



We Must Accelerate Rather Than Remediate In All Settings...

Virtual, Hybrid, and In-Person

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“The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries on all continents.”- **United Nations Policy Brief “Education during COVID-19 and Beyond**

Education Week reported recently that 75% of districts are virtual or part virtual. Emma Dean of **McKinsey & Company** in “**Covid-19 and Student Learning in the United States: The Impact Could Last a Lifetime**” reports stark and unequal impacts predicting that a January 2021 mass re-opening of in-person school would mean 10.3 months of lost learning for Black students, 12.4 months lost for economically disadvantaged students, and an average of 6.8 months lost for all students. I doubt that we’re going to experience anything close to a mass re-opening in January 2021 and instead think we might be in a cycle of remote, hybrid, in-person throughout the 2020-2021 school year. The long-term academic impact of COVID-19 is expected to last 3-5 years post pandemic. Support now for our students is critical. We can and must stem the losses now and accelerate quickly. The contents of this **EmpowerED 3.2.1** are a synthesis of current research, a **Learning Sciences International** webinar titled “**Achievement Gaps and the Lost COVID-19 Generation**,” and my own and other practitioners’ experiences.

Listen to teachers.

The hybrid model is most challenging model and the one that we are moving towards. The hybrid model employs two different approaches, one in-person and one remote, at the same time. Although the big ideas are the same, the routines,



management, engagement, relationship building, etc. look and sound a bit different in a hybrid model. Teachers today report their greatest struggles with virtual instruction are:

- Motivation and engagement of students
- Translating in-person teaching skills to remote teaching skills
- Identifying gaps and doing something about them

Kalyn Belsha wrote this month in a **Chalkbeat** article titled “**Teaching In-Person and Virtual Students at Once? It’s an Instructional Nightmare**” that “Teachers across the U.S. who are juggling in-person and virtual students simultaneously say their quality of instruction is lower than it normally would be, as they try to keep themselves positioned in front of cameras, keep the in-person students from feeling frustrated, and keep moving through their actual lessons. The result is they’re struggling to reach the students who need their attention most.” This challenge is also discussed by Julie Mason, a middle school instructional coach, in a posting on the **We Are Teachers** website titled “**This Isn’t What We Meant by Hybrid Learning.**” Julie’s post is followed by a link to FAQs that include some really helpful hints.

Ask your teachers how its going and find ways to understand and support them.

Tier 1 instruction and acceleration rather than remediation are critical right now!

Terminology clarification: Tier 1 instruction is a **Response to Intervention (RtI)** term that describes instruction aligned with grade level curriculum and is accessible for all students. All students need to be focused on this core instruction.

Successful and strong core instruction including appropriate scaffolding and support means all students are able to demonstrate mastery of the lesson’s target by the end of the lesson or unit. This is critical whether instruction is fully virtual, blended, hybrid, or fully in-person. This means we plan and provide grade level content for all students. Remediation has proven ineffective. It is the practice of going all the way back to where the child is and teaching them there. However, because the rate of growth remains the same, students run out of time by the time they graduate and never be able to catch up.

The longer some students are not reaching the learning targets or we’re unsure because of the teaching model whether they have or not done so, the gaps start to become voids. We can’t just walk around the classroom and look at their work. We need different routines and strategies to check for understanding. Robert Mendro wrote in a September 1998 article in the **Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education** that “When students have one poor performing teacher, they can experience negative effects on achievement that persist through



three years of high performing teachers.” What do you think this means for today’s remote and hybrid learning models? Do we believe our students are receiving high quality remote instruction now? Since March? Emma Dorn and her colleagues at **McKinsey & Company** further report that 32% of all K-12 students on average are estimated to have received high quality remote instruction during the pandemic, 14% of Black students, and even a lower percentage of students in poverty.

As with in-person teaching, acceleration is a strategy to identify the critical content for each of the years in school. See the **Professional Practices** issue titled “**School Improvement: What Matters Most, Part II**” for more information. We look at prior year content and skills that are prerequisite to the present year. We look for the critical content that can allow learners to continue on path.

Doubling down on frequently used strategies for catching students up (remediation and intervention) will only widen opportunity and achievement gaps in this remote environment. Schools need to be ready on the first days back (whenever they may be) with a fundamentally different strategy for diagnosing lost learning and putting every student on a fast track back to grade level—a strategy designed to accelerate their exposure to grade-appropriate work, not delay it. Michelle Rhee’s **The New Teacher Project (TNTP)** has created excellent guidance to help school and district stakeholders responsible for that planning, organized around a few key questions:

- How do we create a plan to accelerate student learning?
- How do we accelerate student learning in the next two years?
- What other challenges should we be anticipating as we plan to accelerate student learning?

Please download and share **TNTP’s** free resource ***Learning Acceleration Guide: Planning for Acceleration in the 2020-2021 School Year*** with decision makers in your district – it’s that important!

In order to accelerate learners, we must accelerate teachers’ capacity to provide powerful remote learning.

LSI’s Executive Director of Curriculum and Virtual Products, Meg Bowen, provides seven constructs (bolded below) that need to be considered in orchestrating virtual learning. Each of her tips is followed by my own thoughts about the tips; you will also find below from Theresa Fernandez, an 8th grade ELA teacher at Walker Middle School, Orange County Public Schools, Orlando, Florida, several very useful field-tested practices and suggestions about how to build on and put those tips into action as we strive to accelerate the learning of both students and teachers.



Positive relationships with and among students

Casual conversations, lunchrooms, recess, informal opportunities are places educators get to know their students when we're in-person in classrooms. In these online times, this looks different, but remains important. Shared slides, google docs, break out rooms, consolidate group thinking into one, check-ins, polls, whiteboards are some ways to enhance those relationships in a remote setting.

Fernandez recommends that we create and implement "get to know you activities, emotional check-ins, private messaging for praise and feedback, and be observant for issues and notice when a student is "off" then reach out, respond, and support." Fernandez notes, "One of my students said that just the fact that I took the time to check in with them helps emotionally. The follow up with these surveys is the most important part. Sometimes I'll just follow up with an email that says I'm thinking about them and that I'm available if they need someone to talk to, or I'll send them a private message."

Virtual routines for students to access tools and resources

Don't throw in a bunch of tools—this is confusing to students and parents. Help students know where to find materials electronically and how to submit assignments. Establish a **Tech Ambassador** program where members of your older grades are "on-call" to assist with some of these tasks.

Fernandez reports, "Routines are important every year, but I feel they're especially important with distance learning, and consistency is key. I set up my learning management system (**LMS**) page so students have access to their work every day. If the web conferencing system, **Big Blue Button** goes down, the students know exactly where they can access their work and the slides for the day that I would have used in class. I also format my slides consistently so the students know what to expect: Bell work, reminders, common board/learning target, lesson for the day, and then a wrap up."

Student roles continue in a virtual environment

When you have students working in groups they grow in self-management and student agency. Learning how to use breakout rooms and have better supervision over them can help.

Lesson planning by identifying standards and learning targets

Planning for quality instruction by breaking apart a standard and defining the learning is a "must" to ensure students' mastery of a standard.

***Terminology clarification: Learning targets** are concrete goals written in student-friendly language that clearly describe what students will know and be able to do by the end of a class, unit, project, or even a course. These goals begin with an "I can" statement*



and should be posted in all instructional settings. The term target is used intentionally, as it conveys to students that they are aiming for something specific; it is, therefore, important that the level of thinking be clearly specified as there is a huge difference between “I can name or define _____” and “I can compare and contrast or analyze and evaluate _____.”

Don't let the mode of instruction impact this important step! Make sure you have identified the critical prerequisite skills and are teaching those. Oh, and just because you may have identified critical content in months or years past, do it again now. You'll find that revisions are needed. There isn't time to front load, so plan building background knowledge for asynchronous activities.

For more information, see the ***Making the Standards Come Alive!*** issue titled **“Learning Targets.”**

Flipped model with less teacher talk and more active collaborative learning

Spend bulk of learning time collaborating. Give asynchronous time to build background knowledge and content so they are ready to tackle meaningful learning tasks in virtual time and with peers. For more information, see the archived issue of ***EmpowerED 3.2.1*** titled **“Flipped Learning.”**

Rigorous standards aligned tasks that work in virtual, blended, and face-to-face settings

Create tasks that are complex that will encourage motivation and engagement. Gamify where you can to build interactivity and engagement. For more information see the Professional Practices issue titled **“Rigorous and Innovative Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.”**

Structures to verify student learning and offer real-time micro interventions

How do you know if and what students are learning? The simple fact is we don't know when to intervene if we don't know if they're learning. We must use strategies to check for understanding and intervene in the moment to avoid the gap that can grow exponentially.

Fernandez uses polling and says, “This is by far one of my favorite features because it holds the students accountable, it helps me see quickly who is participating and who isn't, and it helps me see which students are getting the answer correct and which need more help. I really miss having the ability to just walk around my classroom full of students and monitor their work or make suggestions quickly.” Of importance to note is Fernandez's observation, “If I ask students to share in the chat or contribute, I give them a choice to send a message to the public chat or to private chat. If I reference something they shared to the



whole group, I don't say their name specifically. This can help the students feel safer, and I'm still able to verify their learning and give guidance as needed."

Check out this David Steiner and Daniel Weisberg article on ***The 74 Million: "When Students Go Back to School, Too Many Will Start the Year Behind. Here's How to Catch Them Up — in Real Time."***

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