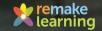
REMAKING TOMORROW What Comes Next?

Insights & actions to shape a post-pandemic future of learning that is just, equitable, and learner-centered



In partnership with KnowledgeWorks & PA Department of Education

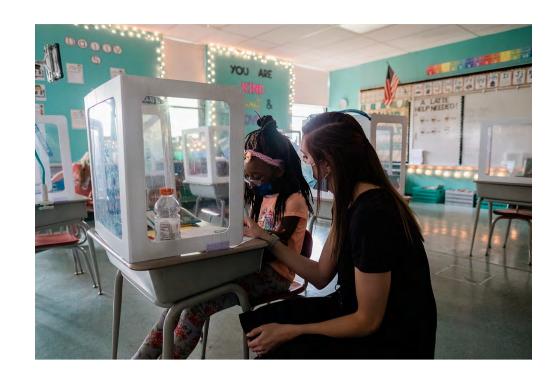
WHAT COMES NEXT? It's up to us.

If the future of education felt uncertain before COVID-19, it feels downright opaque today. After a year that has challenged nearly every archetype, requirement, and so-called standard of our education system, even our definition of innovation feels different.

So many of us are asking: Where do we go from here? What comes next? A better tomorrow isn't guaranteed, but it *is* possible if we act today.

All around us, educators, learners, and families are calling for change. We hear it every time remote learning breaks down along long-standing racial and class lines. Or wherever teachers, parents, and caregivers rally together like never before to nurture young people. Whenever a school re-prioritizes its learners, their basic needs, and their mental health. And whenever we collectively acknowledge every caregiver's essential role as an educator and every educator's undeniable role as a caregiver.

Yet, as the end to the pandemic draws closer, the temptation to return to "normal" remains strong. It's felt most by those in positions of power and privilege. And it is this pull that threatens our progress toward



Drafting a Blueprint for Tomorrow



In spring 2021, Remake Learning, KnowledgeWorks, and the Pennsylvania Department of Education came together to post-COVID learning, organizers conducted 21 role-specific listening sessions with nearly 200 classroom teachers, school administrators, out-of-school time providers, early learning educators, parents, and caregivers from 41 Pennsylvania counties.

deeply investigate pandemic-era teaching and learning in western Pennsylvania and across the state. Their goal was to fight the pull back to "normal" and answer the question: What have we learned that we *must* preserve post-pandemic?

They focused on **capturing**, **synthesizing**, **and sharing educator experiences and best practices** from the last year, ultimately hoping to inspire others to build a more just, equitable, and learner-centered future.

Building off the 2020 report *Remaking Tomorrow: Learning in a Post-Pandemic Future* and the call for a state-wide panel on They also issued a call for surveys and received over 900 responses from educators across the state.

Through both the listening sessions and the survey, organizers focused on capturing **practices** that sparked learning innovation during the pandemic, **conditions** that fed existing educational inequities, and the **actions** we could potentially take now to

The majority of practices, conditions, and actions identified fell under one of six areas:

» TECHNOLOGY USE: Educators began using technology en masse—like Zoom, text messaging, and chats—to support learning and real-time communications with students and families.

» PARTNERSHIPS: Collaborations emerged across districts and sectors to support learning communities and connect learners from different communities and cultures to learn with and from one another.

» STUDENT & STAFF SUPPORTS: Schools started developing more ways to support both academics and whole person health, like repurposing district buses to provide meals in the community.

» SCHEDULES: Educators began thinking differently about when school happens. They adopted asynchronous courses that allowed for greater flexibility to meet family/student needs.

» APPROACHES TO LEARNING: New ideas for learning and assessment emerged. For example, some schools started offering enrichment opportunities provided for "gifted" students to everyone.

» PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A

"flipped" PD model began to emerge, one that offered asynchronous and virtual options for educators and even teachers learning how to use technology from their students.



To better understand these findings, organizers convened the Remaking Tomorrow Panel on Innovative Teaching and Learning on April 29 and May 3, 2021. In each session, regional and state education leaders came together to identify the data's larger implications on learning and brainstorm an action plan for sustained, scalable changes to both This publication presents the panel's key recommendations, along with four indepth case studies, success stories, and supporting data. You'll also find a guide for organizers who want to replicate this process in their own communities.

education practices and policies.

Justice, Methods, and Relationships

Since early 2020, area educators have identified educational justice, holistic methodology, and meaningful relationships as three aspirational focal points for shaping the future of learning.

These themes first appeared in the *Remaking Tomorrow* report and they guided the research and synthesis behind this publication.

We define them as:

» JUSTICE: A commitment to helping every learner, family, and community flourish by renegotiating power imbalances, dismantling barriers, promoting anti-racist practices, and affording more supports and opportunities to learners of greatest need while working alongside them, valuing their experiences, and supporting and honoring their voices, strengths, potential, and dignity.

» METHODS: Engaging and relevant learning practices that support learners' and educators' health, wellness, and human development and cultivate their capacity to navigate rapid social and technological change.

» RELATIONSHIPS: Prioritizing the connections between learners and their families, peers, educators, and mentors, in ways that forge engaged partnerships, negotiate power dynamics, and help learners develop cross-cultural understandings and social capital that unlock opportunities to thrive.



And make related recommendations

The Recommendations

SEE THE RECOMMENDATIONS >>>







Remaking Tomorrow: What Comes Next is designed to help all those invested in young peoples' future make an urgent case for continued change.

We hope you'll use it as a tool in your postpandemic toolbox. Come back to it when you need **a flashlight**, to shine a light on the toughest challenges from the last year. Or **a highlighte**r, to call out the best and brightest ideas that emerged during the pandemic. Or even **a roadmap**, to help build new programs and guide meaningful conversations with leaders and legislators about post-pandemic learning.

We can't afford to return to a status quo that never truly worked for every learner. But together, we can build a tomorrow that's filled with more just, engaging, and accessible possibilities.

FIND YOUR WAY

Insights and inspirations await you! Here are a few recommended pathways for different readers. Rather go your own way? Use the > and < buttons to navigate through the entire publication.

Practitioners

QUICK WINS

A collection of quick and easy-to-replicate strategies used by educators during the 2020-21 school year.

BRIGHT SPOT BLOGS

Four pandemic-era success stories from schools and organizations in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Administrators

CASE STUDIES IN PANDEMIC LEARNING

Four in-depth examples of schools and learning environments that overcame pandemic learning challenges. Each provides a detailed look at the problem they faced, their step-bystep approach to finding a solution, and reflections on their outcome.

Policymakers

KEY DATA

Highlights from our research on pandemic teaching and learning gathered from 21 listening sessions and a survey of 900+ educators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

FROM THE PANEL Suggested actions and long-term shifts to maintain and scale pandemic-era success.

Organizers

PROCESS GUIDE

A step-by-step overview to help you organize the Remaking Tomorrow research, convening, and storytelling process in your community.



JUSTICE









DATA

METHODS RELATIONSHIPS

QUICK WIN

AT A GLANCE

Watch for these icons along the way. They highlight stories and recommendations related to **justice**, **methods**, and **relationships**. Others highlight **quick wins** and **data points** from our research.

NORTHGATE SCHOOL DISTRICT

hosted virtual parent coffees to stay in touch with families. This one-on-one time allowed parents to feel heard, get questions answered, and be more open and honest.

> BRENTWOOD BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT connected with families via video conferencing to learn about their needs, helping support deeper school-family understanding and connection.

FOX CHAPEL AREA SCHOOL

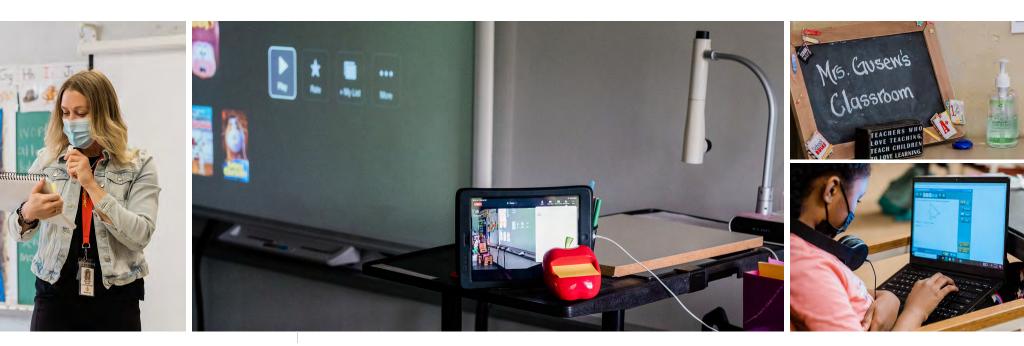
DISTRICT created virtual parent night events to build stronger relationships with

families.

MOSHANNON VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT hosted a family chat, led by their instructional coach, to provide learning time with new technologies, which resulted in better family understanding of online platforms and programs.

DUQUESNE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Getting families comfortable with virtual school technology



QUICK FACTS:

 $\bigcirc \bigcirc \bigcirc$

- **Q** City of Duquesne, Allegheny County
- 📱 In-school learning environment
- **3**57 enrollment

The Problem: Tech-Based Tensions

Duquesne City School District is among the smallest public school districts in Pennsylvania. After a tumultuous end to the 2019-20 school year-when students were sent home with books and hard copy materials but no devices -the district needed to ensure their families and learners had the support they needed to succeed in 2020-21, whether learning in a fully virtual or hybrid environment.

By August, students were buzzing with excitement about the new school year. But parents, not so much. Many weren't sure what the new year would hold or how they'd effectively support their child's education while juggling new technologies and digital learning platforms.

The district had previously established a one-to-one technology program with iPads and recently added Chromebooks for grades 3-6. To introduce families and students to new devices and help them embrace technology as an effective, efficient learning tool in the year ahead, school leaders needed to help every parent and caregiver overcome their tech issues and anxieties.



Both educators and parents interviewed in listening sessions identified technology use as a key challenge, including device access, reliable internet access, and adapting to multiple platforms.



The Solution: Individualized, Big Tent Approach

The district hosted "Tech Tents," a back-to-school event for families to learn about student devices and provide time for one-on-one tech support with staff. The event was a natural extension of the district's existing commitment to families and the community. Pre-pandemic, they had regularly hosted parent and community events-like back-to-school cookouts and resource fairs—so it was not unusual to invite families to the school.

The district set up tents throughout the school parking lot and assigned each teacher to a tent; teachers taught in the morning and staffed their tent in the afternoon.

When families arrived, teachers introduced them to their child's device, demonstrating the programs or apps they'd use in class. For easy access, the district also pre-organized apps in folders on each device and gave each parent a login card with their child's credentials.

Tech Tents was designed as a one-stop-shop. While there, parents could pick up supplemental materials and manipulatives-everything they needed to be successful at home. Technology staff was also available for questions and troubleshooting, and an interpreter was available for families with limited English language skills.





The majority of educators surveyed ranked technology access for learners as a top priority for the future of learning.



Teachers and school leaders worked to make the event a fun, social experience-one that not only provided a service but ensured families had what they needed:

• Staff distributed donated goods and backpacks and offered other giveaways and resources.

• Other community organizations and programs had tents onsite (Pre-K Counts registration, SNAP, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania, etc.).

• They made sure to have plenty of cold water on hand. It was August, after all!

To help ensure success, prior to Tech Tents, the school clearly and consistently promoted the event to parents and families through calls, emails, social media, and personal emails from teachers to all families on their rosters.

Outcomes & Successes

» TEACHERS BUILT STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS with parents and caregivers.

» PARENTS SUCCESSFULLY CONNECTED with other community resources.

Tech Tents helped the district make meaningful connections between school and home. Today, the district receives many more emails from parents than they did in the past, which they view as a positive outcome connected to Tech Tents outreach.

The event wasn't without its challenges, though. The district walked away with several ideas for improvement:

• They only had one person capable of addressing device issues, and while this person was onsite for the event, it would have been helpful to have more.

• Offer staggered arrival times or schedule appointments to avoid wait times.

• Reinforce that teachers and staff need to empathize with where parents are and what they're dealing with. They should try to identify families' barriers and ways to remove them.

• Remind teachers and staff to be present and available on an ongoing basis, helping to build and maintain positive relationships.

»LOOKING AHEAD the district plans to continue Tech Tents, possibly multiple times a year, in conjunction with open houses or other events.

RELATED READING

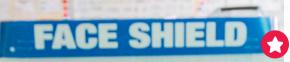


Digital transformation doesn't happen in a vacuum. Elizabeth Forward School District leveraged real-world community partnerships to build a digital ecosystem for their studentsone that has fueled personalized learning, pandemic era adaptability, and new approaches to staffing and professional development.



LAUREL HIGHLANDS SCHOOL DISTRICT faculty and staff delivered lunches and visited the homes of students who were not responding to remote learning, which resulted in greater relationship building, communication, staff support, and student success.





Suave

KISKI AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT used time previously reserved for afterschool detention to provide virtual and in-person tutoring. This increased student achievement and collaboration between high school students (the tutors) and students in grades 5-6.

PITTSBURGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

hosted provider information sessions to help external partners better align their out-of-school programming with student needs and district goals.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHARTER SCHOOL

conducted weekly teacher feedback surveys to gather student input on classes and methods, resulting in a more democratic, reflective classroom.

Maintaining and translating hands-on creative arts programming to virtual platforms

MANCHESTER **CRAFTSMEN'S GUILD**





QUICK FACTS:

Q Pittsburgh, Allegheny County 📱 Out-of-school learning environment

The Problem: Moving Hands-On Online While Empowering Expression

Manchester Craftsmen's Guild (MCG) has long been a leader and innovator in creative out-of-school time programming that allows youth to experiment and experience art. Traditionally, they offered many hands-on after-school and summer arts activities. But the pandemic prevented these programs from continuing in their former state during much of 2020 and into 2021.

MCG had to pivot if they were to continue serving the youth who had come to rely on and look forward to these experiences.



The Solution: Embracing New Partnerships, Perspectives, Opportunities



One-third of surveyed educators want to involve community members more in educational decision-making.

MCG flipped the challenges of pandemic program delivery on their head. They created new partnerships and strategies to deliver creative education virtually while also embracing new opportunities that wouldn't have arisen if not for the pandemic.

They first tackled logistical challenges, essentially becoming a shipping and receiving business. Staff packaged all supplies and materials for students so they were ready for pick-up or home delivery.

Then, they turned to more transformational work. Staff didn't want to simply move their in-person programs online; they wanted to wholly reimagine them as new opportunities for youth to build self-expression, support, connection, explansion, exploration, and self-worth. They wanted to create a high-quality virtual program that was dynamic and reinforced the value of students, instilling in them a sense of "you deserve the best because you are the best."

They brought together seemingly disparate activities into an integrated program, including college, career, and life art sessions, goal-setting, and drop-in support sessions with Carlow University's psychology department.

They also made virtual connections to creative professionals, visiting artists, alumni speakers, arts showcases, awards ceremonies, and health and wellness activities (like yoga, healthy cooking, and lifestyle decisionmaking)-many of which they wouldn't have engaged normally due to distance or time. New partnerships, including one with the Archie Bray Foundation for the Ceramic Arts in Montana, were essential to bring their programming to life.



When the time came for program implementation, they also embraced a few key methods, including:

• Building a two-week logistics window into their timeline to prepare and distribute student materials



sessions expressed a desire to create more linkages between schools, out-ofschool organizations, libraries, museums, etc.

• Leveraging existing relationships with partner schools and teachers, so staff could drop into virtual classes to build student awareness of new programming

• Utilizing new online enrollment options

Outcomes & Successes

» EXPANDED THEIR REACH to new schools and students, who, in a pre-pandemic world, wouldn't have access to programs because of time or distance.

» CONNECTED WITH CREATIVE PROFESSIONALS who they otherwise wouldn't have sought out.

» BUILT A FOUNDATION FOR CONTINUED PARTNERSHIP with new organizations (they're currently planning for future inperson experiences with the Archie Bray Foundation).

» HELPED STAFF AND LEADERS EMBRACE NEW WAYS of virtual collaboration.

» INCREASED PUBLIC AWARENESS around their mission and programs thanks to increased use of technology (which has, in turn, connected them to even more new resources and partners).

Like crafting a beautiful ceramic, building MCG's new virtual programming was a process; it started out a little messy and unclear, but by working with raw materials—and even putting them through fire—they created a piece of art.

MCG suggests that other educators looking to start a similar process be intentional about student engagement, honoring student voice by validating and showcasing student work, and be mindful about building a meaningful approach for all involved organizations. Above all, they encourage others to keep efforts consistent, relevant, and fun; be brave and fearless, and always come from a place of hope, belief, resiliency, and love.

RELATED READING



Partnership is no longer optional in education-it's essential. In the Pittsburgh region, Trying Together has helped usher in a new level of focus and collaboration to support early learning centers, families, and the entire caregiving infrastructure, ensuring both families and providers can find the care and support they need.

READ THE BLOG >>

EAST STROUDSBURG AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT offered a virtual play option to connect students from across multiple district schools and their cyber academy.

73

OVER HALF of educators surveyed said social-emotional learning and learner engagement worsened during the pandemic, indicating a need for renewed focus in these areas postpandemic.

NEIGHBORHOOD NORTH MUSEUM OF PLAY

incorporated a teaching artist and integrated arts programming to be more culturally responsive to Black students and provide for students' mental wellness.

SENECA VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT

hosted a virtual presentation with a Holocaust survivor. The experience gave students a hands-on lesson in white supremacy and inspired greater participation in diversity groups.

GREENSBURG SALEM SCHOOL DISTRICT

Confronting implicit bias in a white district (during a pandemic)



QUICK FACTS:

During listening sessions, educators said the lack of

"change mindset" in

organizations, families, and

communities, including

feelings about embracing

more anti-racist practices,

was often a challenge.

- Second Streensburg, Westmoreland County
- 🛱 In-school learning environment
- 2,600 enrollment

The Problem: No Space for Courageous Conversations

On May 25, 2020, when the United States was only a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic, George Floyd became a household name when he was murdered at the hands of white police officers. Communities everywhere erupted in civil unrest, igniting a renewed fervor against deeply ingrained racial inequities and social injustices.

Within this context, a small group of teachers in the Greensburg Salem School District began to question their own implicit bias and privilege.

Located about 35 miles southeast of Pittsburgh, the predominately white district includes a mix of urban, suburban, and rural communities. Following Floyd's murder, the district observed some increased racial tensionss and clashing ideologies, while media coverage inspired both conversation and introspection around the disconnect between the status quo and the critical need for social justice.

Rather than keep these discussions at the sideline, **the district knew they** needed to embrace and facilitate difficult conversations about race and bias with their staff, students, and community.



The Solution: Dialogue, Learn, Share. Repeat.

To spur conversation, a small group of teachers hosted an informal book study over summer 2020. Their goal was to learn more about implicit bias concepts and find ways to apply them to their roles as educators.

Inspired by a similar group at the Fox Chapel Area School District, the teachers tackled a variety of content: books, articles, and documentaries. Through their conversations, learnings, and sharing with others who expressed interest, the group grew from an initial three members to nearly a dozen.

The group also tapped into the expertise of Dr. Melissa Marks, an associate professor of education at the University of Pittsburgh Greensburg. Dr. Marks specializes in multicultural education and diversity, and she helped the team explore how to integrate current civic issues into the social studies classroom and consider the cultural perspectives of their curriculum.

At the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, the group shared their learnings with district staff during a start-of-year presentation. Their goal was to spark more conversation about implicit bias, build awareness, and prepare staff to respond should the topic arise in class. Their presentation covered not only the definition of implicit bias but also ways to check behavior and how to address bias with students and families.

Their conversation eventually spilled over to the district's Student Voice team, which started integrating a new focus on equity and social justice.





Nearly all surveyed educators said either providing authentic, culturally relevant learning experiences or developing antiracist education

cultures was a top priority for the future.

Outcomes & Successes

» TEACHERS ARE EXAMINING THE PERSPECTIVES presented in their curriculum, particularly in social studies and English language arts.

The book study was the first step on a long path toward social justice. The district knows that much of its work is yet to come. Though necessary, they acknowledge that it was difficult to prioritize this work amidst other pandemic challenges, including all that teachers needed to overcome to operate day-to-day. But, they stress, it is possible.

District leaders expect more shifts in curriculum and instruction in the future, though these changes may not be easy.

The book study group hopes other districts will replicate their approach, starting with a handful of teachers or staff who are ready and willing to look inward about bias, privilege, and justice. They recommend being mindful of culture and assessing "where are we now?" in terms of a collective understanding of social justice work. From there, they recommend developing a plan rooted in shared understanding, compassion, and willingness to grow.

RELATED READING



Just as discussion and dialogue can support more equitable learning, they are often the root of simple yet effective social-emotional learning. When the pandemic hit, **Intermediate Unit 1's** campus schools offered a mix of mindfulness curriculum and professional support to recreate the schools' unique blend of hands-on and social-emotional learning in a virtual space.

READ THE BLOG >>

THE PENNSYLVANIA SOCIETY FOR BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH offered @Home Science Kits to engage students in hands-on science through their screens.

> PERSONALIZED LEARNING was identified by both listening session participants and survey respondents as an issue of high priority, including the use of key student supports and strategies that impact social-emotional learning, diversification of educator roles, and partnerships.

SOMERSET COUNTY LIBRARY reworked their summer camps using grab-and-go kits and an online instruction platform. Though their buildings were closed, the library successfully maintained programming and even attracted new campers who were previously unable to attend due to transportation barriers.

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA provided direct instruction and modeling to nonverbal students so they could independently communicate answers and preferences using Google chat. This created a communication system that students did not have prior to virtual learning. Reimagining summer learning and connecting with under-theradar youth in a virtual space

CARNEGIE LIBRARY OF PITTSBURGH







QUICK FACTS:

Q Pittsburgh, Allegheny County

Out-of-school learning environment

The Problem: Digital Program Delivery & Recruitment

Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh (CLP) has long been a regional hub for learners of all ages. Each summer, CLP traditionally offered in-person Summer Skills Intensives, engaging and arts-focused workshops for youth and teens in grades 6-12. Workshops took place over a week and offered 20 hours of summer learning time.

But in summer 2020—in the midst of the pandemic—CLP knew their summer programming couldn't be business as usual.

The workshops were designed to be very hands-on, so CLP leaders initially felt unsure about continuing them in a virtual environment, especially when tackling topics like *Textiles 101* (for beginner hand sewing) and *Finding Your Artistic Style* (using a variety of materials for artistic expression).

Further, student recruitment felt nearly impossible in an all-virtual environment. In prior years, CLP attracted summer intensive participants from other in-person programming and recruited teens who frequented the libraries after school. Now, these sources no longer existed.



About half of surveyed educators said their ability to tailor instruction to diverse student needs worsened throughout the pandemic.

Complicating matters, CLP didn't regularly collect contact information for youth who came to the library outside of formal programs.

CLP needed to reimagine their Summer Skills Intensives as dynamic, engaging virtual learning experiences while also recruiting participation and building relationships with students from afar.



The Solution: Grassroots Promotion, Hybrid Approaches

First, CLP went back to basics to recruit participants. They leaned heavily on word-of-mouth, using informal conversations during curbside pickups to spread the word. They leveraged their device lending program as a cross-promotion opportunity and advertised the program heavily on CLP's website.

Thanks to these efforts, they successfully filled their roster—but now they needed to ensure the program experience would be a positive one.

CLP tackled program delivery step-by-step, blending at-home and digital content strategies to build a program that was more than just an "online version" of their old intensive:

• Staff prepared care packages for participants, including all the supplies they'd need to successfully complete their programming (plus extra!).

• For students without internet or computer access, CLP lent out hotspots and devices.

• They used a flipped schedule: Staff met with students consistently for a week (virtually), but students could work on and complete their projects at their own pace.

• In the past, they leveraged partnerships with local artists to incorporate video content and talent showcases into programming. In the virtual space, they utilized YouTube interviews and other videos featuring artists.







educators indicated relationships and surrounding youth with supportive individuals as a priority for the future of learning.

Outcomes & Successes

» OFFERED A NEW BLEND OF CONTENT, including live, staff-led daily check-ins focused on mentorship, recorded video tutorials, and library databases that enhanced lessons and curriculum.

» MADE WORKSHOPS MORE STUDENT-CENTERED AND INTEREST-DRIVEN. Activities were student-directed, with staff available for support. They encouraged students to "pick and choose what excites" and follow that pathway.

» CONNECTED ART, MINDFULNESS, AND CREATIVITY. Students had a space to give and get support from one another during the early months of the pandemic.

» BUILT NEW RESOURCES TO CONNECT STUDENTS TO ARTISTS AND PARTNERS, focusing on local opportunities and people.

- **» INCREASED FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**, as many parents and caregivers could now participate in virtual programming alongside youth.
- » ALLOWED FOR STRONGER STUDENT-STAFF RELATIONSHIPS, as virtual delivery eliminated many of the physical space distractions that were part of in-person programs.

CLP received many positive comments from family members on their reimagined Summer Skills Intensives, a testament to the program's positive impact on family engagement.

CLP plans to offer their virtual Summer Skills Intensives again in summer 2021.

For other organizations looking to implement a similar program, CLP recommends ensuring options and opportunities are not overwhelming or intimidating. Reinforce with youth that they should follow their interests and there is no grade.

RELATED READING



Out-of-school time organizations have doubled-down on their "whatever it takes" approach to learning. In the Pittsburgh region, **Boys & Girls Clubs of Western Pennsylvania, Allegheny County's Department of Human Services**, and others have formed the cornerstone of **Community Learning Hubs**, safe and accessible spaces for daily remote learning and before- and after-school time.



CANON-MCMILLAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

(and

allowed high school students to change their schedule and earn credit for elective classes, helping students to overcome possible failure from another course.

> HOMER-CENTER SCHOOL DISTRICT altered their specials schedule to give students the same class daily for three weeks, instead of rotating each day. This allowed for more in-depth study of each subject and the completion of units and projects that were previously not possible.

DISTRICT re-evaluated their due date requirements to enable students to experience success in spite of current pandemic-related

WEST MIFFLIN AREA SCHOOL

challenges.

GREATER LATROBE SCHOOL DISTRICT offered quick virtual meetings with students in between classes to answer questions and provide remediation.

WHERE DO WE GO **FROM HERE?**

Recommendations from the Remaking Tomorrow Panel on Innovative Teaching & Learning

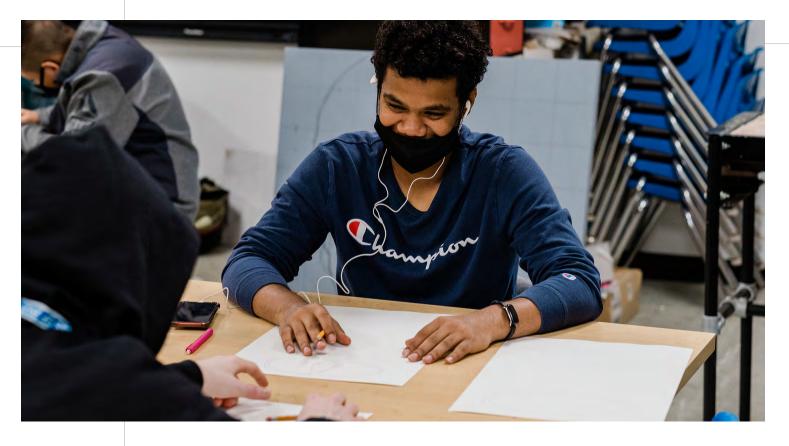
By Gregg Behr, James Denova, and Valerie Kinloch, Remake Learning Co-Chairs

In response to the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and social injustice, we have seen remarkable moments of progress among members of southwestern Pennsylvania's learning ecosystem. We've seen what is possible when people suspend their assumptions about learning and come together to meet young people's and families' needs.

Out of necessity, barriers to change have been weakened. And yet it's clear that work remains if we are to recognize and dismantle systemic racism, and grapple with our understanding of justice and equity. The methods we use to teach and learn must evolve, and the relationships we build must support every child as an individual.

In our region and nationwide, stakeholders must guard against the impulse to return to any "normal" that was siloed and unjust. No answer will be found in quick fixes or one-size-fits-all solutions.

With that in mind, the Remaking Tomorrow Panel on Innovative Teaching and Learning built on the findings of the Remaking Tomorrow report and data collected through hundreds of surveys and listening sessions by bringing together 120 education and community leaders for working sessions on April 29 and May 3. This group included a cross-section of education experts, recognized innovators, and leaders from universities, library systems, and departments of education from two states, along with students, teachers, and administrators. Together, they brainstormed ideas for the future of learning, shaped by current experiences and findings. They also kept three aspirational focal points in mind: Centering justice, developing innovative methods, and prioritizing meaningful relationships.



Immediate Actions and Long-Term Shifts

Within each focus area, the panel identified several recommendations for immediate action and long-term shifts to support continued, relevant practices across the region and beyond.

You'll find these recommendations below, along with a detailed description of the focal points and highlights from current practice.



TO TRULY HAVE AND SUSTAIN JUSTICE, there must be a commitment to working with and alongside learners, families, and communities. Educational equity as it explicitly relates to teaching and learning requires both a redistribution of available resources and a renegotiation of power relations through the lens of antiracist practices. In other words, we must provide support to, and make available opportunities for, all learners, and especially those who need us the most by valuing their lives, histories, cultural knowledges, and community and family heritages. We must, without question, know who our students are and what their hopes are as we celebrate their lives and uplift their brilliance.

It should go without saying that equity requires us to do what is right and just. That is, we have to engage in systems-level change by collaborating with learners, educators, and families within the context of schools and communities. We need to think about as well as approach education differently. Do we see teachers as experts, as knowledge-producers, and as leaders? Do we view students as leaders within classrooms and community spaces? Are we providing the necessary resources, experiences, and learning environments to students and teachers and, by extension, to school leaders and to families? Are we willing to reimagine teaching and teacher education through humanizing, equitable, assets-driven perspectives? What could this reimagination look like and entail?

Prior to and especially during the COVID-19 global pandemic, we witnessed increased momentum toward more equitable futures and just educational practices. Many schools began leveraging not only technology, but also relationships in order to ensure that students and families continue to have a voice. Barriers were not only named, but attempts to move them were put into place. Equally important was the increased attention that more education stakeholders gave to exploring what equitable practices and systems mean.

BRIGHT SPOTS TO BUILD ON: Administrators in one Pittsburgh-area district have begun using a series of questions to review instructional materials and resources. With dedicated time, space, and a process to explore these questions through ongoing conversations, they wondered together about the following: Who gets represented and who does not get represented in our curricula, pedagogies, and classroom discussions? Do the learning experiences we offer value the dignity of our entire community? In what ways do they value the dignity of all? How do they not value the dignity of all? What must we do better? How can we work to become more inclusive and critical in ways that nurture and support members of our community?

Immediate Actions:



and mental health providers directly with schools and families to offer social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum.

Create district-level plans for communicating with families and give families multiple ways to communicate with schools, including phone, email, text, and video chat.

What communication tools do you currently use that you could easily extend to parents and families?

Offer professional development for teachers on justice, equity, and belonging, including training on classroom "facilitation" and creating inclusive classroom spaces. Invite teachers to lead and/or co-lead these experiences.

Distribute resources about trauma and experiences of learning inequity to educators and families.

Establish SEL curriculum standards that address mental health and wellness and include nonnegotiables such as equity and justice.

Create a regional family engagement support system that fosters meaningful, multi-level, and two-way communication with districts.

Create student advisory panels across grade levels as part of the overall administrative function of schools, ensuring practices, policies, and procedures meet the needs of all learners. Panels should represent a real structure shift and rearrangement of power for all involved and make space for creativity.

Define "whole-learner health" in writing, with specific language around SEL and equity, working with specific expert partners.

Long-Term Shifts:



TO BUILD A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR ALL LEARNERS, the methods we use must ignite engaging and relevant learning practices that support learners' and educators' health, wellness, and human development. The COVID pandemic has revealed growing disparities among different student populations and communities. In order to close these gaps, our future educational methods must cultivate each student's personal style and pace of learning.

Personalized learning will be increasingly critical to the navigating of rapid social and technological change. So as we look beyond the pandemic, the methods we develop must emphasize the importance of personalization for all students, as well as for teachers' own professional journeys. We can achieve that personalization by embracing flexibility in our thinking, in our teaching, and even in practicalities like our scheduling.

This is a moment to go beyond what was familiar and discard approaches that no longer serve our students or teachers. We must build flexibility and clear methods for personalization into our system, so that all students can be successful.

BRIGHT SPOTS TO BUILD ON: During the pandemic, one Pittsburgh-area teacher invited an author to speak to her class in the evening, rather than during school hours. This easy shift of schedules meant that parents could join in, allowing kids and parents to learn side-by-side. Another began using Sign-Up Genius to schedule "custom appointments" for individualized guided-reading lessons. The approach to teacher professional development was also transformed: Rather than continue with day-long trainings for large groups, some districts began offering personalized, on-demand video trainings and quick tips that were specifically relevant to a given teacher's work.

Other schools have looked at extended day schedules that meld online tutorials with scheduled coursework, again customizing instructional plans to students' individual needs. Some schools are using small group community learning hubs to supplement scheduled course work, an emergency adaptation to COVID that will, in some cases, become a permanent part of the educational environment.

Immediate Actions:

Offer students access to learning opportunities in other districts.

Think of a neighboring district. How could you partner with them to offer additional classes to your students? What could you offer their students?

Provide professional development for teachers on personalized learning and establish a system to make this type of PD sustainable across the state.

Create more professional development opportunities that can be accessed at any time and can be personalized for individual educators.

Determine policy levers that can help break down silos across districts and dissolve artificial borders.

Long-Term Shifts:

Redesign school schedules to offer greater student-centered flexibility.

Offer individual learning plans to every student, so that personalized learning is not limited to students with special needs and gifted students. These plans should be student-driven, but also engage parents and teachers early and often.

Codify pandemic-era instructional flexibility and focus on competencybased assessment, continuing to offer different models of instruction beyond Flexible Instructional Days.

the school year, and learning spaces around the student, rather than require students to adapt to a standardized schedule and predetermined physical classroom environment?

How can we wrap the school day,



Offer alternative pathways to educator certification, including apprenticeships, training programs, or on-site learning.

Create a state-level "Office of Personalized Learning" or "Office of Learning Innovation" to ensure personalized learning improves and grows, and create a grant program to help schools pursue structured, thoughtful approaches to personalized learning.

Relationships Make School More Human(e) By Gregg Behr

RELATIONSHIPS ARE HOW WE NURTURE HUMAN POTENTIAL, support each other through difficult challenges, and discover opportunities to thrive. The current moment provides an opportunity to broaden our definition of "educator" and connect learners to entire ecosystems of caring adults. How might we prioritize meaningful relationships among learners and their families, peers, teachers, and communities? How might we forge diverse, engaged partnerships that help learners develop social capital?

BRIGHT SPOTS TO BUILD ON: During the pandemic, educators sought new ways to build and maintain strong relationships with their students and families. Teachers in the Pittsburgh region volunteered to help with meal delivery to students in order to connect with learners on a personal level. Administrators hosted virtual Q&A sessions where parents could share their needs and concerns. To build on increased family engagement sparked by the pandemic, one superintendent held brief but meaningful "virtual coffee" meetings with individual parents.

On a broader level, communities saw relationships deepen among schools, local nonprofits, and out-of-school time providers. Such relationships have enabled creative collaboration: One district said they began collaborating closely with county commissioners and local hospitals to share healthrelated information. Elsewhere, we've seen robotics companies partner with classrooms to teach coding and STEM. We've seen hip-hop artists partner with after-school programs to train community organizers. And we've seen parks team up with museums to teach sustainability and art.

Immediate Actions: T



Create and support spaces where students, organizations, and community members collaborate on new approaches to teaching and learning.

Make impactful connections among districts, teachers, out-ofschool educators, and families.

Use technology to build

partnerships and connections among schools, organizations, and programs across the region, state, and country, normalizing and building the ecosystem approach to learning.

How are students made more or less human by the spaces we create for them and also by the adults in those spaces?

Hire district-level "Relationship Directors," who can specialize in building social capital for students and teachers.

Long-Term Shifts:



Expand the PAsmart Grants model to support research and development of scalable learning innovations across clusters of schools and partner organizations.



Create a statewide "Portrait of a Learner," "Portrait of an Educator," and "Portrait of a Graduate," which are shared among schools and agencies, including higher education entities.



DERRY TOWNSHIP SCHOOL DISTRICT offered the biweekly professional development series "Take 5 to Thrive," which included quick tips and a reminder to teachers to support their physical, emotional, mental, and professional wellness in the midst of the pandemic.

CANON-MCMILLAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

allowed high school students to change their schedule and earn credit for elective classes, helping students to overcome possible failure from another course.

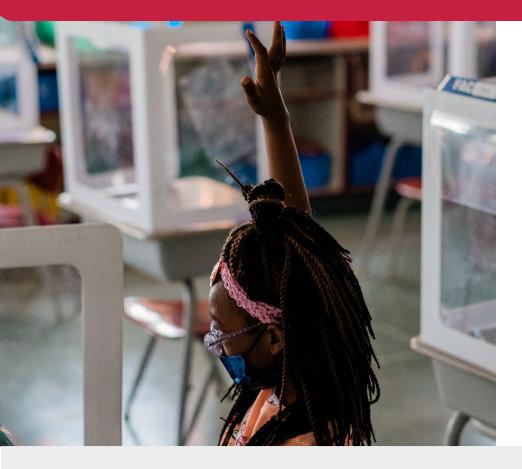
THE MAJORITY of

educators surveyed said they are hopeful for what post-pandemic learning will look like.

This in

COMMUNITIES IN SCHOOLS PITTSBURGH

hosted self care and trauma training for teachers to help build their emotion management skills. This contributed to a greater sense of community among teaching staff, students, and families.



REPLICATING CHANGE

A Remaking Tomorrow Process Guide for Organizers

Want to organize the Remaking Tomorrow process in your community? The recipe starts with four basic ingredients: **capture**, **understand**, **strategize**, and **share**. Follow these steps, and add your own local flavors, to chart a path for post-pandemic learning in your region.



CAPTURE

Provide space and time for educators to connect, reflect, and identify "bright spots" and "darks spots" from their pandemic experience.



UNDERSTAND

Look for patterns in the data you captured and organize the information into a digestible format.



STRATEGIZE Convene a cross-sector advisory committee and create an action plan based on your data.



SHARE Distribute your findings widely, highlighting your action plan and clear recommendations for postpandemic learning.

Capture.

Step one is all about collecting data. Use an **online survey** to gather educators' feedback and experiences, particularly on the challenges and successes they faced during the pandemic. Shape questions around the ideas of justice, methods, and relationships.



Design your survey to capture breadth over depth. This is your tool to surface larger trends.

As time and resources allow, organize **"role-alike" listening sessions**. These guided discussions are designed for groups of 20-30 educators from similar roles, like high school teachers, early educators, administrators, or parents. Recruit a team of facilitators to lead the sessions and provide them with a facilitation guide, a slide template, and a spreadsheet to record themes that emerge from their sessions.

Use the principles of human-centered design

to guide your sessions and help participants identify different pandemic teaching experiences as positive, negative, or having potential. Discussions should last no longer than 90 minutes. Consider using a survey tool designed specifically for research.

Collect email addresses for potential listening session attendees. Send them a personalized invitation via email. Ask them to forward the invitation to others who may be interested. Include the survey link, too, in case they aren't able to attend but still want to contribute.

Make it easy for session attendees to register. Create a simple Google form, which can collect contact information and filter registration options based on an attendee's role.

Ask for "quick wins" along the way, as either part of your survey or in a separate Google form. Ask educators to identify a simple yet successful tactic they've used over the pandemic to engage learners or families. This is a quick way to build up a library of inspirational ideas.

Understand.

You've got your data, now it's time to make sense of it. If able, partner with an expert in data analysis and synthesis. They can help you review and organize information collected in your survey and listening sessions, identifying trends and big-picture findings.

> When considering partners, look to nonprofits who specialize in educational research, or reach out to a local college or university.

Ask your analysis partner to produce a report that summarizes findings from all research efforts. This will make your next steps much easier!

Strategize.

You've made sense of the data, now what do you do with what you've learned? It's time to bring together your biggest thinkers, brightest leaders, and status-quo challengers.

Convene an advisory committee or panel of educators and education stakeholders. Host a two-hour meeting to review data and findings and brainstorm the actions needed to catalyze sustained change. Recruit people with the capacity to change systems, create policy, and design or implement new programs.

As with your listening sessions, collect a list of contact information for potential panel members. Send each a personalized invitation to join the panel. Be clear about their role, the goals of the work, and the time commitment.

Share.

It's time to shout what you've learned from the rooftops. Consider hiring a writer to author blog posts or case studies. You can source stories from survey responses, quick wins, and listening session conversations. Think about telling your story visually, too. As health and safety protocols allow, send a photographer to visit local learning hubs, schools, or outdoor classrooms.

Last but not least, bring everything together in a final publication. Present your panel's recommendations, key findings, and stories. Hint: You're reading one right now!

APPENDIX

BRIGHT SPOT BLOGS:

How IU1's campus schools kept mental health support in place during pandemic learning

This school district built an award-winning digital ecosystem by using the real-world learning ecosystem outside their doors

Trying Together's support of Pittsburgh's childcare infrastructure

Creative problem-solving built Pittsburgh's Community Learning Hubs

QUICK WINS:

Brentwood Borough School District connected with families via video conferencing to learn about their needs, helping support deeper school-family understanding and connection.

Canon-McMillan School District allowed high school students to change their schedule and earn credit for elective classes, helping students to overcome possible failure from another course.

Communities in Schools Pittsburgh hosted self care and trauma training for teachers to help build their emotion management skills. This contributed to a greater sense of community among teaching staff, students, and families.

Derry Township School District debuted "Take 5 to Thrive," a bi-weekly professional development snapshot that offered quick tips, tricks, and reminders to teachers to take a few moments to support their physical, emotional, mental, and professional wellness in the midst of the pandemic.

East Stroudsburg Area School District offered a virtual play option to connect students from across multiple district schools and their cyber academy.

Environmental Charter School conducted weekly teacher feedback surveys to gather student input on classes and methods, resulting in a more democratic, reflective classroom that supported a sense of collaborative learning for both youth and adults.

Fox Chapel Area School District created virtual parent night events to build stronger relationships with families.

Greater Latrobe School District offered quick virtual meetings with students in between classes to answer questions and provide remediation.

Homer-Center School District altered their specials schedule to offer students the same class daily for three weeks, instead of rotating each day. This allowed for more in-depth study of each subject and the completion of units and projects that were previously not possible.

Kiski Area School District used time previously reserved for after-school detention to provide virtual and in-person tutoring. This increased student achievement and collaboration between high school students (the tutors) and students in grades 5-6.

Laurel Highlands School District faculty and staff delivered lunches and visited the homes of students who were not responding to remote learning, which resulted in greater relationship building, communication, staff support, and student success.

Moshannon Valley School District hosted a family chat, led by

their instructional coach, to provide learning time with new technologies, which resulted in better family understanding of online platforms and programs.

Neighborhood North Museum of Play incorporated a teaching artist and integrated arts programming to be more culturally responsive to Black students and provide for students' mental wellness.

New Castle Area School District created a virtual learning guidebook to help teachers more effectively learn new remote and hybrid teaching strategies and tools.

Northgate School District hosted virtual parent coffees to stay in touch with families. This one-on-one time allowed parents to feel heard, get questions answered, and be more open and honest.

The Pennsylvania Society for Biomedical Research offered "@Home Science Kits" to engage students in hands-on science through their screens.

Pittsburgh Public Schools hosted provider information sessions to help external partners better align their out-of-school programming with student needs and district goals.

The School District of Philadelphia provided direct instruction and modeling to nonverbal students so they could independently communicate answers and preferences using Google chat. This created a communication system that students did not have prior to virtual learning.

Seneca Valley School District leveraged virtual learning to host a student presentation with a Holocaust survivor. The experience gave students a hand-on lesson in white supremacy and inspired greater participation in diversity groups.

Somerset County Library reworked their summer camps into an at-home format using grab-and-go kits and an online instruction platform. Though their buildings were closed, the library successfully maintained programming and even attracted new campers who were previously unable to attend due to transportation barriers.

West Mifflin Area School District re-evaluated their due date requirements to enable students to experience success in spite of current pandemic-related challenges.

DATA POINTS:

 Both educators and parents interviewed in listening sessions identified technology use as a key challenge, including device access, reliable internet access, and adapting to multiple platforms.

The majority of educators surveyed ranked technology access for learners as a top priority for the future of learning.

One-third of surveyed educators want to involve community members more in educational decision-making.

Educators in listening sessions expressed a desire to create more linkages between schools, out-of-school organizations, libraries, museums, etc.

Over half of educators surveyed said social-emotional learning and learner engagement worsened during the pandemic.

During listening sessions, educators said the lack of "change mindset" in organizations, families, and communities, including feelings about embracing more anti-racist practices, was often a challenge.

Nearly all surveyed educators said either providing authentic, culturally relevant learning experiences or developing antiracist education cultures was a top priority for the future.

Personalized learning was identified by both listening session

participants and survey respondents as an issue of high priority, including the use of key student supports and strategies that influence further changes in social-emotional learning, diversification of educator roles, and partnerships.

About half of surveyed educators said their ability to tailor instruction to diverse student needs worsened throughout the pandemic.

53% of surveyed educators indicated relationships and surrounding youth with supportive individuals as a priority for the future of learning.

The majority of educators surveyed said they are hopeful for what post-pandemic learning will look like.

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