



**Learning Together from a Distance:
*TSLP Resources & Reflections***

This unprecedented time challenges us all to think about how we can care for each other, how we can learn together and how we can reexamine and reimagine the purpose and role of school. It's a lot. And it's especially a lot when so many of us are doing this critical work in our homes, when some of us are sick or afraid of becoming sick or that our loved ones might become sick, and worrying about the future of our families, our communities and our world.

For years, many of us have been talking about the possibility of moving to a more student-centered learning model; almost overnight, that possibility has become our new reality and our new mandate. School systems, school leaders, teachers and families are faced with a challenge: can they, at once, imagine radically new or reclaimed ways of learning together and pursue these ways in fully virtual settings? As folks accept this challenge with open hearts, compassion and courage, we think it's important that they ground their work in a shared understanding of the purpose of schooling, clarify the core identity and values of their learning community and establish aspirations for student learning and experiences that grow from the wisdom and desires of their community.

With that understanding, we're pleased, thanks to the generosity of so many others in our education community, to be able to provide a list of resources to support you in your critical and courageous work over the next few months as well as to offer our perspective on the ways your work can proceed from a holistic, community-driven approach to school change.

We want to do both of these things because, while we believe these resources connect you to important ideas, planning frameworks and instructional design and delivery tools, we also know that, as resources are being quickly circulated around the country right now, we run the risk of ending up in a familiar place: data rich and information poor, rich in resources and starving for direction about how to best use them in service of our students, our colleagues and our communities.

At TSLP, even as we acknowledge the trauma and uncertainty surrounding the context for this change, we nevertheless think schools, students and teachers can and will find durable success with distance learning if they approach their work designing and

delivering connection and instruction as a school redesign process. As we give shape to school in this new reality, we should begin with the needs and desires of students, families and communities, and focus on allowing educators to do what they do best: honoring those needs by facilitating learning in the context of authentic and powerful relationships with their students.

If teachers, schools and systems can meet this moment by accepting and meeting the fundamental challenge it poses to our assumptions about school and schooling, the work educators, students and community members do together now can predict their collective ability to translate their work and learning into long-term positive change once school is back in session and our community is restored to good health.

In that spirit, we offer the following questions as starting places to frame or reframe your planning for the weeks and months ahead:

What is the purpose of “school” during this period of distance learning? If state testing will not serve as the arbiter of success, what will?

What priorities for learning and child development might we elevate in this moment of crisis and change?

What unique learning opportunities and experiences are we afforded during this time that we can embrace to encourage and support our childrens’ development?

What are the unique learning opportunities and experiences we can elevate and embrace for the adult educators who will be supporting and connecting with our children?

In all of our planning, how can we create the space and accountability to ensure we are offering children opportunities to feel seen - opportunities that are relevant to who they are, how they learn and where they want to go?

As you consider this purpose-driven approach to your planning, we want to offer this “Launchpad” from our friends at Future Focused Education (FFE) in Albuquerque, New Mexico as a starting point.



FFE uses this tool as the foundation of their work designing educational experiences for their students. You'll note this launch pad is not divided by grade level or subject and it does not explicitly reference state learning standards. What it implicitly argues - and what we want to propose to you all - is that, in our work as designers of a radically new or reclaimed approach to schooling, we should start by figuring out and building our capacity to help students arrive at these human development milestones. With this orientation, instructional support is not the sole focus - and may not even be the primary focus - of the education work you'll do in service of your students and families; instead, it is one of the means by which teachers can support students on their personal journeys to meaningful and fulfilling lives.

Without intentional effort and careful allocation of our time and resources, this new normal of distance learning will exacerbate and reinforce inequities that, unfortunately, are ubiquitous in the educational endeavor in this country. These inequities take the shape of limited access to basic necessities, technology and, more fundamentally, to learning opportunities that reflect, affirm and develop our students for who they are. As part of the front-end planning and ongoing reflection that you and your communities will do as your distance learning strategy grows and develops, we'd propose that you continuously grapple with the equity and access issues that are surfaced in our new normal and that you set explicit equity metrics against which to measure the success of your distance learning strategy. Further, we encourage you to analyze every strategic decision, every teacher level decision, through the lens of whether it meets the needs of the actual students you serve. Meeting the compliance requirements of distance learning isn't the goal - meeting the educational and emotional needs of our students is.

We believe that this moment, in which all children will learn in their homes and communities, can provide educators, school leaders and systems leaders real opportunities to attend to the children they serve and to grapple with solutions to those inequities child-by-child. When teachers create individual learning plans alongside students and their families, they can and should prioritize creating and maintaining relationships with adults and peers, ensuring access to instruction that aligns to students' unique interests and skills profiles and providing access to the lifesaving resources of mental health services and nutrition. This crisis creates an opportunity to help our students belong to our schools and systems in ways that have been elusive or denied to so many students - especially our students of color and indigenous students, students who identify as LGBTQ and students with neural differences. By meeting students in the beauty and genius and challenge of their lived experiences, teachers can study their students and their gifts and developmental needs, learning from them and ensuring that their distance learning programs support their healthy identity development.

This time, with all of its threats and its opportunities, will define who we are and who we will be for each other. We have faith, because we know your hearts and the hearts of your communities, that, if we begin our work by regrounding, reimagining and reclaiming what school can be and design our plans in accordance with those insights, that we can emerge from this traumatic national experience whole and healthy and full of ideas and learning about how we can serve our students, communities and our world.

We will get through this. And we will be changed - by our students, by our work together and by the challenges and possibilities we've explored together from distance with our students, families and communities.

Be of good courage. And please reach out to schedule time to talk or if we can be helpful in any ways. We're so grateful for you and for your service.

All our best,
Katie & Dan

Resources and Tools

Comprehensive Distance Learning Toolkits: Free, high-quality online resources for distance-learning from national leaders in the work of student-centered learning

[Transcend Education Partners: School Resource Hub](#)

[2Revolutions: Online Learning Resource Bank](#)

[Technology in Education \(TIE\): Transition to Online Learning](#)

Tools for exploring *Why*: What is the purpose of your work & students' learning during this time?

[Forbes: Distance Learning During The Coronavirus Pandemic: Equity And Access Questions For School Leaders](#)

[Future Focused Education: Are Graduate Profiles a Fad? Or a Real Fix?](#)

[Big Picture Learning: Leaving to Learn in an Age of Coronavirus](#)

Tools for planning *What*: What experiences will help students grow and learn in alignment with the purposes you're holding for this time?

Note: There are more curricular resources online than any person could review in their lifetime. We've included a handful we thought may not show up elsewhere. We hope you'll use the resources below - and others you find - that connect with your why for the distance learning ahead.

[CBC: Indigenous educators volunteer to teach short K-8 lessons online amid school closures](#)

[Homeschool Resources: Anti-Oppressive/Anti-Racist Home School Options During Quarantine](#)

[Mensa for Kids: The Art of Storytelling](#)

[NY Times: The Learning Network](#)

[Racial Equity Tools: The Storytelling Project Curriculum](#)

[Story Corps: The Conversation of a Lifetime](#)

[Success Academy to Share Remote Learning Plans Nationally](#) (webinar registration)

Tools for enacting *How*: What platforms and technology are needed to organize and connect you, your students and the experiences that will support their development during this time?

[Preparing to Take School Online? Here Are 10 Tips to Make It Work.](#)

[2Revolutions: How to Create Deeper Online Learning](#) (free account required)

[Wireless Minneapolis](#) - free city-wide WiFi during COVID-19 crisis

[WiFi Map](#) - find and access existing free WiFi anywhere