

Lessons Learned About Education During a Pandemic
March 4, 2021
Staff

Question 1: What frustrations do you have with this year and how can you change that into a positive request for the district?

- If you're going to teach VLO, you should be 100% VLO. Teaching hybrid is too difficult.
- Class sizes are too large and vary across the district. It's very difficult to social distance with so many students in the room. Walking in hallways with younger students who are using "airplane arms" for social distancing means that students can be out of sight (for example, when turning a corner in the hallway).
- There's an overabundance of paperwork for teachers this year.
- It's very difficult to keep students on pace when they are absent because of quarantine or isolation.
- Canvas is good, but it's hard to grade assignments that would normally be a worksheet.
- VLO isn't for everyone. Students who aren't engaged in the classroom may not be engaged as a VLO student.
- For some VLO students, there is a lack of motivation. It's a long year to be online and away from their peers. We're seeing learning gaps as a result.
- We need to work on executive functions for students going into VLO.
- What can we do to prepare VLO students who are returning to school? How can we be strategic about this?
- It's very hard for the ESL team. There is no support because everything on Canvas is in English, but our students need it in their native languages.
- Early childhood schools need more technology to meet the needs of students.
- This year has been a heavy workload with the large class sizes.
- How can we engage our families who haven't been in the schools?
- Balancing the caseloads for special ed is really difficult.
- What systems and structures are in place to help transition students into a new class mid-year?
- We need to thank our support personnel. ESL and reading teachers are getting pulled to cover for other teacher absences, which means their students don't get services. Also, we pull our paraprofessionals & others to sub when needed but not everyone is prepared to fill this role.
- It's sad when we have to pull people to cover classrooms because we're pulling the people who work with our most at-risk students.
- The building sub has been so helpful this year. Please consider continuing this.
- Having two building subs - one for teachers, one for aides - would be so helpful.
- This year has been hard without parent volunteers.
- At the elementary level, our ESL population does not have technology at home. Yes, we make them available for remote learning, but there's so many things we use technology for on a daily basis, including homework.

- Technology in the buildings is not equitable. The chromebooks for grades 5-6 are great, but the devices for younger grades are poor substitutes.
- Technology integration into the classroom has been great, but I'm worried that we won't be able to move forward with it because we don't have enough devices.
- When devices have to get ready for remote learning days, they are pulled from classroom carts. This means our students aren't able to use them during class time.
- If we could be 1:1 districtwide, including grades k-2, that would be huge.
- Need to keep in mind that Chromebooks aren't for everyone. Our youngest learners do best with iPads.
- The phase-in days at the beginning of the year were the best days of my career. It's so beneficial to be able to get to know students and start building relationships in small groups.
- OT/PT needs support in how to build a curriculum like VLO. Model courses were built by teachers, but we don't have anything like this. It would be incredibly valuable.
- From a nursing perspective, we appreciate the staff jumping in and helping. It feels like staff have been coming to us a lot to vent. We have resources to share.

Question 2: What did you learn from this year that you want to keep? What can we build on for the future of education?

- Teachers should consider using "Talking Points" app to communicate with students.
- Face-to-face learning is best.
- Mask breaks became smaller recesses - while I thought it would be concerning, it's actually been enjoyable.
- When masks go away, we'll still have things that we need to work on.
- Staff need to remember to take care of themselves.
- We've really become more personalized. Knowing that we had to meet the kids where they were at the start of the year after returning from remote learning last spring. We worked on personalized learning plays last year but we really put it into practice this year.
- We've really leaned on one another this year and worked together. How do we keep doing that?
- Remember to focus on the social-emotional piece of what students and staff need. When we focus on that, the other pieces will come together. It's ok to press pause.
- The connection we have this year - jumping on Teams and Zoom - it may not be the best way to meet, but it makes meetings more accessible. (Think parents who can't get a babysitter)
- It would be really hard to find an aide, teacher or admin who hasn't worked their tail off this year.
- Shoutout to Keith and Krista and the VLO team. The curriculum has been a fantastic supplement to in-person learning and for remote days.
- VLO lessons are such a great resource for community building and lesson building.
- I'd love to have model courses for special education. It's taken a lot of work to build that out. It would be helpful to have this ready to go.

- It takes a major event like this to make a systemic change. I don't want to go backwards - let's keep moving forward.
- We hit warp speed last spring with video lessons. We'd been workin on plays and flipped classrooms. We had laid the groundwork already. This experience has reinforced that we were on the right path.
- The VLO lessons will be so helpful to keep personalized learning moving forward. It's not just me creating the lessons; we're collaborating and helping each other.
- Recording lessons during class and then uploading them to Canvas has been helpful for absent students.
- Keeping snow days was important for social-emotional needs. Just flipping on and off to remote learning would be very difficult for teachers of younger grades.
- Teachers mentoring at-risk students has been very helpful. The kids are really working and growing from having an adult at the school to connect with and who is looking out for them.
- I have never seen a group of people come together to collaborate and try this hard like I've seen at Hopewell Junior this year. If it doesn't work out, they say let's try something else. It has been incredible to see how much the staff is doing for the kids.
- Technology is an amazing tool and we've e learned so many new ways to use it, but we need to remember the other pieces to learning. Relationship building and face-to-face is so important. The skills that students learn outside of the virtual world are so important. Social skills are needed for kids to be able to collaborate.