

ENGAGING DIGITAL CURRICULUM

DISTANCE LEARNING PLAYBOOK



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Sales@bridgeteksolutions.com
864-214-0221

CHALLENGES OF LEVERAGING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY FOR AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT

As difficult as 2020 has been, it's hard to imagine how schools could have adapted to such challenges even ten years ago.

Technology has been a lifeline for teachers and students looking for instructional continuity in a time of uncertainty. But as schools move between in-person and distance learning, social and learning-community bonds are stressed, leaving teachers overwhelmed and students less engaged in learning.

Teachers understand that learning is about more than delivering information and assessing subject mastery. The social aspects of the classroom — shared discovery, collaboration, and conversation — are critical elements of the learning process. And as this year has demonstrated, that's been the hardest piece of the puzzle to replicate in an online learning space.

As schools rely on technology to keep the learning happening, nurturing this engagement is critical. How can teachers combine pedagogically sound coursework and rich, meaningful interactions? How can lessons be confidently delivered no matter where the learning happens?

Device-enabled learning is now essential — and a robust instructional platform should sit at the center of it all.

In 2020, teachers need that platform to not just be pedagogically sound but also designed to bring their own subject matter expertise and engagement strategies to life, whether teaching face-to-face or remotely. That means the instructional or learning platform has to support synchronous learning as well as asynchronous. When real-time instruction is possible, it multiplies the impact of student-teacher interactions by enabling educators to intervene in the learning moment — not days after. In short, it becomes a platform that enables teachers to focus on the art of teaching, not just content orchestration.

The best learning platforms use technology to combine instruction and support with innovative digital curriculum. To fully inspire and empower students, this instructional content should be:

- Fresh, relevant, and relatable
- Designed to drive outcomes, not distraction
- Adaptable to diverse learning speeds and strengths
- An opportunity for social sharing, collaboration, and creativity

CONNECTING TO THE FUNDAMENTALS IN NEW WAYS

Today's teachers are relying on technology to create a learning space, deliver content and activities to students, and allow for communication and collaboration — all the elements of a traditional classroom. But they also need the technology to help them strengthen the social bonds that make their classrooms successful.

Ultimately, teachers are more than instructors — they're learning orchestrators. Given engaged students, reliable technology, and dynamic content choices, teachers will experiment and iterate. The classroom is their lab.

An effective instructional platform that supports remote learning will:

- Work in synchronous or asynchronous learning models.
- Build on proven pedagogy to ensure experiences aren't just engaging, but also rigorous.
- Provide content that aligns with school- or district-wide curriculum goals.
- Encourage and enable students to participate, collaborate, synthesize, and share.
- Provide real-time feedback and analytics that monitor student participation and performance
- Use these feedback loops to support teachers in delivering more personalized, focused lessons.
- Be accessible and meaningful to students with special learning requirements or needs.
- Excel across diverse device formats. Schools who haven't achieved true 1:1 computing might see students connecting from desktops, laptops, tablets, or even smartphones. The platform needs to be responsive.

Finally, and perhaps now more than ever, a successful instructional platform must tap into the unique forms of social interaction that define the world for so many learners. Spontaneous interactions, broad group conversations, and immediate feedback are important features.

“Students say there's a certain willingness to share and engage their peers on a digital platform. That it means less social anxiety than speaking out in front of the entire class.”

— Robert Thornton, Social Studies Curriculum Director, 6-12, Harmony Public Schools

TURNING SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT INTO STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT WITH EXPLOROS

Exploros combines instructional fundamentals with interactive digital content that can be used synchronously or asynchronously to create an engaging social, device-enabled learning experience for both students and teachers. The instructional platform empowers teachers to focus on their mission, while helping guide students through coursework or providing supplemental learning.

An important differentiator is the peer-to-peer learning capabilities Exploros offers. Through an intuitive social-media-like interface, the platform encourages students to synthesize their learning into sharable responses at each step in the lesson. For students learning from the isolation of their bedrooms, this feature evolves device-driven learning into something more social and therefore much more motivating.

While teachers might not be physically present with students, Exploros includes features like in-app teacher video that support real-time digital engagement in a familiar way. Additionally, with the social engagement features, students are required to develop ideas, collaborate with peers, and share their work in real-time. When combined, all these activities provide instructors with critical learning analytics and a natural pathway to engage students in discrete teachable moments.

Modern schools build on strong foundational content with strategies for effective student engagement. Exploros gracefully and effectively combines the three essential elements of digital teaching and learning: pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and tech knowledge, thereby empowering the teacher to focus on the art of teaching.



WHAT MAKES EXPLOROS SO UNIQUE?

Developed by educators, for educators, Exploros has long understood the power of thoughtfully crafted digital content. 2020 has been a powerful lesson in these universal truths:

- Technology must be tied to clear learning outcomes and gains
- Digital learning is more engaging when anchored in social cohesion
- Device-enabled content must give teachers a single platform for nurturing diverse learning needs

Whether schools are moving to digital coursework or just looking for content designed around specific needs or subject areas, the Exploros instructional platform is designed for today's K-12 learners and classrooms.



5E design

Exploros lessons are built around the 5E instructional model: engage, explore, explain, elaborate, and evaluate. A 5E learning progression allows students to build their knowledge and conceptual confidence across a lesson and display their newly acquired knowledge in both formative and summative assessments.



Social learning focus

Exploros' social-media-inspired design encourages participation, collaboration, and gamification. These features build students' sense of belonging and agency, which studies show leads to significantly higher levels of meaningful learning and engagement.



Instructional flexibility

The Exploros instructional platform puts the teacher at the heart of guiding student learning, making it an ideal technology solution for face-to-face, hybrid, and remote learning. Lessons can be delivered in person or remotely in a synchronous or asynchronous format.



Ease of use and mastery

Additionally, the platform is easy to implement, requiring a minimum of training. Today's teachers and students are often having to navigate both in-person and distance learning, all while learning new tools and processes. Some can master it — but many can't. Exploros is built with these realities in mind, putting people's needs ahead of extraneous bells and whistles.



Seamless integration

Schools have invested a lot into existing tools and platforms. That's why Exploros is designed to quickly plug into their existing IT environment. As a Google partner, Exploros integrates with Google SSO, Google Classroom, and other Google Workspace (formerly G Suite) tools, including Google Docs. Exploros also integrates with the popular K-12 LMS Canvas.

“What I like about the platform itself is that it is very teacher friendly.”

— Blanca Ibarra, Middle School Social Studies Coordinator, United ISD
Curriculum & Instruction



Elementary School

Middle School

High School

	 Digital Citizenship	Social Studies 	 English, Language Arts, Reading	Health 
Elementary School	ISTE-aligned content for grades 3-12 covering:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American History 	Grades 4-8 emphasis on reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills	
Middle School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Tools and Skills Digital Literacy Your Digital Community The Digital World and You 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> World Cultures Civics US History Through 1877 World History Texas History 	Integrated content partnerships with additional support for reading intervention and vocabulary instruction	
High School		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> US History Since 1877 USCIS Citizenship Test Review 		Integrated content partnership for drug prevention



The COVID-19 pandemic has redefined the K-12 classroom. School isn't necessarily a physical space — nor is it simply a device — but the digital or face-to-face interaction and connection where learning is happening. Exploras ensures the connection between teacher and student is strong no matter where learning is taking place, so instructional continuity, supportive teaching, student agency, and academic achievement can occur.

“I’m really confident that the digital curriculum I’m using is aligned to a really specific learning standard and even provides a learning breakdown within that standard.”

— Robert Thornton, Social Studies Curriculum Director, 6-12, Harmony Public Schools



A CHALLENGE FOR BOTH INSTRUCTIONAL AND IT EXPERTS

Final consideration should be given to IT integration. The ease of onboarding and implementation is a critical issue when adopting an instructional platform. Each teacher has a unique transformation pace and degree of tech comfort or savvy. Schools and districts need an intuitively designed platform that teachers can leverage with speed and simplicity. For IT administrators as well, an instructional platform should easily integrate into the rest of the system administration ecosystem so that IT can spend more time helping teachers and students connect, create, and collaborate in new ways.

BUILDING RESILIENCE AND MASTERY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

The year 2020 has seen schools and communities collaborate in heroic ways to keep learning happening. Educational technology investment has accelerated, and schools have been forced to take an overwhelmingly pragmatic approach to technology in the classroom. The realities of the COVID pandemic have meant moving quickly from theory to practical implementation.

Lenovo understands that these are not ideal times for educational decision makers to move into the unknown. We are committed to bringing effective solutions to the education market that combine the latest in hardware, software, and services. K-12 education needs meaningful innovation now more than ever — and we're honored to play our part.

“The IT guys come in with their own questions about the capabilities. Once they heard Google sign on, they were really at ease.”

— Robert Thornton, Social Studies Curriculum Director, 6-12, Harmony Public Schools



Learn more about Lenovo and Exploros at
<https://www.exploros.com/lenovo/>

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Sales@bridgeteksolutions.com
864-214-0221