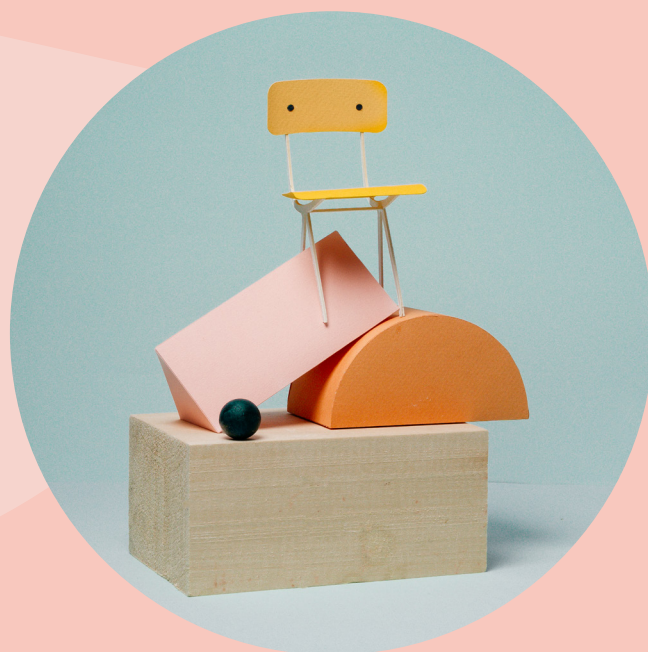




6 ways K-12 administrations can prevent failures in remote learning





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The world's education system is going through a global experiment as many schools adopt remote learning as the primary or supplementary learning methodology in their classrooms.

As COVID-19 spread throughout the country, faculty had to quickly adapt their in-person courses for remote classrooms. It worked as a stopgap while we came to terms with lockdown, but educators soon realized that it wasn't up to par with high-quality, in-person education or high-quality online-first programs provided by other organizations.

According to [Inside Higher Ed](#), the proportion of students who were highly satisfied with their learning experience fell from 51 percent pre-COVID to 19 percent post-COVID. However, students were not the only ones who faced challenges. 60 percent of instructors said they struggled to keep students engaged.

As teachers and staff saw in the spring semester, delivering high-quality online instruction takes a lot of preparation. With the right short and long-term planning, K-12 schools can empower students, parents, and teachers, setting themselves up for success for the remainder of the year.



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Where does your school fall on the digital transformation spectrum?

Prior to developing a strategy for streamlining and adapting virtual learning to your K-12 school, it's critical to identify exactly where you fall on the digital transformation spectrum. [Harvard Business Review](#) outlines the three stages of digital transformation they see in educational institutions, particularly exacerbated by the COVID crisis. They are as follows:

Stage 1: Digital newcomers

Digital newcomers are characterized by their limited digital courses with less than 3 percent of their courses online. Teachers will frequently have limited access to hardware and software including collaboration tools, video

conferencing, laptops, and webcams. Poor internet connectivity on-campus also characterizes this group.

Next steps for digital newcomers

These schools should seek help from peer schools, consultants, and technology companies to ensure their students and teachers have all they need to succeed.

Stage 2: Emerging adopters

Successful experimentation with online learning and basic communication and collaboration tools distinguish these emerging adopters from digital newcomers. These schools need to accelerate their momentum towards digital transformation quickly.

Next steps for emerging adopters

Emerging adopters should invest in a task force specifically dedicated to developing an online learning strategy. HBR recommends leveraging early adopters among teachers and staff to act as mentors and key architects of this strategy. With hands-on experience on the ground, these advocates will be able to report back on key learnings and can provide on-the-ground resources for other staff who may be more resistant to the changes.

Empowering these advocates with the resources and decision-making skills to create a turnkey solution will ensure your strategy is aligned with the specific needs of your classrooms and teachers.

Lastly, these schools should accelerate the production of online courses with open content from other institutions to help carry them through the upcoming months.

Step 3: Advanced institutions

The last stage of digital transformation for schools is distinguished by robust technical infrastructure and teachers that are well-versed in online teaching.

Next steps for advanced institutions

These schools should focus on scaling this infrastructure across all programs using online courseware as digital textbooks. Administration should also work to make their remote learning equitable among different socio-economic backgrounds, assisting those who have limited internet connectivity and encouraging teachers to create an environment that facilitates live discussion.

As the most sophisticated schools adapt to the new reality of incorporating remote learning, they can elevate their K-12 school experience by facilitating crowd-sourced notes, classroom breakouts, and interactive events.

It is imperative that schools move through the digital transformation spectrum swiftly as remote learning becomes an integral part of the classroom experience. Avoid these mistakes as you work to improve your school's technological standing.

Mistake 1: Not investing in personalization

Schools should focus on humanizing and personalizing remote learning to their students. While basic-level courses require little personalization or human interaction, schools should invest heavily in developing custom online courses for advanced-level classes. Delivering courses to a large audience at a low cost can help offset the 1-on-1 investment in students.

School administrators and districts can place more resources on mentorship, tutoring, and college counseling to offset the lack of in-person classes ([Govindaraja](#), [Srivastava](#), [HBR](#)).

Personalizing the remote learning experience also means treating students as individuals with different needs. Teachers should encourage students to ask for help if they are struggling with internet connectivity or investing in appropriate laptops.

[Learn how Zendesk can help K-12 schools manage relationships with students and parents.](#)

Mistake 2: Not investing in designing new courses

Online courses require a different strategy from in-person classes. Administration should encourage teachers to rethink their teaching methods and adjust for their students.

Students are more likely to be distracted in long monologue lectures. Encourage teachers to rethink traditional classroom settings and focus on weaving interactive material into their lesson plans to make them more engaging.

Mistake 3: Not adopting the appropriate technology

Investing in software and hardware is crucial to keep classrooms running seamlessly. Schools with better IT infrastructure and higher IT support staff ratio will distinguish themselves from schools that are still catching up with remote learning technology.

Schools can also leverage the shift to a digital format to their advantage. For example, give students more detailed feedback— incorporating voice to

supplement written comments. This not only humanizes feedback for those looking for a connection, it also encourages students to feel as though they are more than just a small square on a video call.

Mistake 4: Losing the human aspect of education

[Many students](#) report that in an online learning environment, they don't feel as though they belong to a peer group or a college cohort. In-person, students experience more competition, motivating everyone to excel.

Without being able to “read the room,” teachers can remain clueless as to when students are surfing the web or finishing up another assignment. By encouraging interactive conversations, teachers can ensure students feel comfortable in asking for assistance. By opening up additional communication channels, faculty can provide more personalized support and adjust their teaching strategy.

Mistake 5: Not dedicating a task force to creating an online strategy

With no certain path over the upcoming months, it is imperative that your K-12 school invest in creating a specific task force to develop a short and long-term

digital and online strategy.

This task force should define best practices for teachers and take student surveys into consideration. As the task force has a better grasp of areas of improvement, it can also create actionable measures to make changes within the classroom and improve the student experience.

Mistake 6: Not learning from mistakes

Teachers should be encouraged to make changes to syllabi and class contents. Teaching should be an iterative process, changing based on how students are understanding course material.

K-12 schools need to get continuous feedback and encourage teachers to experiment, fail, learn, and iterate.

Remote learning is an inevitable future, at least in some respect. Take these upcoming months of experimentation to ensure your institution is planning for the long-term and investing in the future.

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Zendesk for Education

Helping school districts provide the best experiences for their students and staff

Today's school districts are continuously strained as they adjust to the new realities of remote learning, budget cuts, and rising demands. Schools are ramping up quickly

to ensure their students are receiving the best education possible. Zendesk helps schools big and small provide efficient support to students, parents, and faculty.

Join these [K-12 schools](#) in transforming student experience:



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