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A Principal's Reflections

Reflections on teaching, learning, and leadership.

Sunday, April 26, 2020

Remote Learning Teaching Tips

There is so much pressure on teachers as more and more schools close for the academic year as a result of COVID19. With little to no training or preparation, they have stepped up to keep learning going. It hasn't been easy for them to say the least. A recent eSchool News article highlighted that most teachers don't feel fully prepared for remote learning.

> ClassTag surveyed more than 1,200 U.S. teachers in mid-March to collect and share best practices, ideas, and common approaches to remote learning. More than half of those surveyed teach in public schools (66 percent) and more than half are elementary school teachers (60 percent). Perhaps the most concerning survey result is that more than half of teachers (57 percent) say they do not feel prepared to facilitate remote and online learning.

In some cases, immense challenges such as digital equity and limited parental support at home have had to be addressed and overcome. It hasn't been perfect or necessarily smooth in some cases, but it doesn't have to be. In the end, there is no one right way to go about implementing any type of remote learning. Thus, the efforts of all teachers during this difficult time should be commended by all. We will get through this because of them.

Administrators have had their own fair share of challenges. They have had to do their best to support their staff in helping them navigate into the great unknown. Difficult decisions have had to be made regarding grading, making funds available to get technology in the hands of disadvantaged kids, getting school work to kids where the digital divide could not be overcome, and figuring out how to provide professional learning support virtually. Like teachers, they are working crazy hours to help keep learning going.

All of us not in their shoes can only look through an empathetic lens and try to support these heroes as best we can. Below are some tips for teachers and administrators to assist with implementing remote learning. Please note that these are only suggestions. If digital access is a challenge, check out these practical ideas that can be implemented without any tech. Now, without further ado, here are some remote learning teaching tips.

- Keep sound instructional design at the forefront.
- Design experiences that align with the current scope and sequence for the marking period or semester. The goal is to try to eliminate any significant learning loss while allowing kids to progress to the next grade level.
- Develop a balance between synchronous (live session) and asynchronous (tasks to be completed offline) teaching and learning.
- Use the same amount of interactive activities that you would in class (every 15 - 20 min or so), but have students respond using a digital tool. Here you can find a listing or some great options.
- Use a URL shortener to make links easily accessible in a slide presentation or push out using a Learning Management System (i.e., Google Classroom, Canvas, Schoology). My favorites at bit.ly and tinyurl.
- Utilize chat and screen share features inherent in video conference tools.
- Leverage an adaptive learning tool if your school or district has purchased a license. If not, consider this PreK – 12 resource from Khan Academy or some tools highlighted HERE.
- Incorporate movement (i.e., Go Noodle) and mindfulness
- Create supplemental resources to go along with the lesson. These could be a digital handout in the form of a Google Doc, articles to read, anchor charts, skeleton outline for notes, etc.
- Provide flexible timelines for students to complete work.
- Set up video conference sessions for students who are confused to ask questions or get extra help.
- Focus more on providing timely, actionable, and accurate feedback as opposed to grades. If grading is mandated, make sure it is realistic and fair. Consider giving students a series of assignments over a period of time where only one or two, not all, will be assessed for a grade.
- Ensure SPED accommodations are being met.

The overall goal is to move to a more personalized approach that focuses on student agency through path, pace, place, voice, and choice. If technology resources are available, then the best comprehensive strategy to pursue is real blended learning. In a remote world, this will look a little different than in a classroom or school. However, the pedagogical tenets remain the same. Below you will see an image I created that highlights four focus areas to develop sound blended experiences in a remote learning environment followed by some context on each.
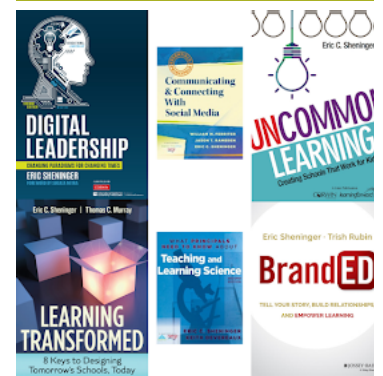
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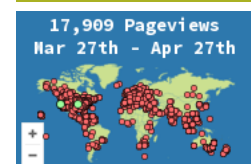### Follow Me On Twitter

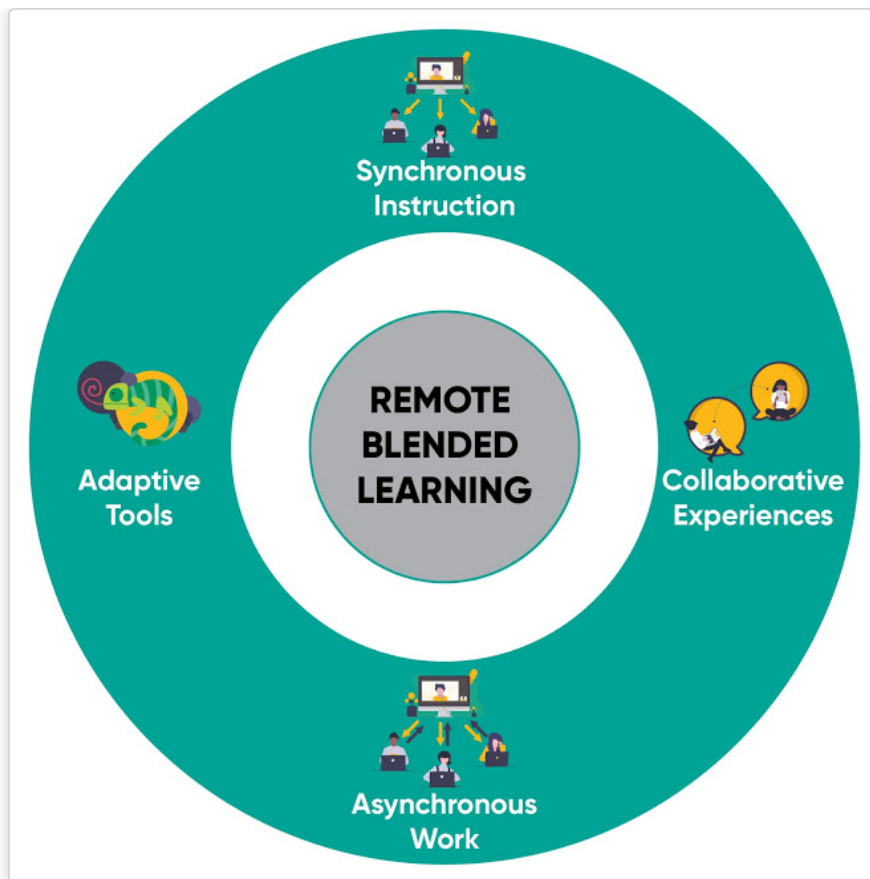Follow @E_sheninger

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Synchronous instruction: Live lessons, extra help, remediation, or question and answer sessions hosted live and in real-time using a video conference tool (Google Hangouts/Meet, Zoom, Blue Jeans, etc.). It is recommended that these be recorded for students to refer back to when needed and as a support for asynchronous work.

Asynchronous work – Tasks and assignments that are completed over a specific time period using strategies such as playlists and choice boards. Other options include research papers or projects.

Collaborative experiences – Activities where students work together in a virtual space to complete a cooperative learning task using tools such as Padlet, Google Docs, Popplet, Flipgrid, etc.

Adaptive tools – Technology that modifies the presentation of material in response to an analysis of student performance. These can be used for self-facing, remediation, or extra practice. There is a slew of great options out there, both free and paid. HERE you can check out some free options. Some of the top paid tools include Read 180, Math 180, Waggle, Edgenuity, and IXL.

In my mind, a dynamic remote blended learning experience results from a convergence of the four focus areas identified above in conjunction with the teaching tips addressed at the beginning of the post. What matters above all is to keep moving forward. Reflect on what is working and what isn't. Make needed changes and pivot when necessary. Elicit feedback from colleagues, students, parents, or your Personal Learning Network (PLN). Finally, take needed breaks and embrace self-care. Thank you all for your efforts and keep up the great work!

Be sure to check out my entire #remotelearning series.

Posted by Eric Sheninger at 4/26/2020 09:07:00 AM   ✉

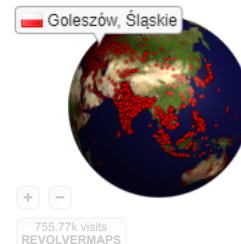Labels: #remotelearning, blended learning, edtech, personalization, Personalized Learning, remote learning

1 comment:

Unknown April 27, 2020 at 1:52 AM

Hi,
I appreciate the level of research you did. my friend Rebecca Antinozzi she is also a school teacher i will share this post with her. Thank you for sharing.

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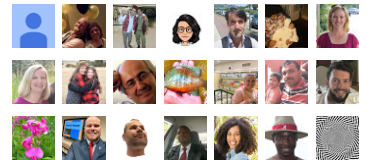 ► March (10)

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