



The State of K-12 Education in 2021 Webinar Q&A

Answers have been edited slightly for clarity

Is there school district funding for culturally responsive learning materials and EdTech platforms like DreamGalaxy Academy?

Victoria: Overall, there is funding available for ed tech resources and other evidence-based learning materials to help students. There is no funding for any one specific program, but any ed tech resource or external resources that incorporate cultural learning can be used by districts and schools at their discretion.

Who at the district level is normally "in charge" of the funding?

Kathy: Local school boards have the final say on proposing a budget; in many districts, the public also votes to approve the district budget. In the district administration, the chief financial officer oversees the distribution of funding per the budget. Sometimes in that office (Finance) in larger districts, there will a person(s) in charge of specific aid programs.

Victoria: Funding at the district level can vary from place to place - it could be the school board, the superintendent, the CFO, etc.

Are ELA and math the priority subjects for the use of the Cares resources?

Victoria: CARES funding can be applied in a variety of ways and decisions on how the funds will be spent are largely made at the district level. Subject specific funding isn't outlined in the Act but districts and schools can work together and use funds to focus on bolstering specific subjects to suit their needs. Schools can fund after school tutoring sessions or use external resources to help support students in all subjects including ELA and Math as an example.

Kathy: In terms of dealing with learning loss, yes.

Will South Carolina continue with the science adoption this year?

Kathy: The most recent information I have is that the priority list for adoption spending has 9-12 science ranked 19 and 20 on a list of 24 subjects. There is refurbishment funding for science kits for the 21-22 school year but funding for some elementary science kit refurbishment is not available.



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What are the conversations around open educational resources and platforms that are organized for families, students, and educators?

Kathy: I'm seeing more of that, but I have not seen a lot of it. I have begun to see more in the higher ed market, and I have begun now to see it that discussion in K 12, so I think there will be more of that.

How are you dealing with sense of community amongst students? Is this a pressing issue at the district level that needs to be solved?

Denise: I think it is a pressing issue that needs to be solved, we have CASEL to help us to understand how important it is to attend to the social and emotional needs that will arise during this time. We basically from a district we work with our schools and with CASEL, we are looking at basically about four general concepts, first with creating the foundation for the social emotional learning, in providing the support and mutual respect for staff members, because again, the focus on staff members was critical is well, then, providing that platform for students and then seeing what we've learned and making adjustments based upon what we've learned.

Can you comment on the quality of and the access to distance learning that English language learners have received relative to the general population?

Denise: With our English language learners what we had to do was I'd kind of say almost double services, especially for our kids who chose the distance option. They have a homeroom teacher who is providing instruction, we have also paired them with an in-school teacher who after hours we pay them a stipend, and they provide supports, as well as if they have time during the day, they have also jumped into Zoom lessons, where there's been some collaborative teaching with the homeroom teacher and the EL teacher. We've had to bring kids in to actually give them various assessments, because we still gave the access test for our EL learners. We had to provide the opportunity for MAP testing because MAP is the benchmark assessment that we use in our district. We have one person in our district that is dedicated as the director for EL services, and she's done a phenomenal job with making sure we have provided the resources for those students during this time, and during our distance learning time.



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Will hybrid learning continue in a significant way after the pandemic?

Kathy: I think hybrid will continue as an emergency alternative, perhaps a snow-day alternative, workable if a student is homebound for some reason, but there would have to be a clear-cut purpose to have it integrated into the regular school year. I would expect some increase in remote learning for students/families who have found that more to their liking. Some school districts (New York City for one) are NOT offering a remote option for the fall. Other districts are making a virtual school option available, but that is an alternate school not a remote version of the in-school program.

Denise: Our district is one of 13 in the Northeast Georgia region, and we shared a document with leaders asking what are you offering kids for the upcoming school year K-5, what does middle school look like, as well as high school? Then we asked, a couple of years from now on, what are your plans, what are your thoughts? In our area there's very little opportunities as far as a distance learning model. I guess some people are a little leery because you have screen time, and the amount of screen time that kids are provided during the course of the school day.

We've also talked about the science of teaching reading, and how that's difficult if you're not very creative but still, you have some limitations. Also, with pre-K through second grade as far as teaching reading, you have those socialization issues, too, because you want kids to learn how to get along, how to play, how to interact well with other students. In our area we really did not see a lot of districts next year who will provide a distance learning model, but about three out of thirteen districts are going to provide a distance learning academy, and they're going to do a PBL, some personalized learning opportunities for students.

It's very interesting, and I'm very interested to hear what their plans are because there was not a district out of the thirteen that was saying you know, two years out if we know that we've been successful at providing a digital learning platform for students and parents, and we want to make sure we've created them while being able to provide for those needs.

We have some special-ed parents and they email us on a regular basis, saying my child has ABA therapy, and I haven't had to check them out of school for those sessions, so they have tried to be a proponent for why we should we look at a model for next year for elementary, and we'll certainly take all of those things into consideration. That's the good part about making sure you're in tune with the needs of the community that you serve. Our parents have been great about completing surveys and when we had our community meetings where we've had like town hall meetings, we have had lots of attendance because parents want to make sure that their voices are heard during this time, so I think you'll see a shift like I said.



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In the years to come, everybody was saying they would make some type of transition with looking at how to do, whether it's hybrid or just a full distance learning model for a population of students, that that is the need for that population.

Victoria: I agree with Denise that it will be very much up to the districts about meeting the needs of the students, so I think schools and districts will have the opportunity to assess what worked for them, and, in some cases the distance learning provides like Denise said, opportunities for students to be more flexible or meet their needs in different ways. So I think we'll see a lot of incorporation and a lot of school districts assessing what worked and what didn't, in conjunction with the best practices clearinghouse the Department (of Education) is looking to work on. I think we'll see a lot of hybrid models could be incorporated, just long-term as an alternative, or something available to students who might need that or it might serve them better.

Can you advise companies as to what they might do to customize their materials to qualify for the funding?

Kathy: Any allowable use instances that existed in federal funding laws previously also pertain to the funds in the three federal spending plans (CARES, CARES II, and the ARP). No additional customization of the materials would be required, however, in terms of sales/marketing, pointing out the materials' relevance to addressing 'learning loss' probably would be helpful.