#VAis4Learners Innovation Network

Monthly Cohort Update - April 2020





Opening Message



Finding Bright Spots

As educators across the country respond to this spring's circumstances, the weight of the challenges facing our communities can sometimes feel unbearable. Moreover, trying to

operate as a school district in these stay-at-home conditions can also contribute to a sense of isolation, as if we are each and all navigating this situation on our own.

While these measures may create an environment of social distancing, there are still opportunities for social *connection* through which we can learn from each other. In their book *Switch: How To Change When Change Is Hard*, authors Chip and Dan Heath recommend a technique of *finding the bright spots*, scanning the environment with a focus less on what's



broken and more on what's working. Finding bright spots and learning from them that can provide insights into successes that can pave the way to transformational change.

To identify and amplify those bright spots, we asked district team members representing the <u>Virginia Is For Learners Innovation Network</u> a simple question:

What has your school community done in response to the emergent situation that you would wish to celebrate or share with others?

What resulted from that question is a veritable array of light representative of short-term, intermediate, and long-term efforts to meet health and wellness needs, communicate with the school community, address internet access, and distribute learning resources in concert with an overall initiative to support continuity of learning throughout this spring and potentially beyond.

We invite you to review <u>this impressive list</u> and consider how these strategies might complement and enhance your approaches to serve your community.

#VaLINchat --A Weekly Supportive Networking Event for Virginia Educators

Since launching our initial #VaLINchat on April 2, educators from Virginia and across the country have come together on Thursdays at 7pm to discuss teaching, learning and caring for our communities. We've tackled topics such as "forced innovation" and some of the resulting silver linings for education.



We've learned that every single one of us is deeply concerned about equity. We've learned that some students are thriving, but that many are without the resources and support they get from daily interactions with teachers and staff. We've shared inspiring stories and marveled at the lengths our teachers will go to in order to meet the needs of our learners.

Mostly, though, we are learning from and with one another. Please join us if you haven't already. You can stay for the full hour or just join as your time allows.

When: Thursdays, 7:00-8:00 PM

Where: This is an Online Event. Log onto Twitter and search for #VaLINchat

What: Questions for this week are below

Intro Q: Welcome to #VaLINchat! Our focus for the chat is how current circumstances have impacted our view of professional learning. Introduce yourself by sharing your name, role, and one surprising thing you've learned about yourself over the past several weeks.

Q1: How have current circumstances impacted your beliefs about what professional learning is or might be?

Q2: The learning environment has changed for students. What might need to change to maximize the professional learning environment for educators?

Q3: What are priority areas for professional learning in your division?

Q4: What professional strategy/practice/resource do you recommend for educators right now?

Q5: Share the best example you have tried or heard about how educators are learning together right now?

Q6: How are/might leaders model professional learning?

Final Q (FQ) Regarding Professional Learning, complete the stems: "I used to think----, and now I think---."

Learning Design Interactive Webinar Series

Many educators across the country have found that simply trying to post in-class materials online has had little impact on learning, especially for the many families that simply can't access online learning.



Based on a request by educators in Essex County, VaLIN coaches developed a design framework based on common instructional design principles that could guide the development of five days of learning activities for off- or online delivery. They developed examples in multiple subject areas and grade bands, as well. The framework and samples were shared with VaLIN teams from across the commonwealth through a series of interactive webinars. Educators representing over 20 divisions (extending outside Virginia) and serving in roles of teacher, school leader, specialist and superintendent came together to grapple with the realities of teaching in an emergency online environment, brainstorm solutions to learning challenges, and design cross-curricular learning experiences to engage ALL students.

You can access the framework, sample learning ideas, and a jointly developed middle school science and language arts learning module. If you or members of your team need support using these materials in your division, reach out to your VaLIN coach!

Learning Design Framework

Ideas from the #VaLIN Brain Trust

Middle School Science/ELA Learning Module with a Communication focus

YouTube Playlist of recorded sessions

What's Happening? Education and Covid 19

Recently, Alaina Trott, Director of Strategic Initiatives for Chesapeake Public Schools, was interviewed to share insights on major concerns around equity issues in the Covid-19 world. Click to hear her interview and other other stories of Covid-19 from around the globe.

Free for a Limited Time: Most Likely to Succeed



Ted is making *Most Likely to Succeed* available for streaming for free during the all of this craziness. The free link is available on the <u>Innovation Playlist</u> and also on <u>Vimeo</u>. If any divisions are interested in planning and implementing an online Community Night discussion using *Most Likely to Succeed* and/or *What Schools Could Be*, reach out to <u>Becky Ellis</u> for support.

Crowdsourcing Innovations

#VaLIN Brain Trust

What do you do to reach the lost or disengaged learners?

Your answer

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boundless



Boundless will be running an online *What School Could Be* book study for VaLIN teams with Ted Dintersmith and other special guests. Stay tuned for more information in the near future.

Need more copies of the book? Please <u>contact Becky</u> to arrange to obtain FREE copies. And if you can't wait to get started, try using <u>this discussion guide</u> from Ted.

Follow us on Twitter #VaLIN #VAis4Learners

Next Meeting Event

WHEN

Thursday, July 23rd, 8am-4pm

WHERE

TBA

MORE INFORMATION

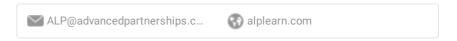
Still tentatively scheduled and we are talking about the possibilities. More information will be released as available.



About Advanced Learning Partnerships



ALP is a partner, designer, and agent of change. We move beyond the expert mindset and one-size-fits-all, quick fix solutions.



Virginia is for Learners is an initiative of the <u>Virginia Department of Education</u>, the <u>Virginia School Consortium for Learning</u> (VaSCL), and James Madison University with support from <u>Ted Dintersmith</u>. Coaching is provided by <u>Advanced Learning Partnerships</u>, <u>Dr. Scott McLeod</u> from the University of Colorado at Denver, and <u>Kaleb Rashad</u> from High Tech High Graduate School of Education.