

How Do You Keep Learning Progressing When Schools Go Remote?

This summer, NetRef came together with educators and education experts (online, of course) at the virtual ConnexionED conference. During our breakout panels, participants discussed their experiences with remote learning in the spring – what worked, what didn't and what they're doing to make it a more enriching experience for teachers, students and parents during the 2020-21 school year.

Take a peek into that conversation.



Rob Demeuse

Director of Technology, Mauston School District (WI)



Mike Evans

Chief Technology and Information Officer, Forsyth County Schools (GA)



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Assistant Principal for Teaching and Learning, St. John's Prep (MA)



Dr. Fred Hickmon

Assistant Superintendent, Kemper County School District (MS)



Phil Hintz

Director of Student Information, Barrington 220 School District (IL)



Carl Hooker

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Director of Technology, Randolph School District (WI)



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Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Leicester Public Schools (MA)



Jason Naile

Director of Instructional Technology and Media, Forsyth County Schools (GA)



NetRef What does remote learning look like for you this school year?



Dr. Fred Hickmon We are doing asynchronous learning simply because of internet connectivity. Although we're working with every entity that is available to help with the broadband situation, asynchronous is the only possible way for us to guarantee quality instruction.



NetRef Are there benefits to learning at home?



Phil Hintz It's a great opportunity to utilize things that might not be in a regular classroom. For example, if you want to teach math or science and you happen to have some baking goods, why not do some measuring of chocolate chips and flour, put that all together, and you've got chocolate chip cookies and at the same time kids are learning!



NetRef That's a great idea! But how do you *really* know if students are engaged and learning (and not just baking cookies)?



Kerry Gallagher If we can't measure engagement by their facial expressions or their body language, there are other tools that are available to us. One of those tools is NetRef. It lets us see what students are doing on their screens and has reports that measure engagement when learning online.



NetRef ([Here's more](#) about that remote engagement (and attendance!) report.)



Rob Demeuse We did a NetRef pilot this spring. After teachers and I started playing with NetRef, we saw that the Internet wasn't being used for learning as much as we wanted. So I ended up blocking about 24 of the most popular social media sites. That forced the kids back on task.



NetRef Learn more about the blocklist and allowlist features Rob used, [here](#).



NetRef So, what are some other tools you're using to support remote learning?



Craig Johnson We're using Google Meet. We're a G-suite school, so we thought, "Let's utilize the tools we're most familiar with and that are inherently built into the systems that we're using."



Jason Naile This year we're looking into syncing our SIS with Microsoft Teams so that each class actually has a team and recorded sessions can easily be found at any point in time to increase collaboration and communication.



Carl Hooker The district I'm in, where my kids go to school, they had three different platforms for each of my kids. I'm a tech guy and I struggled with it. HOW DO WE STREAMLINE?



NetRef Good point, Carl. How many tools is too many tools?



Dr. Matthew Joseph We did what we call the "Core 4" for our district. These are the 4 tools that we're using from K through 12 so families know what they are, what they look like.



Kerry Gallagher And if we really start the year strong by hitting home the consistency with which we use those foundational tools, our students will know where to go, our teachers will become proficient in using those tools, and we will build confidence in the parents and families that we serve. And that doesn't mean you can't build on that foundation with other tools as your teachers and students and parents grow and build confidence. But again, first we need to build authentic relationships and trust. So, having a few core tools, that's the key.



NetRef What are other ways we can make remote learning easier on parents and students, too?



Carl Hooker I would have a cheat sheet, a one-pager, of all of the things you need to know, like the log ins, that can be printed out and stuck to the fridge. The second thing I'd recommend (I saw this at Miami-Dade, I think) is a "Parent Academy." I love the idea of having little tutorials. Here's how you get into Google Classroom. Here's how you get into the portal or the LMS. Make a quick little website.



Mike Evans Offer 24/7 network support. When we looked at our numbers from this past year, we had so much learning that took place from 10:00 pm to 2:00 am in the morning.

No matter where they're working (at home or in school) teachers can log into NetRef to view real-time internet and app activity on students' school- or district-owned devices. From there, teachers can:

- Monitor student engagement and attendance remotely.
- Turn the internet off or on in a click.
- Instant message a student or entire class.
- Push a website to a student or class.
- Create an allowlist that limits student activity to only specific sites and subdomains.
- Build a blocklist that makes certain sites and subdomains off-limits.
- Lock down browsers to create secure testing environments.
- Screenshare their screen or students' screens.

[Contact us](#) to learn more about using NetRef to minimize distractions and maximize learning in your physical and virtual classrooms.

