Virtual Teaching Academy
Session 10 Recap
Instructional Resources
3-4:30pm EDT
July 1, 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.

Presenters:

Pete Just, CETL
Email: pete.just@wayne.k12.in.us

Monte Kalish
Email: montekalisch@gmail.com

Kelly Hermann
Email: Kelly.hermann@phoenix.edu

- Session Overview:
    - Virtual school technology ecosystem
    - Essential technology tools
    - Technology usage strategy
    - Technology procurement
    - Digital Accessibility

- Building & Leveraging a Digital Ecosystem:
    - Ecosystem: A series of products that work together to facilitate the needs of instruction.
        - Elements of an ecosystem:
            - The foundation of any digital ecosystem is a Learning Management System (LMS).
            - Broadly speaking, LMS software is an online tool that facilitates a type of "virtual classroom" that engages students.
                - Popular LMS software:
                    - Blackboard
                    - Canvas
                    - Moodle
                        - Note: While Google Classroom is a fantastic tool, it lacks some of the functionality that allows it to be classified as a fully-functional, robust LMS.

- LMS software functions as a repository for digital curriculum/content.
  - Examples:
    - Documentation
    - Assignments
    - Exams
    - Progress tracking
      - Think of LMS software like the cornerstone of a traditional school building.
      - For students, LMS software serves as digital entrance into the digital learning environment.
        - Students leave a unique digital trace when they use an LMS.
          - This is the virtual equivalent of physical "seat time."
          - Put another way, LMS software provides "learner analytics."

- Student Information System (SIS):
  - SIS software houses all manner of individual student data.
    - Examples:
      - Attendance
      - Schedule
      - Grades
      - Transcripts
      - Rostering
        - Note: Ideally, rostering – the process of adding individual student data to an SIS – will be done via a once-daily, automated process.
        - Independent software applications (apps) also must integrate seamlessly into any educationally-focused digital ecosystem.
          - Examples:
            - Remind: School Communication
            - IXL
            - Coursera
            - Kahn Academy
              - Kahn Academy Kids

- Essential Tech Tools – Hardware
  - These are the physical devices students use to access LMS software, and the digital curriculum housed within the LMS.
  - Examples:
    - iPads
    - Chromebooks
    - Computers
      - Laptops

- Essential Tech Tools – Communications:
  - These tools are used to:
    - Share resources/information
    - Foster connections with students/families
    - Provide clarification and guidance re: class activities.
      - Examples:
        - Email
        - Web-based reminders
        - Announcements in learning tools

- Essential Tech Tools – Webinars

- Webinars are video-based software solutions that allow teachers to create purposeful, targeted, synchronous interactions with students.
  - Synchronous webinars can:
    - Foster a sense of community
    - Increase/facilitate student engagement
    - Facilitate content clarification
    - Facilitate classroom discussion/group work
      - Examples:
        - Zoom
        - Adobe Connect
        - Google Meet
        - Microsoft Teams
- Concerns:
  - Not every student has broadband access or *any* Internet access.
  - If districts have implemented a "Bring Your Own Device" (BYOD) policy, students might not have the necessary hardware to leverage Webinar (video) technology.
  - The length of time students are on camera. Remember, this tool is not meant to mimic traditional classroom instruction.
    - Be aware of cognitive load (the amount of information teachers ask students to process at one particular time).
      - Cognitive load limitations should be a real concern.
  - Be aware that with video technology, participants are looking into private settings (homes).
    - This may raise privacy issues/challenges.

- Tech Usage Strategy:
  - This is important because it helps districts/schools set consistent expectations and ultimately provide a better user experience. Nothing beats clear guidance re: how tools should/can be used.
  - Some questions for teachers, schools and districts to consider:
    - How do we measure student engagement?
    - How will communication with students/families be tracked?
    - What are the minimum/maximum expectations re: synchronous sessions?
    - Do we expect students to always be on camera?
      - Hint: No.
    - How will issues of academic integrity be addressed in the virtual environment?
    - Do teachers have the support to handle basic "tech support" challenges that are bound to arise?
    - How is inappropriate behavior handled online?

- Tech Procurement Considerations:
  - Start with the obvious: Ask "Why?"
    - Do we really need the technology that is being considered for purchase?
    - Is it redundant to hardware/software a school/district already owns?
    - Will it "play nicely" within our digital ecosystem
      - Is it platform agnostic?
    - Is student data collected, if yes:
      - Who owns it?
      - Will it be sold?
      - How long is it archived on the system/platform?
    - Is this product easy for students to use?
    - Does this product support an automated process re: rostering users?
    - Is this product really and truly free? These are known as "Freemium concerns.

- Accessibility in Procurement – Essential Questions to ask/not ask:
  - Federal law dictates that students with disabilities have the right to a "free, appropriate public education."
    - Consequently, the needs of students with disabilities, both visible and invisible, must be considered; always.
  - With this in mind, ask these questions *before* making a technology purchase:
    - What accessibility standard has your company adopted for your product?
    - How has your company verified the accessibility of your product?
    - Do you use screen readers during product testing?
      - Note: Screen readers are essential for students, faculty and staff with low vision or no vision.
    - What accessibility documentation do you have for your product?
  - Don't Ask:
    - Is your product ADA certified?
    - Does your product meet ADA regulations?
    - Can you provide me with a statement that your product meets ADA requirements?
      - Pro Tip: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) does not provide standards or guidance re: the accessibility of specific products. Therefore, products cannot be "ADA compliant" or "meet ADA regulations."
        - As a result, any "statement" that a company may provide is baseless.

- Digital Accessibility Strategy:
  - Determine: Who? What? When? Where? Why?
    - What standard will be followed?
    - When will key accessibility-focused questions be asked?
    - Do you know your stakeholders and their needs?
    - Where are stakeholders (students, parents, general public) accessing your resources and how does this behavior influence accessibility?
    - Who is responsible when something is not accessible?
    - Why is this important for your class, school or district?
    - Are there students without obvious accessibility disabilities who may benefit from accessibility features?
  - Consistency is important – Knowing your standards and how a school and/or district will meet them is critical to an equitable student/parent experience.

- Building a Culture of Accessibility:
  - This begins by understanding the current climate/culture within your school or district.
    - Is accessibility a district-wide priority?
  - Policies and procedures aren't enough.
    - Without a financial commitment to resources and teacher training, policies and procedures are meaningless.
  - School/district leaders must ensure that accessibility is a priority in everything.
    - Accessibility is nonnegotiable.