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Restart & Reimagine

10 Challenges
Your District is Facing This School Year

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With fall right around the corner and the fate of millions of students and staff hanging in the balance, the stakes have never been higher for the education world. Educational leaders will have to juggle challenges ranging from budget disruptions, to equity gaps, to learning regression.

There's a lot we don't know about the future of K–12 education—but our research and our series of conversations with 50 of the nation's leading voices in education identified some of the prime concerns as well as some ways to navigate the uncharted COVID waters.

Though there is no one solution to the challenges ahead, we outline in this ebook the many strides district administrators have already made—to celebrate and inspire further progress for returning, recovering, and reimagining the future of schooling.

> *The American public school system was working for some kids, but there's a lot of kids that we were missing. I think this crisis has put a magnifying glass on the inequities in public education.*
>
> — *Dr. Jesus Jara*
> *Superintendent, Clark County School District, NV*

Note: The scope of this ebook is limited to considerations of student, teacher, and community needs. We are not public health or education officials. We consciously refer to the words of educational leaders who will be making decisions based on their community and the voices of experts—educational leaders whom our work centers around supporting.

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The COVID-Slide

With schools shifting to remote teaching and learning virtually overnight, educators have done an extraordinary job in ensuring the continuity of learning. Despite their best efforts, the reality is that students are losing some academic gains, and educators are bracing for a "COVIDslide," an exacerbated summer slide, in the fall. NWEA estimates that students will return in the fall, having lost roughly 30% of typical yearly achievement gains in reading. For mathematics, it is estimated that students will lose 50% of their achievement gains, and, in some grades, they may fall nearly a full year behind what we would observe in normal conditions. As K-12 leaders plan for AY 2020-21, they need to account for significant learning loss and find ways to close the achievement gaps that have widened as a result of the pandemic.

After-school and summer programming

Jennifer McCombs, a senior policy researcher and director of the Behavioral and Policy Sciences Department at RAND, contends that "school leaders will need to provide more quality after-school and summer programming to get kids caught up." In our interview with Marlon Styles Jr., he said: "I'd like to see us really think about how we can tailor some of the extended learning opportunities for students outside of the academic school year in this new-age concept of summer school."

Earnest Winston, Superintendent of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) in North Carolina, said that self-directed remote learning opportunities for enrichment are provided to all students over the summer. To account for learning loss in early learners, students in grades K-4 are strongly encouraged to participate in a reading checkup program led by one of CMS's community partners, Read Charlotte.

Personalized and adaptive learning

Students have received varying levels of academic support since building closures. When they return to school in the fall, they will most likely have more variability in their academic skills than ever before. Beginning the school year with diagnostic and formative assessments may be the most useful way to determine where students are struggling, and differentiated support can give students a better chance at academic success.

Now more than ever, educators may need to consider how to provide opportunities for personalized and adaptive learning. Dr. Divya Sridhar, Policy Advisor at McGraw Hill, explained in a Medium article that a number of education thought leaders have identified adaptive learning as a promising, personalized solution for students. Moreover, the U.S. Department of Education has a strong focus on personalized and adaptive learning to produce a more prepared and skilled workforce for high-demand jobs. She also contends that intelligent adaptive learning platforms effectively assess and identify students' existing proficiency levels and shape their progress.

When our team spoke with Dr. David Miyashiro, Superintendent of Cajon Valley Union School District in California, we realized that students could have more personalization and flexibility in their learning than we thought was possible. Dr. Miyashiro's team has changed the nature of classroom instruction by fully embedding personalized and adaptive learning solutions in their district.

An evidence brief on addressing learning loss by The Annenberg Institute at Brown University claims: "High-dosage tutoring that is directly tied to classroom content – helping students succeed in their coursework – can substantially accelerate learning in both math and reading for the most struggling students."

When students return in the fall, learning gaps will be more pronounced than ever

With most districts continuing elements of remote learning in the coming school year, implementing **Paper's Educational Support System (ESS)** will allow students to receive **intensive tutoring**, tailored instruction, and personalized solutions to ensure no student is left behind.

Support your students with **unlimited one-on-one tutoring in all subjects, and essay reviews, at a fixed cost. Students can access help 24/7 in both English and Spanish**.

All student activity is recorded, tracked, and made readily available to teachers and administrators, equipping them with insights to identify specific learning gaps and deliver targeted personalized instruction.

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The Digital Divide

As classrooms transitioned to at-home digital instruction, lack of adequate internet access caused significant disruption to students' learning.

"We've got a large number of students who either don't have devices or, more importantly, aren't connected; they're logged out right now. It makes the learning experience much different than those that have internet access," underline shared Marlon Styles Jr., Superintendent of Middletown City Schools in Ohio. "If we can tackle the homework gap in this country and do something about it, not just talk about it, I think in the education world we'd be all in to try to figure out a creative way to meet the needs of a variety of learners. We must connect kids now!"

Unsurprisingly, internet connectivity was a key piece of the challenges leaders pointed to time and time again in Paper's interview series since school closures. Common Sense Media reports that 15 to 16 million K-12 students in the United States lack adequate internet or devices to sustain effective distance learning at home; 9 million of them lack both.

Low-tech learning strategies

The educators we've spoken to over the past few months have expressed that physical learning packets aren't the be-all, end-all for reaching students with limited access to technology. There are a multitude of ways to engage students, with or without high-tech initiatives. Christopher Bugaj, Assistive Technology Specialist at Loudoun County Public Schools in Virginia, shared his thoughts with Paper on how families can work with students at home: Turning the captions on the television helps kids become better readers, and lowtech literacy-fun activities are abundant, such as writing words on the driveway with chalk and building sentences with Legos.

Turning to television

Though many households in the United States do not have adequate internet access, nearly every home has a television. Many district leaders enlisted the help of local media services as a way to reach students who lack broadband internet or devices. When we spoke to Dr. Jesus Jara, Superintendent of Clark County School District in Nevada, he said: "We also have Vegas PBS; luckily, we have our own TV station, and we put lessons out here for families. And Cox Communication, our internet provider here in the community, jumped in, and now our teachers are doing lessons on TV."

A rallying cry for internet access for all

Since school closures, the movement towards digital equity has gained an incredible amount of momentum. Educational leaders are rallying together and amplifying their voices, whether by holding press conferences, giving presentations, or participating in social media campaigns. There are countless examples of educators going to the state level to address digital equity issues. When we spoke with Dr. Michael Hinojosa, Superintendent of Dallas ISD, he had recently launched Operation Connectivity in partnership with Gov. Greg Abbott and the Texas Education Agency. Initially, the initiative was to address the lack of high-speed internet and devices for many Dallas ISD students. Now, it aims to provide internet connectivity to hundreds of thousands of students statewide.

Teacher Support

This past spring, millions of teachers who had never taught online were suddenly moved en masse into an emergency remote learning model. While professional development has already been a central focus for district administrators, the fall semester provides an opportunity to further address training gaps for teachers as well as ensure their wellbeing during this extraordinarily taxing moment in their professional history.

Michael Morrison, CTO of Laguna Beach Unified School District, described how his team developed a calendar for online training in spring: "Every day we have ten classes of training that are for teachers, that they can drop into. And then we record those sessions, and they could come back." For the long-term, he thinks that the "silver lining to the corona cloud" will be that teachers will be comfortable and confident in using new tools.

Socioemotional support

Principal Evan Bishop of Hopkinton High School described to us how professional development and community building for staff have been adapted to fit digital mediums. There have been Zoom trivia nights for faculty, and their usual staff summer retreat will now be taking a virtual form. Hopkinton developed a task force of senior teachers who were sharing their successes over a collaborative Google Doc. Interested teachers could then sit in on other teachers' Zoom sessions to witness the methods by which these successes were implemented. Every week, there were sessions for staff that anyone in the district could join, which offered training led by the district's technology department.

Fostering a collaborative environment

Dr. Antonio Shelton, Principal of Santa Monica High School, told us his teachers are collaborating in ways that he didn't think were possible this spring. "There's a lot coming at them, but I tell you, they have stepped up in many ways. Getting online has brought out a lot of creativity from our teachers. We have four hundred and three people on our campus that work in some capacity to support students, and they're starting to collaborate like never before. We're sending tips to them, and they're sending tips to each other," he said.

At Beaumont USD, there was a shared commitment to professional development early on from the staff. Five hundred teachers engaged in professional development regarding the use of new technological tools—even before the district required them to do so. "As a district, we focus on bringing everyone to the table. We have great relationships with our staff. They feel that trust that we're leading them down the right path, which leads them to voluntarily engaging in the work even before it becomes mandatory," said Chief Innovation Officer Dr. Ebon Brown in an interview with Paper.

Effective, real-time PD

At Spokane Public Schools, teachers are receiving different <u>tiers of support</u>. "One tier is teacher support around facilitating distance learning. In Spokane, we've centralized that in our district. We have a learning plan that we've developed with a team of teacher experts and curriculum coordinators for each grade level each week. So it's allowed teachers to focus on facilitating the learning with the tools, rather than both having to plan and to facilitate learning simultaneously. It also just kind of helps our teachers focus their time on the well-being of students and not spend hours trying to make sure that links work or if they've recorded videos in the right way," explained Dr. Adam Swinyard in a conversation with Paper.

"Another tier is making sure that professional development and support are available in real-time. We've had virtual drop-in sessions available for teachers, and chat lines and channels going on in Microsoft teams pretty much all day every day. Because you don't know when teachers are getting engaged in their work, and you don't know when they're going to have questions. You don't know if it's going to be at 6 AM before their kids wake up or if it's going to be later at 10 PM. So we've really tried to make it so they can always get connected to a real person to ask their questions or problem-solve something."

Teachers are not exempt from the plethora of challenges that come with distance and hybrid learning models. Teachers were already overworked in the standard classroom model.

Paper's ESS *gives educators the opportunity to take a breath and rest easy knowing that they don't need to be accessible to students at all hours of the day. Reports delivered to teachers by Paper identify trends in their students' learning and can alert them to areas requiring more attention.* ***Teacher workload can be reduced****, allowing them to have work-life balance and attend to other responsibilities at home.*

Paper's teacher training, including personalized and asynchronous professional development, was designed alongside our partner teachers with the specific goal of supporting them in the post-COVID education world.

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Financial Considerations

Budget, fiscal allocation, and financial responsibility have been core issues in focus during this tumultuous year. However, since the recession of 2008, schools have dealt with incredibly low funding, and the money never returned even though the economy has rebounded, forcing school systems to make magic happen from very little. Jess Gartner, Founder and CEO of Allovue, explained: "School districts were just in the last year or two starting to get on the other side of the cuts from the 2008 recession. They have lived through these economic downturns before, and they know that the downstream effects on federal and state funding and from their local tax funding can be pretty severe."

With some districts facing the possibility of a 20% reduction in their funding, according to Forbes, "school districts are contingency planning for a budget shortfall while contingency planning for how schools will operate during the pandemic."

"We've got big budget disruptions that we're trying to manage, and the federal CARES Act money has offset that to some degree," shared Dr. Jason Glass, Superintendent of JeffCo Public Schools in Colorado. However, they are still expecting a steep road ahead in terms of operating next year. "And the long term multi-year budget impacts will be even worse. So we're trying to conserve as much as we can to shield ourselves from those down the line."

Reviewing partnerships

Allovue's checklist to help districts prepare for revenue reductions recommends reviewing multi-year contracts and asking vendors to provide the district with a better rate. "If not, you may have to resort to canceling the contract altogether […] Prioritize contracts above a certain threshold so that you can maximize the savings potential. Revisiting a $500K contract could generate more savings than a $5K contract."

Holding onto or seeking partners that offer scalable and equitable services to your school community can help keep budgets tight while also providing the most value. For instance, what drew the Fulton County Library System to Paper's ESS is that it provides unlimited tutoring sessions at a fixed cost to them; the Library System can encourage student usage without fear of an increased total annual cost.

Equitable decisions

According to an Education Week Opinion piece, "focusing on equity will help leaders minimize the worst effects of the revenue losses that are so unfortunately coming their way." Students with the greatest needs and in hard-hit districts will suffer the most from resources being taken away, and they will require additional support to not fall further behind. "For students to have equal chances to learn, districts need to know how budget cuts will affect individual schools and work to reduce the impact on the schools with the most children in need."

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Leveraging Technology

As district leaders plan for the coming academic year, they are trying to nail down efficient and standardized processes to implement instructional technology, which is no doubt going to be a critical component of any district's plan post-COVID. Making informed decisions about which tools to implement and scale for the fall can be time-consuming. Not only is the selection process difficult, but purchasing, adopting, and evaluating digital products comes with a myriad of challenges.

CTO at Rocklin USD in California, Ryan Johnson, underlined shared that in the past winter and spring, teachers were given the freedom and flexibility to try any teaching tools they wanted. However, now that the trial-period of adapting to distanced learning has come to an end, the next task for the district is deciding on which tools to invest in long-term. The challenge, he explained, especially when considering state budgeting restrictions, becomes finding commonalities to minimize cost and increase maximum effectiveness in delivering summative and formative assessments.

Leveraging data

CTO Ryan Johnson shared that Rocklin USD is assessing the most effective long-term solutions for the fall (and the future) by collecting teacher reviews of free trials, tracking student engagement, and factoring in state budgeting. By gathering data from teachers, Rocklin USD will be deciding which tools will be implemented as long-term solutions.

Evaluating the training and support offered

It's no secret that in order for educational technology initiatives to reach their full potential, implementation must be done thoughtfully. EdTech companies have an ongoing role to play in this; they should have a passionate support staff that walks your educators and students through their software and is ready to answer any questions they may have even

years after the initial implementation. Beyond evaluating the edtech product itself, district leaders should consider the training and support that the company offers. Bob Fishtrom, former Director of Instructional Technology at our partner district, Sequoia Union High School District in California, explained that the multi-tiered implementation and training strategy offered by Paper is what drew him to a partnership. "It's why I really appreciate the Paper model. It's not one and done, and that's why a lot of programs aren't as effective, there's passion behind what your team does."

Goal-based criteria

Jake Miller, a technology integration specialist, educator, speaker, and host of the Educational Duct Tape Podcast, shared that he has identified 15 main goals for blended and remote learning, and based on his 17 years in education and his expertise as a technology integration specialist, he believes that good EdTech tools will hit on a number of these goals when implemented. Of these goals, he noted that Paper's ESS effectively allows for at least four: *Interactivity, formative assessment, differentiation, and feedforward.*

Blended and Remote Learning Goals

Hearing from Students	Engaging Instruction	Interactivity
Building Rapport	Formative Assessment	Amplifying Student Voices
Feedforward	Feedforward (Student Teacher)	Feedforward (Student Student)
Summative Assessment	Rich Methods of Assessment	Communicating with Families
Social - Emotional Needs	Content Delivery	Differentiation

Paper's educators meet students where they are, providing **24/7 one-on-one tutoring for all subjects**. Each educator is trained in the Socratic teaching method, guiding students to find answers on their own.

Paper also provides students with **an essay review**, where students can upload any piece of written work and receive an annotated version within 24 hours.

All student activity is recorded, tracked, and made readily available to teachers and administrators, equipping them with insights to **identify specific learning gaps** and deliver targeted personalized instruction.

Paper's customer success team works closely with each and every partner school to understand the specific needs and goals at each site. Through **professional development**, personal consultations, and student sessions, Paper ensures that schools are excited and ready to make educational equity the reality.

Socioemotional Needs

This fall, there will be an exacerbated need for socioemotional interventions for staff and students. Dr. Adam Swinyard, Assistant Superintendent of Spokane Public Schools, told us how his team is "making sure we're thinking about the wellness of our kids and our families, knowing that this situation has caused significant trauma and stress for them. This has manifested in different ways: Students not being with their teachers, that in many cases are one of the most caring and loving adults in their lives, [...] food insecurities, housing insecurities, all the different things that are coming alongside this crisis that we know are making it really hard for our families."

Research from the Aspen Institute, National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development shows that emotional wellbeing and relationships are fundamental to how children's brains develop. Given the tumult brought on by the pandemic, educators have to be even more mindful of this than ever in the coming school year.

Mind the gap

When schools reopen, it will bring an enormous range of experiences, trauma, and readiness in students. Dr. Swinyard told Paper how "there's going to be a lot of pressure to jump right into academics because of the learning regression that we know is going to happen [...] but if we're not as thoughtful as possible about the social-emotional learning aspect of the transition, then we're going to struggle [...] Those gaps are going to be aggravated because we're going to have our well-adjusted kids ready to move forward and learn, but it could take longer for the students that are coming from more stressful environments."

Grace before grades

At Patterson Joint Unified, a Paper partner district, Assistant Superintendent Veronica Miranda described how the team prioritized socioemotional well being since the early days of building closures. "The biggest thing has been letting our teachers know we are in a health crisis. It is not business as usual. [...] We want our students to remember everything we taught them. A year from now, they might not, but they are going to remember your face. They're going to remember you communicating with them. They're going to remember you touching base with the family."

One consideration for the coming school year is that the routines that students were accustomed to were disrupted for a more extended time than in a typical school year. "They're used to going away for the summer and then coming back in the fall, and that already can be a hard transition back, for teachers to build routines again and their connections and relationships," explained Dr. Swinyard.

An equity lens

Ever since building closures, we've heard touching accounts of how districts continued to provide socioemotional support to their students. Michael Morrison, CTO of Laguna Beach Unified School District, described how his district's socioemotional support team reached out to students individually, reaching out and setting up sessions to talk to them regularly. At Shelby County Public Schools, the district's online resources repertoire includes a robust "socioemotional learning" section that includes a 24-hour support hotline for families to ask questions about isolation and mental health.

In catering to socioemotional needs, districts will have to continue to use an equity lens to account for their communities' unique contexts. "We're trying to provide them with socioemotional support in their native language as well. We have folks that do door-knocks, for example, and if we can't get a hold of the family, we leave a door tag in their native language. So they know we came by, and we care," said AASA Superintendent of the Year Dr. Gustavo Balderas, in an interview with Paper earlier this year.

Supporting Families and Caregivers

With many distance learning efforts having fallen onto the shoulders of parents and guardians, pandemic learning during the spring has taught us that at-home supports are going to be a key component of instructional planning whether schools restart with remote, hybrid, or inperson models.

Veronica Miranda, Assistant Superintendent of Patterson Unified School District, told us in May how situations at home were already accounted for in early iterations of remote learning: "Many families are doing what I'm doing: Working from home. And then what happens? Kids can't get online and do work because their parents are working. So they've got to wait until 4 o'clock to actually jump on their Google Classroom. That's why the expectation for any new learning is you record it so kids can access it. You may [even] have kids at home who are taking care of siblings. Making them aware of what the situations are is so important."

Effective, equitable dialogue

The California Partnership for the Future of Learning conducted a needs assessment this spring, based on feedback from around 20 grassroots organizations who heard from over 600 students and families from lowincome communities of color in districts across California. One of the main findings was the importance of engaging students and families as partners in COVID-19 response plans.

AASA Superintendent of the Year Dr. Gustavo Balderas described how his district team ensured that they were incorporating the voices of parents that are not often included in decision-making: "In terms of having authentic two-way discussions with communities of color, something I did this year was that I had a group of Latina mothers come to the school board meeting, and my all English-speaking board heard from them in Spanish, which is not what you usually do. So the language translation was done for the Board members, not the families. So, it was the board members that wore the headsets, and the parents could speak freely in their native tongue," he said, explaining how this allowed them to see "how people feel on the other side."

Community-specific needs

Districts will need to continue to consider the different needs of students and families when making restart plans. This includes students and families who are homeless or in transitional living situations, may not have reliable connectivity, or depend on special educational resources from their schools.

Dr. David Miyashiro, Superintendent of Cajon Valley Union School, aims to help move the education system forward in this respect: "A survey sent to parents on what their needs were," he recalled with us, "revealed the needs of the school system in general. First responders and healthcare workers who don't work a regular work schedule explained that they would like to spend more time with their children in the mornings when they don't start their shift until later in the day."

"PD" for parents

Adeptness with virtual learning tools is essentially a requirement for post-COVID education, and parents are no exception to this. According to Dr. Gustavo Balderas, "one of the lessons that this crisis has provided is that we have to cater to parents' needs, and teach them how to work the technology and materials that we're asking kids to use. So I do think there is not only a need for PD for staff, but also for parents helping their kids at home."

As more and more students are learning remotely and asynchronously, there have to be personalized solutions to ensure no student is left unattended when in need.

Paper's tutoring platform *does some of the heavy lifting so that parents and guardians, who have to continue being their children's de facto teachers—juggling at-home learning and full-time child care with work and life responsibilities—don't have to drop everything to help their kids outside of teachers' hours of availability.*

At a fixed cost for districts, all students receive access to unlimited live help from trained educators, ***24/7, in English and Spanish,*** *allowing districts to serve their communities equitably.*

Addressing systemic racism

There are long overdue conversations around systemic racism across the US due to the current civil unrest. Educators across the country are being challenged not to let this moment go to waste and to take explicit actions to help end systemic injustices within schools.

Thus, decisions for this fall will need to be made with a racial equity lens to address practices and messaging that reinforce disparate outcomes by race.

At JeffCo Public Schools, this work is underway. "What can we do as an educational institution to confront that within ourselves, and examine and make changes to our own practices and systems? We need to think about how to do that work thoughtfully," Superintendent Dr. Jason Glass told Paper.

Identify and address racial inequities within the school system

"When I pull a team together, saying we need answers on how we're training people around systemic racism and oppression, how we need answers on how we are going to evaluate our own practices and policies, and how we are going to have tough conversations with our law enforcement partners, within a day, they had pulled together a ton of resources and had a starting point for us," said the superintendent.

Dr. Glass explained how they are looking at their special education and gifted and talented education identification disproportionalities: "Do we really believe that our Black and Brown kids are less gifted and talented? Of course, no one would say that out loud, but the results show that that is the outcome in the system that we've created. That in itself shows us that there are difficult conversations that we need to have and that every school system in the country has to have."

Anti-racist restructuring

For real change to occur, there is a need for training centered on compassionate dialogue, recognizing implicit bias, and dismantling structural racism. Travis Bristol, an assistant professor of education at the University of California at Berkeley, told NPR that for students to receive anti-racist education, teachers need better training, and students need more diverse teachers.

At Shelby County Public Schools, the administration has doubled its equity training efforts. "We have already trained over 200 people to be our equity champions," explained Deputy Superintendent Dr. Whitelaw in an interview with Paper. "We want to train all summer long, exposing our teaching force and central office force, so that we understand what we need to be thinking about as we educate all children, but especially our Black and brown children, because of the issues they face."

Reimagine families' contributions for change

Districts will have to consider who is leading anti-racist work at their schools, and who determines if objectives are met. Likewise, they'll have to make sure that the communities directly impacted by racial inequities have influence and aren't left out of this work.

At Spokane Public Schools, "we're definitely concerned about serving our ELL population as that is one of our student groups that we're seeing some of the lowest levels of engagement around. We know that the language barrier and the school-to-family connections that have historically been a challenge are even more so during this crisis. So we're trying to reach out to community leaders in those neighborhoods and talk with them about what the families' challenges are, and what the steps are to support their needs. We're making sure that we're trying to be thoughtful around that and not make assumptions around what we think the supports are," Assistant Superintendent Dr. Swinyard told Paper in May.

At Eugene School District, AASA Superintendent of the Year Dr. Gustavo Balderas explained to us his team's efforts: "Over here we have a large Latinx population, so we're working with our community partners, such as the Latinx Alliance. We've been leveraging such groups to provide for our families because they have greater access to the broader community."

Special Education Needs and Services

Although distance learning quickly became the default response to school closures across the US, it has not served everyone—particularly the millions of special education students—equally. Students with IEPs and their educators are facing unique challenges due to the disruption in their routines, social learning, and instructional needs brought upon by extended time away from school.

Utilizing Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL aims to help teachers reach a wide variety of students, focusing on how students learn and demonstrate knowledge. Chris Bugaj, an assistive technology expert believes that educational experiences should be student-centered and designed to meet every individual's needs. Selecting instructional tools that meet the needs of students with disabilities, and then applying those same tools to all students has continued to be a proven approach for efficiently making effective technological decisions.

"If you design things with an accessibility lens, then one, you don't have to redesign things, and two, you catch all those kids that may have been falling in the cracks," said Chris Bugaj.

Flexibility and balance

Whether it's finding the right balance between asynchronous and synchronous instruction—or between instruction and play or movement—educators must strive to provide options and alternatives for each student in this stressful time.

As special education and resource teacher Hannah Patrick told us, "this is the time for students, especially in resource, to look at playing, social skills, and life skills." Dr. Kathryn Welby recently wrote a guide for Edutopia on how to improve distance learning for students with IEPs. She outlines a combination of at-home, asynchronous and synchronous strategies that educators can incorporate.

Reinforcing a sense of belonging

<u>Riverside USD's Tim Walker</u> explained how virtual learning is not an all-inclusive solution to education long-term, especially for students with moderate and severe disabilities. The growth of these students is dependent on being in close contact with their peers, teachers, nurses, and psychologists. He stressed that extra attention will be required on students with disabilities when they do return.

Regardless of the model of schooling this year, educators should be collaborating and identifying which students may need personal checkins: Not just for assessing the need for assistive accommodations as they enter a new school year, but for mitigating the loss of connection felt by students that rely on it.

Hannah Patrick <u>explained</u> to Paper her school's approach to keeping students with IEPs engaged in spring: "My homeroom teacher and I make a list of students and parents we need to call, and we take turns checking in [...] Just having social interactions with them goes a long way. We're also trying to get a Facebook group, so we can post updates and birthday messages."

College and Career Readiness

Near the end of this past school year, Dr. Antonio Shelton, Principal of Santa Monica High School, talked to the Paper team about his senior students' unique situation—students in the Class of 2020 were no doubt dealt a bad hand, missing out on doing things one traditionally does in their senior year: "Right now they're supposed to be having senioritis—you know, you're not supposed to want to do work, but you go to school every day to see your friends!"

With the Class of 2021 facing similar disruptions to their senior year, it is critical that preparing these incoming students for post-graduation success is a large component of districts' restart plans. This is especially true for students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, students with disabilities, and English learners, who were already less likely to be supported to graduate under pre-COVID circumstances. Districts will need to have clear plans to ensure that the pandemic does not further derail the aspirations and achievements of current high school students.

Postsecondary transition plans and programs

Districts are coming up with flexible and inclusive plans, resources and support programs to ensure timely graduation and future-readiness. According to The Education Trust, districts can ensure that school counselors and other staff can provide personalized virtual support to seniors, including help completing the FAFSA and making college and career plans. For instance, Beaumont ISD Chief Innovation Officer, Dr. Ebon Brown, described their Be Ready Beaumont initiative to Paper: "It's not all about testing, and it's not all about academics. It's about what kids' strengths, interests, and values are and how they can apply that to the context of the real world and the careers that are out there."

Intensive instructional support

In the new school year, districts can ensure that seniors receive additional support from their core subject teachers and counselling staff, using personalized check-ins, and online learning support when needed, all while prioritizing equity.

For instance, Val Verde USD will be providing access to Paper's unlimited tutoring platform to all students through 6-12. Superintendent Michael R. McCormick stated how: "Val Verde is committed to ensuring equitable access for all students to achieve our vision for a Portrait of a Graduate. [...] As a district, we are committed to supporting 21st Century learning for every student. We believe Paper is a great tool to help us accomplish our vision."

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Paper provides students with unlimited 24/7 access to personalized learning help. Paper's unique approach to academic support is personalized, equitable, and scalable to ensure every student has an equal opportunity to excel academically.

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