coach, BetterLesson

Following the 2020-2021 school year, educators can look back with pride–and exhaustion–on all we have learned. We have learned to teach in brand new modalities like remote and hybrid learning, foster more student independence, and adapt instruction to a huge variety of learning needs.

But one of the most important lessons to come from this pandemic year is a greater focus on the importance of social-emotional learning.

Throughout this school year, educators, coaches, and school leaders have engaged in virtual professional development and one-on-one coaching sessions to hone their social-emotional learning skills and knowledge to meet the needs of all learners. The following are some of the most effective strategies all educators should take within them into next year.

Be intentional about weaving social-emotional learning into the day

In a virtual professional development session, one school leader shared, "I think social-emotional learning is a hot topic right now, but are people really doing it? Do they really know what it means?" This begs the question, "Do we know how to intentionally incorporate social-emotional learning into class culture and instruction?" Continuing to intentionally incorporate social-emotional learning into daily habits and routines next school year can be monumental for educators and students.

- **Thresholding to greet students at the door:** This is an old strategy that gained new importance during remote learning this year. Personally greeting students as they enter the classroom sets the tone for the student's day and incorporates other social-emotional learning skills such as communicating effectively, actively listening, and establishing and maintaining a healthy relationship.
- **Brain breaks:** In another virtual PD session, one teacher shared, "This year, I have intentionally incorporated brain breaks several times throughout the day–and I want to continue doing it once we return to in-person learning." This year we may have noticed the need for small breaks as students struggled to focus on line. But even back in the classroom, brain breaks can be used to manage emotions and promote self-management.
- **Social-emotional learning check-in surveys:** At the beginning of the school year, we may ask students to complete an interest survey, but ongoing student interest and emotional check-ins are key. Daily or weekly check-ins can help you gain a deeper understanding of students and foster relationships.

Build relationships

Establishing and maintaining relationships with students has always been essential. While teaching virtually, many educators explained to me the challenges they faced. From academic difficulties to students simply refusing to turn on their cameras, it all starts with the ability to build, create, and maintain a relationship with students. Here are some strategies to continuously incorporate relationship-building strategies next school year:

- **Class meetings:** Creating a safe space for students to discuss academic and non-academic subjects fosters community through teacher-to-student and peer-to-peer relationships. Teachers can also use this as a space for difficult conversations. Frequent class meetings build relationship skills such as communicating effectively, showing leadership in groups, and standing up for the rights of others.

- **Office hours:** Offering office hours for group and 1:1 student meetings helps teachers establish relationships with students. Teachers may have experimented with virtual office hour formats that they can take into next year, alongside in-person methods.
- **Families and caretakers:** Creating and maintaining relationships with families and caretakers this year presented teachers with challenges as well as opportunities for innovation and connection. As we return to the classroom, it's important to involve families and caretakers in their child's educational journey. Through positive interactions, two-way communication, and continuous classroom and school updates, we can build relationships with families and caretakers that benefit educators and students.

Establish a growth mindset

The power of a growth mindset is important in all teaching and learning modalities. One common theme in many 1:1 coaching sessions this year is that teachers noticed many students struggling with finishing assignments because they felt as though they couldn't do it. Virtual learning may not have met every student's academic needs, but there are several strategies teachers can use to establish a growth mindset:

- **The power of Yet:** When students express that they can't do something, help them re-frame that thought to, "You can't do it…yet." Then, help

Strategies, page 15

A simple routine to support literacy development in all subjects

Stacy Hurst, Assistant Professor of Teacher Education, Southern Utah University

When you look at the five components of reading and how teachers' emphasis on them changes as students learn to read, one constant is word learning. This shouldn't be surprising for those familiar with Scarborough's Reading Rope, which suggests that vocabulary and background knowledge are essential components of skilled reading. These two strands of the rope can account for a 50-60 percent variation in reading comprehension scores. Not only do students need to know how to decode words, but they must also know the meaning of words in order to apply their meaning toward comprehension.

Fortunately, students are building vocabulary and background knowledge all the time as they pick up new words from context through reading and listening, learn new words and ideas in their daily lives, and of course, in all the various content areas they study in school.

Explicit vocabulary instruction not only helps students build vocabulary in the moment, but also gives them the tools to learn new words as they encounter them. Here's an effective routine to help students learn new words whether they're in an English class or the science lab.

Four-Part Processor

To understand the rationale behind this routine, it helps to keep the four-part processing model of word recognition in mind. At its base are the phonological and orthographic processors that govern spoken and written language, respectively, and that inform and influence one another. From there, we move up to the meaning processor, where definitions of words and the meaning of the information coming in are processed. Finally, at the top, is the context processor, which layers in the information about text structure, speaker or author, environment, or any other contextual information that may affect the understanding of the sentence and passage.

Teachers want to make sure they're giving students information that informs each of those processors because they are all important in knowing and understanding a word, but this model also points out all the places where comprehension of a word can go wrong for a student.

Four-Step Vocabulary Instruction

This routine was originally designed by Dr. Anita Archer, but before I launch into the four steps, I like to ask my students to tell me how familiar they are with the word using the Dale Scale:

1. I have never seen this word before;
2. I have seen this word, but I don't know what it means;
3. I have a basic understanding of this word; and
4. I understand this word so well that I can teach it to others.

From there, I:

1. Introduce the pronunciation of the word;
2. Provide a student-friendly definition of the word;
3. Offer examples of the word in use; and
4. Ask questions to check on understanding.

Think about that four-part processor and how each of these steps relates to it. In the first step, I pronounce the word and break it down into its individual phonemes. I may also have students write it out at this point. Together, these steps activate both the phonemic and orthographic processing centers. Next, I tell students the definition of the word, engaging the meaning processor. As I move on to step three and give several examples of its use, I am again engaging the meaning processor, but also adding context about how the word is used. Asking them questions ensures they understand and gives them a nudge to really take ownership of the new word.

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Tohubohu

I'll run through an example using a word I learned on a Word of the Day calendar recently: "tohubohu." In class, I would ask students to hold up their fingers, but here I'll ask you to give yourself a 1-4 score based on the Dale Scale before we begin. Tohubohu is not a common word, so I would expect to see mostly 1s in class. I was certainly at a 1 when I saw it the other day.

Next, I would begin step one and analyze the word with my students, first by asking them how many syllables it has, which is four. Next, we would look at the phonemes, to hu bo hu, and we might note that one of them repeats. Next, we look at it orthographically, perhaps pointing out that it's pretty similar to its phonetic structure. We're still on the first step and we've already pronounced it and written it. I would generally ask my students to write it a few more times here, as well.

Now, for step two, we'll define the word, which means "chaos, confusion, and disorder." It's not an English word, but morphologically, it does have two morphemes, tohu and bohu, which mean confusion and emptiness, respectively. It's kind of like a compound word. As I explain these things to students, I like to ask them to write the definition down, and also to draw a picture that represents the meaning of the word. Kids love to draw, so it's an easy way to

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8 digital learning tools for 2022

Laura Ascione, Editorial Director, eSchool Media

Returning to school after winter break brings with it a variety of emotions–excitement, anticipation, and hesitation prompted by concerns around potential COVID-19 outbreaks. And because schools may move to hybrid or virtual learning despite starting in person, digital learning tools that work in the physical or virtual classroom can prove invaluable.

Recent research from Texthelp shows that teachers believe students were significantly less engaged this past school year, but that digital tools were a bright spot in their classrooms. In fact, 90 percent of teachers say they plan to use edtech tools this upcoming school year.

Through using these tools, teachers say they experienced increased efficiency across the board and that students now have the accessible and engaging tools they need.

Educators who are searching for new digital learning tools to use as students return to classrooms can browse the below list to see if any of the resources fill a gap in their school or classroom:

1. Along, from Gradient Learning and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, is a free digital reflection tool designed to help teachers make each of their students feel seen and understood. It lets students send quick video, audio, or text directly to their teacher so they can open up about who they are and what's really on their mind.

2. Photomath provides step-by-step guidance to math equations via AI photo recognition technology. When teachers can't be present during homework hours and when students need additional guidance, visual guided learning is a great tool.

3. A Kids Company About aims to create challenging, empowering, and important stories for kids and their grownups, but also furthers that mission into new resources to reach extended age groups:

- A Kids Podcast About Network: A growing network of now 7 original shows where each podcast tackles various challenging, empowering, and important topics. The four new shows cover climate justice, activism, and trending news.
- A Kids Class About: Like Master Class created specifically for kids, this interactive video series focuses on exposing teens and tweens 10-15 years old to careers, life skills, and big ideas to help answer the question "who" you want to be, instead of "what" you want to be when you grow up.

4. Mindfulness is a powerful tool for students, and in-class mindfulness can work wonders. A study on the impact of a mindfulness program for young children shows a significant increase in students' positive behaviors and an even larger decrease in students' problem behaviors. The study, "Effects of a School-Based Mindfulness Program for Young Children," was conducted in partnership with the nonprofit Shanthi Project and Muhlenberg College psychology researchers. Published in the Journal of Child and Family Studies, the study evaluated the effectiveness of Calm+Kind +Focused, an eight-week mindfulness program that took place in grades K-2 at Marvine Elementary School in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, in Fall 2019. Teachers reported an approximate 14 percent increase in their students' positive behaviors (being considerate of others' feelings, sharing with others, helping others) from pre to post program. Teachers also reported an approximate 18 percent decrease in their students' problem behaviors, such as hyperactivity, impulsivity, and conduct problems.

5. Verizon's new free education portal, Verizon Innovative Learning HQ, will scale the resources of Verizon Innovative Learning–the company's education initiative addressing barriers to digital inclusion–and its approach to integrating technology into the classroom. Verizon Innovative Learning HQ will provide next-gen learning for students, covering a range of subjects from history to biology, through access to the latest augmented reality and virtual reality education tools. The education portal will help teachers take advantage of immersive technology and recognize the benefits of tapping into next-generation tech in their lesson plans. The free education portal includes content curated by Columbia University, New York University, Arizona State University, and other academic institutions, that pairs immersive AR and VR experiences with lesson plans. A key part of the portal will include professional development courses aligned to research-backed micro-credentials from non-profit partner Digital Promise, to help empower educators with personalized learning pathways that directly address their digital learning needs.

6. The U.S. Department of Education's Return to School Roadmap aims to support educators and school leaders, parents, families, and communities and lead students on a path to return to in-person learning this fall, where they are safe and supported. The Roadmap contains three "Landmark" priorities for each school, district, and state as they work to reengage students this summer and bring them back into classrooms. Check out this handbook on safely reopening schools, too.

7. Currently, just 1 in 5 U.S. high schoolers takes personal finance, yet nearly every student takes Algebra. Cross-curricular instruction–delivered by confident Algebra teachers with world-class curriculum–has the potential to impact the future of the entire next generation of young people, not just the lucky few. The NGPF Financial Algebra course is free and is for high school math teachers who are looking to weave real-world personal finance applications with math standards alignment and deep algebraic rigor.

8. Aperture Education, provider of researched-backed SEL assessments for K-12 schools, has released a free 2021 Back-to-School Guide to help teachers and administrators support students and families as schools resume. The Guide is packed with SEL information, resources, lessons, and activities that can be used to help teachers and students manage stress, strengthen SEL skills, support student engagement, and more. eSN

How coding shapes students' future success

Yasser Jilani, COO and Co-Founder, Code With Us

With unpredictability fast becoming our daily bread, what can be more important than preparing the next generations for future challenges? Every parent wants to secure the best foundation for their children, be it for primary school education, academia, work, or life in general.

In this sense, research has shown us how coding can be relevant across school subjects and academic disciplines. Now it's time to talk about the other advantages it brings, including the cognitive effects of coding on children's brains.

This is how coding shapes the future prospects of children.

Coding gives a head start for professional life

Learning to code can be a game-changer for students, regardless of country. With the hopes of better integrating into the local emerging tech community, Chinese parents prepare their children for code learning before pre-school. And Singapore launched a tailored coding class for primary and secondary school students as early as 2014. India has even introduced coding from class six, based on the country's new education policy.

All of this is based on solid evidence: Computer science students are 17 percent more likely to go to college and have a successful career. Moreover, programming languages such as SQL, Java, JavaScript, C#, and Python are increasingly important to master regardless of profession or industry. The value of learning how to code isn't only in the skill itself; it's in the way of thinking, and that transfers to many other subjects.

As coding requires working with different frameworks and programs, mastering it advances experimentation and creativity. It helps with math, arts, writing, and even overall communication, advancing critical thinking and problem-solving. Everyday school tasks can then be handled more seamlessly. And on top of that, coding can be a significant confidence boost for a child, something that is essential at a young age.

The diverse nature of coding further drives a child's ability to orient themselves in today's digital economy, IT, technology, and science. And with tech pervading even the most traditional sectors, coding can help secure career opportunities even in finance, retail, healthcare, and more. This is good news as half of all new jobs will require some coding knowledge in the future, together with the fact that 14 to 80 million US jobs are now at risk of being automated. Coding is a vital ingredient to strengthen the new generation of today's workforce.

Coding literacy: The new language of our world

Coding has the potential to become the language of daily life as any other language. And the data points in this direction, too: The number of data scientists has grown by 650 percent, and the demand for coding is said to grow by 37 percent year-on-year. Learning to code is the skill that will dominate the 21st century, and it's what we should prepare the younger generation for.

As technology continues to transform the way we live, coders seem to be the best population group equipped to handle the dynamic changes in their private and professional lives. And the sooner the child starts learning, the more they will benefit from the benefits coding brings.

Being able to solve problems by coming up with many solutions to one issue is a typical example of how coding impacts the mind–this is called composition. And as programming involves a lot of repetitive tasks and failures waiting behind every corner, a child can soon learn that there are no shortcuts to getting anything done. Patience and problem solving learned from coding will then certainly serve in real-life situations too.

The effect beyond computer proficiency

The benefits of coding don't end with getting a high-level tech job. Once a child has reached their goal, that's when the impacts of learning to code really start to manifest. Coding can serve as an important equalizer, bringing diversity into learning institutions, computing, and computer science. Traditionally plagued by the underrepresentation of certain groups, with factors like gender, race, and income playing an essential part, this can all change now. Even Dan Costolo, the CEO of Twitter, has expressed the need: "A computer doesn't care about your family background, your gender, just that you know how to code. But we're only teaching it in a small handful of schools; why?

Encouraging children, and young girls specifically, to start early and by making coding classes easily accessible, we can achieve many positive long-term effects in our societies, something we are beginning to see already. Coding has become an incredibly valuable asset, presenting an investment parents should make in their children as early as possible. As the language of the digital age, coding is the tool for the future and future generations. eSN

Yasser Jilani is the Co-founder and COO of Code With Us, a fast-growing Silicon Valley EdTech startup that provides technology education to kids and adults and develops customized teaching content for educators and corporations. Code With Us is one of the largest U.S.-based online EdTech platforms, with more than 8,000 students from all over the world and more than doubling its student base and revenue year to year.

3 ways classroom ecosystems are changing

Remi Del Mar, Senior Product Manager for K-12 Projectors, Epson America, Inc.

One of the definitions from the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ecosystem as "something (such as a network of businesses) considered to resemble an ecological ecosystem especially because of its complex interdependent parts."

When you take a look at a classroom, there are several interdependent parts working together to create a successfully functioning classroom. The students, teachers, technology, curriculum, physical space, and furniture all play a role in creating a successful learning environment–and as we saw with the pandemic, a disruption to this ecosystem can have dire effects.

According to a report by Rand Corporation, teachers' stress levels are at an all-time high and threaten the teacher pipeline. At the same time, according to a McKinsey Report, the pandemic has caused students to fall months behind in learning math and reading and has caused older students to disengage from their education.

As schools and districts look at solving these issues while also addressing the underlying systemic inequities the pandemic brought to light, in part because of access to technology, education thought leaders and administrators are sharing their thoughts about how classrooms need to evolve. The good news is, there is money available like never before to try new things to put student and teacher needs at the front of innovating.

Here are some of our takeaways:

Make Classrooms Student Centric: As everyone knows, the number of student devices has skyrocketed since the start of remote learning due to the federal funding provided during the pandemic. Although some schools were already 1:1 or had BYOD programs in place, many schools are experiencing this type of learning environment for the first time and without a lot of time to plan.

Educators need help determining how best to incorporate these devices on a daily basis while keeping instruction student centric and personalized. Instead of simple lectures with students as passive recipients, we need to move to students being actively involved in the content and learning skills to prepare them for life, with devices supporting that learning. Schools need to invest in instructional technology coaches and other resources to help teachers personalize learning while making it fun and rewarding for students.

Make Classrooms Flexible: As we have seen with the ongoing pandemic, the need for flexibility is important. As cases surge, schools may need to switch between in-person and remote learning and as we saw last year, simply lecturing via video conferencing is not a successful model. Even when students are in person, active learning requires flexible environments with mobile furniture and modular set-ups that can be moved around as needed. Classrooms need to be comfortable places to learn collaboratively, while allowing for multi-modal learning in whole class, small group and individual settings while providing opportunities for sharing and learning from peers.

Make Learning Immersive: After a challenging and lonely year, it seems like most students want to be in the classroom learning. What they don't want is to be passive consumers of information. So schools and curriculum providers alike are now trying even harder to make learning immersive. There are more options for gamified and virtual learning being developed to help get students immersed in the content they are learning and to provide hands-on learning so students are learning by doing. One benefit of immersive learning is the reduction of boredom and keeping students busy throughout the day, which leads to less time for behavioral and attendance issues.

Make Learning Equitable: One of the biggest things we learned from the pandemic is that there is a real disparity in access to technology. Students who did not have access to remote teachers, devices, internet, etc. were at a real disadvantage. Schools around the country looked for solutions, including providing hotspots, outfitting busses with devices and internet then driving them to apartment buildings, and installing internet within dwellings where possible. More companies need to partner with schools to solve this problem long-term so that students can have constant access to information and can be learning day and night.

Constantly evolving

The parts of a classroom ecosystem will always play a critical role in education. However, as classrooms continue to evolve, there will be new considerations that arise. Educators continue to find ways for all of these parts, such as technology, classroom design, and instructional materials, to come together to create a stronger and more supported environment for student learning. eSN

Remi Del Mar is the senior product manager for K-12 projectors at Epson America, Inc. Remi spearheads Epson's vision of merging virtual and physical environments through projection and augmented reality technology sectors and works to define new applications. She continues to educate end-users on the endless capabilities of creating immersive experiences and promoting the ability to break perceptions of what is and into what can be.

4 ideas to infuse critical thinking in ELA and social studies

When our students are taught to embrace the hallmarks associated with critical thinking, educators can be assured that students are on the road to a bright future

Terra Tarango, Director and Education Officer, Van Andel Institute for Education

Every teacher knows the importance of critical thinking in education. Strong critical thinkers make better decisions, are more informed, have more career opportunities, and are generally better equipped to navigate the challenges of everyday life.

In the classroom, critical thinking is essential to the growth and betterment of our students. It's not enough for them to simply memorize that 6 times 6 equals 36; they also need to know the underlying principle behind the equation. And, when put into practice, it can unleash student potential in ways we've never dreamed.

Just consider Ann Makosinski (16), a student who created a flashlight that is powered by her own thermal energy. Kelvin Doe (13), of Sierra Leone, built a radio transmitter and generator for his village out of spare parts. Another student, Gitanjali Rao (12), was inspired by the crisis in Flint, Michigan, to build a way to send water-quality information via Bluetooth.

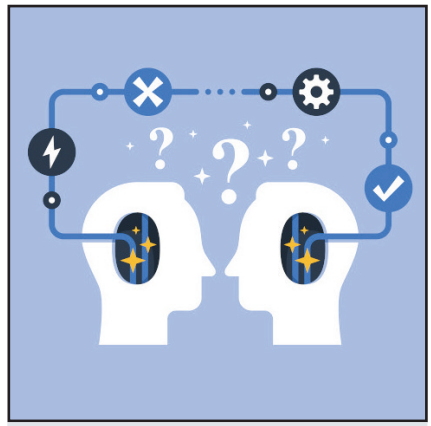
While these are obviously extreme examples, the fact remains that students like that could be in your classroom. What are we doing to ensure that their critical thinking is being forged and allowed to flourish?

ELA and social studies strategies

This all seems straightforward when it comes to math and science, but what about ELA and social studies?

Here are just a few ideas to infuse critical thinking in ELA and social studies instruction:

Personification: Have students write letters from one inanimate object to another. For example, primary grade students may write a letter from the day of the week Monday to the day of the week Friday. Older students may write a letter from the character in a novel to another character. Or have a historical or literary figure write a critique of a contemporary song, show, or movie. What would Napoleon Bonaparte think of the latest Spiderman movie? How might Beethoven review the latest song from Jay Z? Personification requires students to re-contextualize what they know about the subject(s) and apply their thinking in a novel way.



What are we doing to ensure that their critical thinking is being forged and allowed to flourish?

Concept Map (Revisited): Create a concept web after a read-aloud or guided reading session, focusing on the reading and comprehension strategies. Then have students investigate related nonfiction content and have them revisit their concept web, adding expository information in a different color.

Shallow and Deep: A Venn diagram works well when we want students to compare and contrast. However, if you want them to think more deeply, ask them to find shallow (obvious) similarities/differences and then deeper (not so obvious) ones. Take advantage of this graphic organizer: Shallow and Deep. Use it as is or make a copy and customize it to your liking!

RAFT: Use the RAFT strategy to differentiate instruction and to promote creative thinking. Assign (or have students choose) a Role, an Audience, the Format, and the Topic. For example, you may have students present a Topic that is related to their reading, and students might choose to play the Role of a newscaster, present in the Format of a cartoon, and pretend their Audience are parents. To aid student choice, here's a list of possibilities for each part of the acronym.

Building lifelong learners

There's so much more to this topic than we have space to discuss. Consider watching VAI's latest webinar where we cover these ideas in more detail or use this document to discover more free strategies for your classroom. Using these resources, we can help our students stay genuinely inquisitive, open to new ideas, and willing to revise their views when new data is introduced. These are the hallmarks of a critical thinker, and when our students embrace these qualities, we can be confident that they are on the road to a bright future. eSN

Terra Tarango is the Director and Education Officer for Van Andel Institute for Education, a Michigan-based nonprofit that works to create classrooms where curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking thrive. To learn more about VAI please visit vaei.org.

6 key trends shaping the future of K-12 assessment

A new report indicates a growing educator desire to switch to a balanced K-12 assessment approach

Laura Ascione, Editorial Director, eSchool Media

Most educators are concerned that summative assessments cause students undue anxiety, adding to growing concerns over the state of K-12 assessments and how they're created, delivered, and interpreted.

State of Assessment in K-12 Education, a new report from Instructure, the makers of Canvas, explores the current state of K-12 assessments as COVID-19 continues to push schools into crisis

Overall, 81 percent of educators remain concerned that summative assessments are making students anxious, and teachers and administrators want to move to a more balanced assessment approach.

While 94 percent of educators are now using formative assessments and 81 percent are using interim assessments to support student learning, more systems and supports are needed. An overwhelming majority (84 percent) of teachers are having to create their own assessments, and more than half say they spend too much time doing so—a growing problem for a nation of educators already overworked and overwhelmed.

"Districts are increasingly using interim and formative assessment to navigate the pandemic's constant disruptions, which is critical to addressing unfinished learning and ensuring equity," said Trenton Goble, VP of K-12 Strategy at Instructure. "As an industry, we must do more to support innovative assessment at state and district levels, which means giving teachers access to high-quality, valid, and reliable assessments, and investing in technology systems that drive meaningful instructional practice and insights. Most importantly, we must approach these priorities without causing more anxiety for students or teachers."

Before K-12 assessment can be reimagined, one must understand its role in K-12 education today and its impact on administrators, teachers, and, most importantly, students. Instructure's first assessment-focused research study began in the fall of 2021. Together with Hanover Research, 1,058 K-12 teachers and administrators were surveyed across the United States, revealing six key trends:

1. Change the way we approach K-12 assessment.

Teachers and administrators feel that state summative assessments are outdated, and want to shift toward an actionable, balanced assessment approach.

- Only 55 percent of educators positively perceive state summative assessments
- 81 percent of educators are concerned that summative assessments make students anxious

2. K-12 assessment is a key part of the learning process.

Formative and interim assessments are widely used by educators to better understand student needs and adjust instruction in the moment.

- 94 percent of educators use formative assessment, and 81 percent use interim assessment to inform instruction
- More than half of educators (56 percent) say they spend too much time building their own assessments

3. Quality and reliability matter.

Four attributes of district and classroom assessments have never been more important: quality, reliability, validity, and alignment to state standards.

- 84 percent of teachers create their own formative assessments to inform classroom instruction
- When educators do look to license vendor-created assessments, 66 percent of respondents say that the vendor's reputation is very or extremely important during an evaluation

4. Utilizing assessment data in the classroom is essential.

Three-quarters of educators reported that their school provides training and support to help teachers improve K-12 assessment data literacy.

- Two-thirds of educators (67 percent) are comfortable with using assessment data to inform instruction
- Fewer are comfortable using data to design interventions (52 percent) or evaluate their own efficacy (58 percent)

5. The right technology makes a difference.

Districts need systems that support formative and interim assessments, drive meaningful instructional practice, and provide insights that fuel a personalized learning experience.

- 82 percent of educators administer online assessments
- The top three assessment technology features are the ability to track student mastery (57 percent), provide real-time data delivery (51 percent), and align content to learning standards (51 percent)

6. Empowering teachers can lead to a positive assessment culture.

Teachers are the power users of assessment data, so K-12 leaders must ensure they understand how and why data-driven K-12 assessment fuels student success.

- Three-quarters of educators feel their school district promotes a strong assessment-focused culture
- School-level administrators (73 percent) and teachers (70 percent) are primarily responsible for reviewing and analyzing assessment results eSN

Material from a press release was used in this report.

Strategies

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students self-reflect and answer questions that help them understand why they can't do the activity and the steps they need to take to complete the activity successfully in the future. The Power of Yet is related to Casel's self-awareness competency.

- **Create a safe space that allows for growth and risk-taking:** Teach students about the importance of risk-taking. In coaching sessions, teachers have expressed how difficult it can be for students to share out because they are afraid of saying an incorrect answer. Some growth and risk-taking strategies for educators include: reflecting often, providing actionable and specific feedback, and celebrating success.
- **Setting goals & reflective journaling:** Help students to set academic and non-academic goals at the beginning of the week, and then reflect on their progress at the end of the week. Ask students to identify their successes and challenges and then elaborate and explain why. Have students share their goals with an accountability partner to build self-awareness, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills.

This year prompted educators to "think outside the box" to meet the needs of all learners in different learning modalities. While navigating the successes and challenges in teaching and learning, social-emotional learning was an essential topic.

As we return to in-person learning next year, there are several key ideas and learning strategies that educators can utilize to incorporate social-emotional learning. From building relationships to fostering a growth mindset, social-emotional learning has a positive impact on teaching and learning for students, teachers, and leaders. eSN

Lauren Jackson is a Blended Learning instructional coach for BetterLesson, with 10 years of combined experience as an elementary school teacher and assistant principal. She has taught in South Carolina, North Carolina, and Colorado. In her spare time, Lauren enjoys reading books, going to the beach, and spending time with her family and friends.

Development

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engage them, but it also helps really lodge the word into their minds so they can take ownership of it.

Next, in step three, I'll give examples of the word being used in a sentence. "I have a friend who can take puzzles from tohubohu to order much faster than me." "I feel much more at peace when my room is not tohubohu, so I pick it up every day." Or I might show a picture of students reading peacefully in class next to another where the class is in chaos after a large project and talk about the differences in tohubohu between them.

Finally, in step four, I'll check understanding with some questions. Maybe I'll use the same pictures of the class and ask which is tohubohu. "Is your desk tohubohu?" "Was your first day of school peaceful or was it tohubohu?" This is also a great place to ask students to provide their own examples of the word in a sentence.

Finally, I'll return to the Dale Scale and ask them to give me a 1-4 self-assessment on their knowledge of the word.

The whole routine only takes a few minutes, and it can be easily applied to other content areas. In math, for example,

instead of just teaching subtraction, teachers could begin by talking with students about the word "subtract": how it is a verb that means "to take away from" and how "sub" means "under" and "tract," like tractor, means "to drag or pull." At the end, when you're asking questions to assess their knowledge of the word, you might even be able to sneak a word problem past them by asking something like, "I had a dozen eggs, but I subtracted two. How many are left?"

Helping students increase their vocabulary will do wonders for their reading comprehension. It improves not just their understanding of content areas, but their ability to learn more in any area in the future. eSN

Stacy Hurst is an assistant professor of teacher education at Southern Utah University, where she teaches courses in literacy and early childhood education. She has degrees in sociology and elementary education and a master's degree in education. Her extensive experience also includes teaching 1st grade and working as a literacy coach and reading specialist. Stacy is the co-author of a foundational literacy program and is also the chief education officer at Reading Horizons, an educational software company that teaches structured literacy concepts through a blended software and direct instruction approach. Stacy is passionate about literacy and believes that learning how to read well is a civil right. She can be reached at stacy@readinghorizons.com.

Rapport

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sharing. For example, one time I told one of my students that I love the beach and from that brief mention she opened up and told me that it was her dream to one day surf competitively. Moving forward, every one-on-one lesson or meeting we had, I brought up surfing and that created a bond.

That simple mention encouraged her to talk about her hobbies and interests – leading to that rapport and eventual relationship.

3. Build confidence by encouraging one-on-one conversations.

I've found that students are often afraid to ask a question during a live lesson because they don't want to embarrass themselves in front of their peers or appear like they don't know what they're doing. I think this is something that every student can relate to. When I was in high school, I remember dreading being called on to read a passage from our textbook. It's completely normal to feel that anxiety, but there are ways to lessen that feeling.

One way is by encouraging your students to send you an email or text with their question. That way, you're able to help them better understand the lesson, without the added pressure. It's also important to reiterate that dumb questions are the only ones not asked, and that many other students may have had the same question but were

afraid to speak up. By allowing students to ask their questions in a one-off situation, you are helping build their confidence so that one day they can lead by example and not be afraid to ask questions in front of their peers.

The most rewarding part of my job is watching our FLVS teachers build relationships with their students. Our instruction staff is very adept at getting to know their students and listening to find out where they are – especially during these past 18 months when our students (and the world frankly) went through so much change.

A few months ago, I received an email from a parent of a seventh-grade student who was new to FLVS in the 2020-21 school year. At the beginning, she was nervous about how her son would do and if he would stay engaged, but by the end of the year she said she heard her son laughing and enjoying his education again. She said one of his teachers made all the difference, taking the time to get to know him and help him in the new online setting. She shared how thankful she was to see that our FLVS teachers were able to take care of not only her son's educational needs, but his emotional needs as well.

This example shows how now more than ever, building relationships and establishing rapport with students is critical to their success. These relationships help provide a strong foundation, so that even when the world changes, students have a support system they know they can count on. eSN

Robin Winder is the Senior Director, Instruction for Florida Virtual School® (FLVS®) and FlexPoint™. She oversees the daily operations of instruction, including FLVS Full Time, quality assurance, virtual learning labs, blended learning communities, Global School, and all other instructional lines of business. As a member of the President & CEO's Senior Leadership team, she participates in the school's overall strategy, planning, and delivery. In her more than 15 years of service with FLVS, Mrs. Winder has held many roles within the organization including instructor, academic integrity manager, instructional mentor and leader, and senior director of student learning. Mrs. Winder has a master's degree in Educational Leadership from the University of West Florida and a Bachelor of Science degree in Social Studies Education from the University of Central Florida. She also holds Principal and Educational Leadership certifications.

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eSchool News covers the intersection of technology and innovation in education. We focus on how technology can help educators improve learning and deliver instruction more effectively, enhance the student experience, and transform their schools.

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eSchool News ISSN: 1098-0814 is produced 4 times a year.

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