Virtual Teaching Academy
Session 3 Recap
Providing Equitable Access to Instruction/Resources for Students and Teachers
Nooon-1:30pm EDT
June 27, 2020

On behalf of the University of Phoenix, Blackboard and everyone associated with the Alliance for Virtual Learning, thank you for attending our inaugural Virtual Teaching Academy. Following each session, a high-level outline will be emailed to you.

For your convenience, important links can be found below. Additionally, please feel free to use the hashtag #VTA2020 across your social media platforms. Don't be shy about the fantastic work you're doing on behalf of your students!

*Please use the "Webinar link" provided below, to join each daily session.

Important links:

*Webinar link: https://applauncher.gotowebinar.com/#notStarted/280718920414727439/en_US

Link to presentations: https://content.blackboard.com/virtual-teaching-academy
Link to VTA sessions: http://content.blackboard.com/virtual-teaching-academy
General contact email: info@blackboard.com

Note: If you have chosen to add our Webinar sessions directly to your virtual calendar of choice, you will be notified to attend each daily session at the correct local time.

Presenter: DeWayne McClary: Digital Promise; Director, League of Innovative Schools
Email: dmcclary@digitalpromise.org

- What is Digital Equity?
    - A condition in which all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in our society, democracy and economy.
    - Digital equity is necessary for civic and cultural participation, employment, lifelong learning, and access to essential services.
    - Everyone should have universal access to the Internet. This is achieved by making it accessible to everyone irrespective of one's economic status, political affiliation or religious views.

- The Reality
    - 96.5 percent of students are required to complete homework assignments online.
    - However, according to a 2018 Federal Communications Commission study, 25 million Americans do not have broadband Internet access and 14 million Americans do not have any Internet access.
    - For many students the only "connected" device they have is a mobile phone. This is not an ideal learning experience.

- Bridging the Digital Divide: How to get started
    - First, perform a basic needs assessment.
    - Do our students have access to:
        - Appropriate physical devices
        - The Internet
    - Once this assessment is complete, focus on creating meaningful digital curriculum.

- Digital Curriculum
  - Put your students at the center of everything you do.
    - Key question: How do we take information in a physical textbook and put it in a digital curriculum format that students can access outside of the virtual classroom?
      - A Learning Management System (LMS) is a critical element for establishing, and scaling (rolling-out) quality digital curriculum.
  - What is an LMS?
    - An LMS is software that allows you to store and organize your digital curriculum so that it can be accessed by students in a meaningful way.
    - LMS software should integrate seamlessly with your district's Student Information System (SIS) software.
      - Note: SIS software serves as a repository for student-data-only while LMS software is curriculum-focused.
    - Remember, your students are your end-users. Consequently, consider having a select group of students provide feedback regarding which LMS your district or school should purchase and implement.
    - Make sure the LMS you choose will meet your needs today and well into the future – think long-term.
    - Read the details of any LMS software or tool *before* it's purchased. Most school district budgets are done annually. Therefore, you don't want to get duped into signing a three-year contract when you have no idea what your budget will look like beyond the current fiscal year.
  - Digital curriculum development also encompasses the etiquette fundamentals as well.
    - Teach yourselves and your students about the importance of "Digital Citizenship."
      - Remember, the Internet is forever.
      - How should/can students react when they receive negative feedback on a post?
  - Measuring the effectiveness of your digital curriculum:
    - Key question: Do your students have the cognitive and technical skills necessary to find, evaluate, create and communicate using the tools – e.g. iPads or Chromebooks – and the software at their disposal?

- Teachers: Become Comfortable with Technology
  - Set up peer-to-peer working groups where teachers can train other teachers.
    - Consider having a select group of teachers within your district attend the Microsoft Innovative Educator (MIE) Teacher Academy.
    - Upon completion, these teachers can teach their colleagues what they have learned.
  - Districts and individual schools must invest in training teachers to use the equipment at their disposal effectively.
    - The number one fear of teachers is that they won't have control over students' devices while they, the teacher, is presenting.
    - Given this fear, it is important to involve teachers throughout every aspect of virtual learning. Give them a voice regarding:
      - The physical devices a district or school selects
      - The LMS a district or school selects
      - The digitizing of curriculum
        - Remember these basics:
          - When selecting hardware and software, pay attention to the type of technical support that is offered. Ideally, the vendor will provide 24/7 technical support directly to teachers if it is necessary.
          - When you're deciding which devices to purchase for students, it's important to over-order. Why? Because if you have 10,000 students and you only order 10,000 devices, you're in trouble.
          - Given this fact, always consider cost but make sure cost is not the primary determining factor.

- Parents: Become Comfortable with Technology
  - Parents have become quasi-teachers. They're involved in education like never before. As a result, consider:
    - Setting up a "Parent Academy" that features recorded lessons that walk them through the lessons their child or children will be asked to complete.
    - Ask parents what they need by leveraging parent-focused surveys.
    - Make sure parents have access to technical support infrastructure in case a problem arises with the device or software their child is using.
    - Understand that parents are struggling with our "new normal" too.
    - Set realistic response time parameters.
      - How long will it take you to return a call, text or email?
        - Create and strive for work/life balance.
- Closing Thought:
  - Always do right by your students!