Learning From The Crisis

How can technology continue to make **teaching and learning more accessible** for teachers and students?

Updated September 2021

Learning From the Crisis

Insights From the Teach For All Network During the COVID-19 Pandemic

When the global pandemic began, staff, teachers, and alumni of Teach For All network partners leveraged their leadership to ensure that students were safe and could continue learning. Stories, strategies, and successes shared across the global network helped to accelerate impact and drive innovation. We also created the "Learning Through The Crisis" insights documents which were a synthesis of our learnings from these stories.

Network partners continued to redesign and implement new ways of working, teaching, and learning. Many of these discoveries are informing their work far beyond distance learning. As such, we posed this question to the network: "What are you learning from the crisis?" We listened to teachers, teacher coaches, senior leaders, and alumni across our network to understand their experiences and the lessons they've learned. We then synthesized them into insights and examples which are contained in this document.
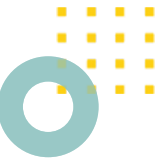
How can technology continue to make **teaching and learning more accessible** to students and teachers?

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INSIGHTS

As schools around the world shut their doors, teachers began to leverage technology to support their students' learning. Virtual classrooms on Zoom allow for students to connect with their classmates and teachers, but many other available technologies were leveraged that can have implications and benefits for students long after they are able to re-enter their classrooms. At the same time, governments, schools, and other organizations needed to reach teachers quickly and at scale to train them on ways to support students, and to create new resources and materials to meet the needs of the new reality.

1 Creating curriculum-aligned virtual learning environments fosters collective learning and allows students from different schools and contexts to access different content, be exposed to different perspectives, build new relationships and expand their networks.

2 Developing and delivering educational content through context-adapted technologies enables out of school children or learners who are absent for a long period of time to continue to learn.

3 Developing accessible resource banks with curriculum-aligned open educational resources (OERs) makes it possible for different stakeholders—parents, community, civil society, etc.—to contribute to improving access to learning.

4 Virtual teacher professional development communities with insights and examples from diverse contexts expand teachers' access to professional development opportunities.

5 Technology-enabled teaching makes it possible to personalize learning and focus on learners' needs and well-being.
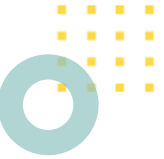
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Creating **curriculum-aligned virtual learning environments** fosters collective learning and allows students from different schools and contexts to access content for other schools, be exposed to different perspectives, build new relationships, and expand their networks.

Photo courtesy of TFN Radio School FB Page

When schools closed because of the pandemic, educators and other stakeholders began developing and deploying curriculum-aligned content to ensure that educators could access the resources they needed to support students so they could continue to learn. With schools starting to re-open, the movement to share and make available online curriculum-aligned resources continued, and in many cases led to similar initiatives, providing students with the opportunity to access content originating from diverse geographical and cultural environments and to learn from teachers with different backgrounds and ways of thinking and teaching.
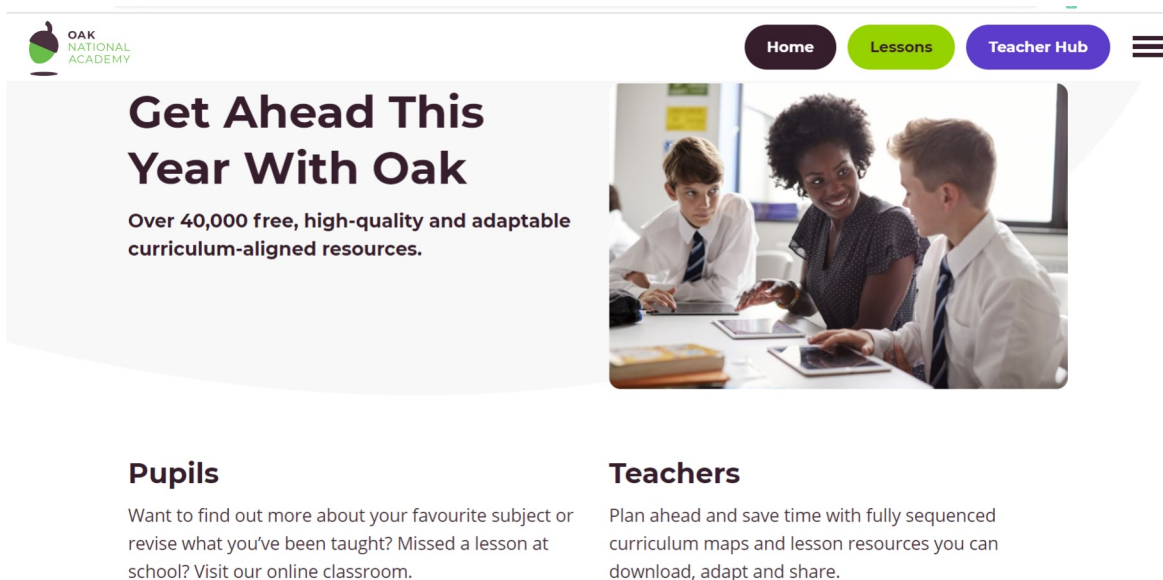
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Teach For Nigeria Radio School

Teach For Nigeria launched Teach For Nigeria Radio School, in partnership with education NGOs ACE Charity (which has done extensive work around remote learning and teaching, particularly in Northern Nigeria) and Ubongo (which brings expertise in early childhood and pre-primary education). Since school has resumed, the hours have been reduced, so the immediate goal of TFN Radio School is to complement the learning and support students are receiving in the classroom. The Radio School lessons are developed by Teach For Nigeria, adapting the standard curriculum to the audio lesson format and incorporating content created by the two NGO partners. **Click here** to watch an introductory video or read more **here.**

Teach First- Oak National Academy's Free Online Lessons and Teacher Hub

Oak National Academy was launched in the spring of 2020 as a rapid response to school closures in the UK by a small group of teachers and developers, many of whom are Teach First alumni or staff. Today, Oak provides over 10,000 free online lessons for students in all grade levels (to age 16) and across all English National Curriculum subject areas. The pre-recorded lesson videos are delivered by teachers, and include quizzes, worksheets, and creative activities to assess student learning. When schools began to reopen in the fall, Oak had evolved to develop a Teacher Hub where teachers could access all the lessons and resources across the curriculum and decide how best to use them for students in class or still at home, often incorporating them into their own learning platforms (like Google classroom), and blending live remote teaching with asynchronous lessons from Oak to help manage the workload in and out of school. **Click here** to view Oak National Academy Learning Platform.

Student Reflections

"I usually enjoy the radio school because it helps me to continue learning even after leaving school."

**Oyedepo Adams, Teach For Nigeria student**

Developing and delivering **educational content through context-adapted technologies** enables out-of-school children or learners who are absent for a long period of time to continue to learn.

When governments started closing schools, education system stakeholders and educators began designing and providing educational content solutions and lessons that could be accessed through widely available technology. These same solutions, which have been developed for low technology contexts, can now also be used to provide out-of-school children and youth and those who are absent for an extended time with the opportunity to access learning materials.

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Teach For Pakistan's WhatsApp School
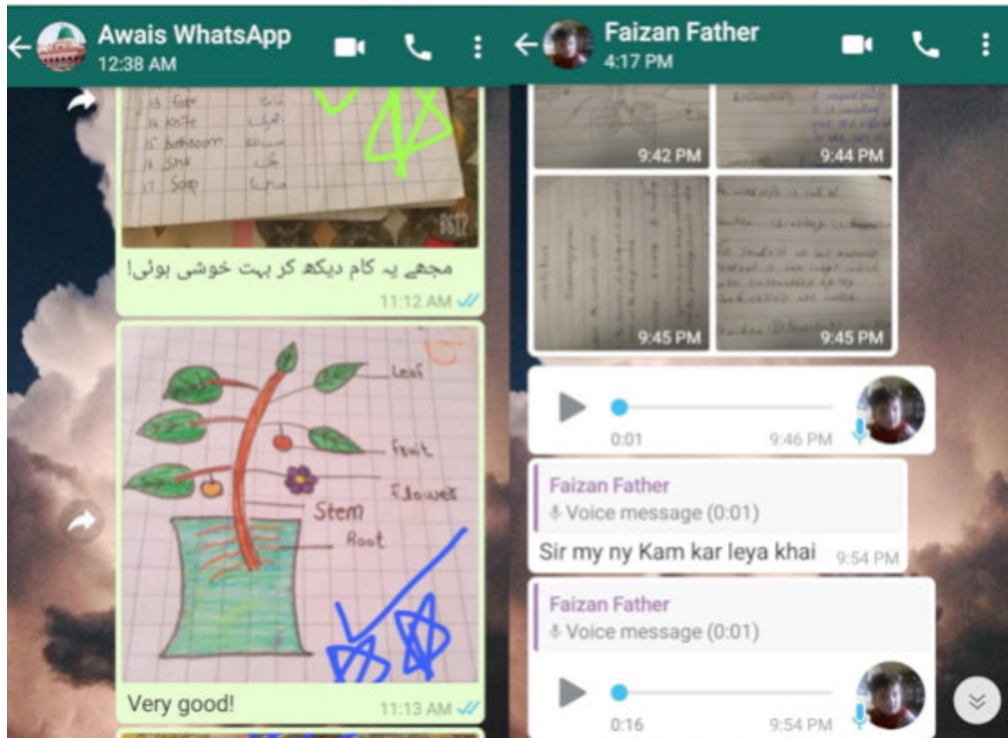
Teach For Pakistan teachers developed a full model of instruction to be conducted over WhatsApp that allowed for instruction, engagement, and feedback, which they believe could continue to be leveraged for students who are out of school either short- or long-term in the future. Each week "WhatsApp School" had a flow of activities starting with sharing of content and videos, allowing students to ask questions and interact via text or voice notes, and having students submit their work and get feedback from teachers. They were even able to work in groups on various assignments over WhatsApp. **Watch a video** of teacher Rabiah describing how she and her co-teachers Fajarna and Sannia, leaned into the challenge of low-tech learning, and set up a WhatsApp School with thriving student engagement! Read more **here**.
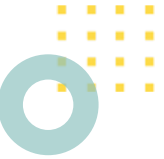
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Teach For Zimbabwe's Virtual Lessons

Teach For Zimbabwe began utilizing virtual lessons for students anticipating a school closure and found that the tools had benefits that they intend to leverage going forward. Some of the benefits they found were that students enjoyed learning from teachers all across the country and that it allowed students to have different teachers for different subjects as opposed to having one teacher cover all subject areas. It also enabled students not in class to join the lessons. The lessons are now recorded as Mp4 files that can be shared without needing an internet connection, which could allow for students without internet or the ability to attend school due to illness or flooding during the rainy season to have access to lessons outside of the school building.

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02 Teach For Nigeria Ogun State TV Lessons

Early in the pandemic the Ogun State government recruited Teach For Nigeria teachers to teach both on the radio and live on TV while schools were closed, reaching a potential audience of millions of children. Teach For Nigeria teachers were specifically selected for these initiatives because of their training in 21st century teaching and leadership skills. The government plans to continue these programs (and Teach For Nigeria teachers will continue to lead the content and teaching) for the foreseeable future, with lessons designed both to supplement what students are taught in school when they've returned to the classroom, and to reach children who are out of school for any reason: families responsibilities, health, work, weather, etc. **Watch an English lesson**.

External Research

"If carefully used, EdTech can help reach learners marginalised by poverty, gender, language, disability, displacement, and being out of school."

EdTech Hub - *Use EdTech in ways that reach the most marginalised*

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03 | INSIGHT

Developing **accessible resource banks with curriculum-aligned open educational resources** (OERs) makes it possible for different stakeholders—parents, community, civil society, etc.—to contribute to improving access to learning.

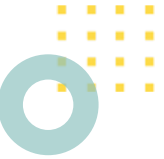*Photo courtesy of ensenapormexico.org*

I LEARN AT HOME

It is a space to share resources and create a learning environment at home.

Given the situation that we are experiencing in Mexico and worldwide with the **COVID-19** disease **pandemic,** **our commitment to children and young people** is to support them to cope in the best way before these unexpected events and to be able to make informed decisions and for the benefit of all.

During the pandemic, families and communities became more involved in children's learning which has led educators to develop content that parents and communities can access to support children. It is expected that this trend will continue and that parents and communities will play a bigger role in children's learning. Therefore, making educational resources available to family and community, and helping them learn about ways to support their children could contribute to improving learning outcomes.
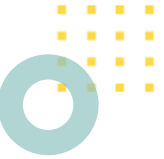
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Enseña por México's Resource Hub For Parents And Teachers
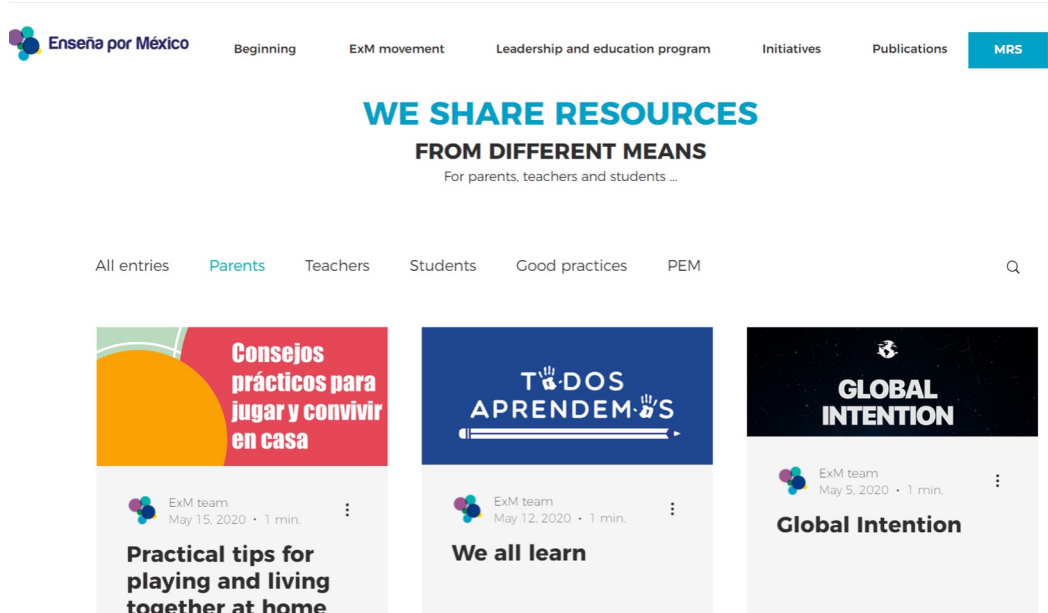
Recognizing that everyone needed resources and fueled by the innovation of its teachers Enseña por México created a space on its website called "I learn at home" to share resources for parents and caregivers as they navigate home learning. Some resources were made by Enseña por México teachers and alumni and others were curated from global sources. This type of platform where parents and teachers can access resources to support students regardless of whether they are in or out of school will continue to serve their community long into the future. **Click here to visit the site**!

Teach For Malaysia - MYReaders

VIRTUAL MEETING IN SESSION!
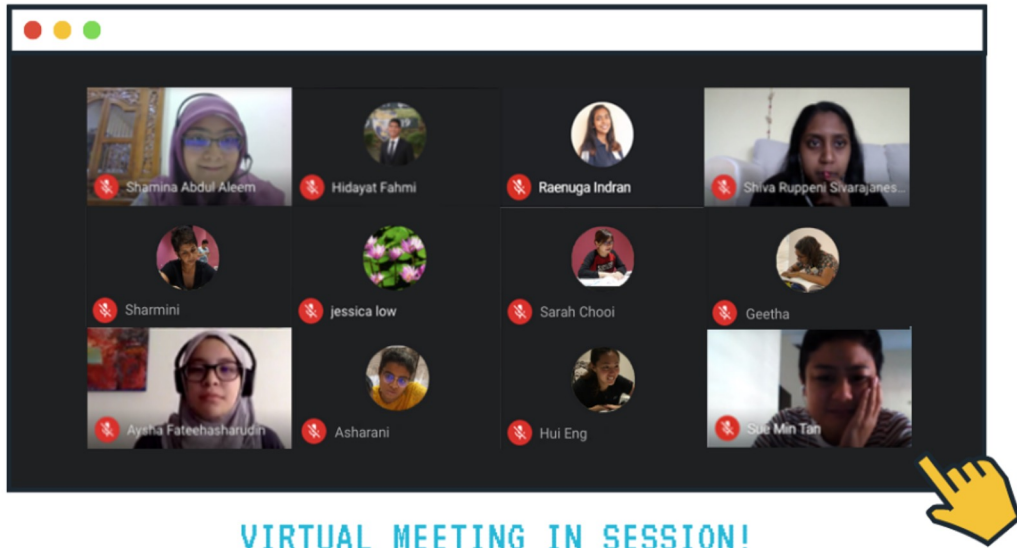
Teach For Malaysia alumnae Charis Ding, Alex Lim, Rachel Lim, and Tay Sue Yen, who co-founded MYReaders, an organization focused on ending illiteracy in Malaysia, quickly adapted their in-person library model to a virtual one, leveraging WhatsApp in order to reach their students and families. Using the voice note feature on WhatsApp, they were able to replicate the one-to-one reading model in real time. Volunteers and students are able to interact via pre-recorded videos, texts, voice notes, and photos. Parents can sit next to their children as they learn and recognize what elements of literacy need to be reinforced.

Teach For India - CAPE
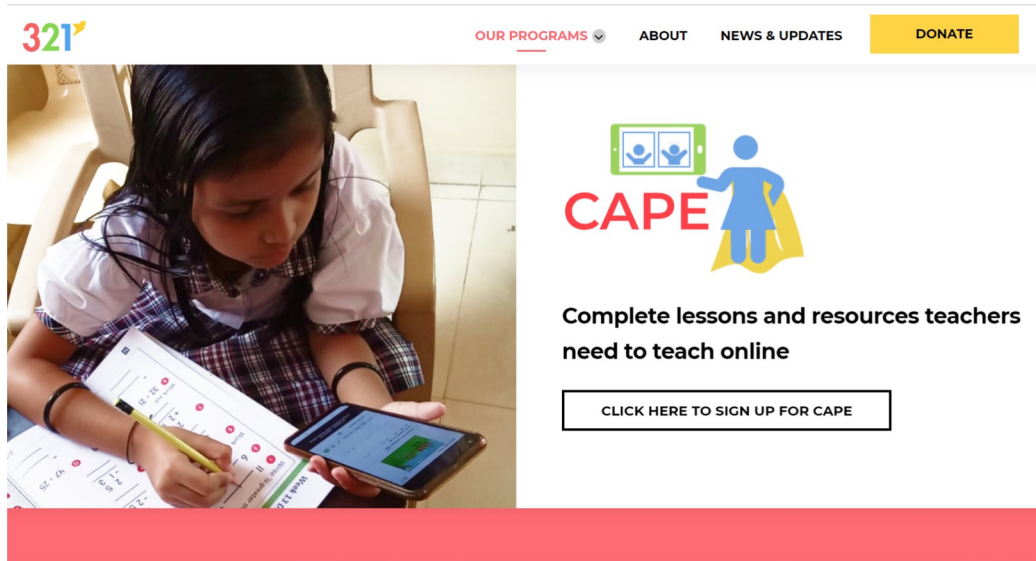
In response to school closures because of the pandemic, 321 Foundation, founded by Teach For India alumnus Gaurav Singh, worked with a small beta group of schools and teachers to build CAPE, a free online lesson bank optimized for use on basic devices and with limited data connectivity. CAPE includes tried and tested videos, pictures, worksheets, and activities that are packaged as one-page lessons that can easily be shared via WhatsApp and are aligned to central and state board standards. Since its launch, CAPE has reached 315,000 students and 15,000 teachers and helped 321 expand from a presence in 70 schools in three cities to over 600 schools in eight major cities and numerous smaller towns. Beyond the pandemic, the plan is to continue using CAPE as a supplement to in-school instruction. **In this video,** Gaurav Singh gives an in-depth explanation of CAPE and its impact.

Virtual teacher professional development communities with insights and examples from diverse contexts expand teachers' access to professional development opportunities.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have seen an unprecedented surge in the number of opportunities for teachers and other educators to connect and learn online. This trend was further accelerated with virtual teacher professional development communities becoming widespread. All this has expanded opportunities for teachers to learn.

Virtual teacher professional development communities with insights and examples from diverse contexts expand teachers' access to professional development opportunities.
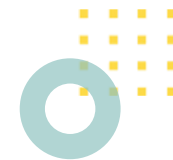
Enseña Perú

Enseña Peru co-created a training alongside current teachers that is full of insights and examples from classrooms across the country of how to execute distance learning. The training was then delivered to over 1000 teachers all across Peru. This rapid development of training using real-world examples from diverse classrooms all across the country that can be shared with 1000s of teachers will allow for the development of trainings from a diversity of classrooms that can be scaled effectively across the country and will serve as a blueprint for how to train teachers at scale moving forward. You can read more **here**.

Teach For Belgium

Teach for Belgium decided to restructure their ongoing training sessions with their teachers to be more self-directed and modular. Teachers could choose the sessions they wanted to participate in and each of those sessions was structured such that they would engage in content often asynchronously, build something for their classroom (virtual or in person), and then share that product back with the group and explain what they learned in doing so. This built a strong group learning environment for the teachers and produced several examples of the specific challenge when the session was complete. Doing all this training online enabled Teach For Belgium to be more flexible about how teachers engaged in content, and allowed the sessions to be relevant to existing challenges. Visit the site **here**.

Teach For Qatar

When COVID-19 hit the country and teachers began seeking virtual development opportunities, Teach For Qatar created new virtual content and professional development workshops in order to reach a broader audience—and even expand their reach by marketing these sessions to other Arabic-speaking countries. Their virtual sessions have led to an increase in their average attendance per session from 22 to 32 participants. They have conducted sessions that include Teach For Morocco teachers and hope to connect with other partners over time.

External Research

"Technology can facilitate the effective design and delivery of remote TPD, by personalizing content delivery through its unique attributes, including intelligent computing features, two-way or multidirectional communication, and audiovisual media capability."

EdTech Hub - *How can education systems enhance and scale teacher professional development through the integration of tech-based solutions?*
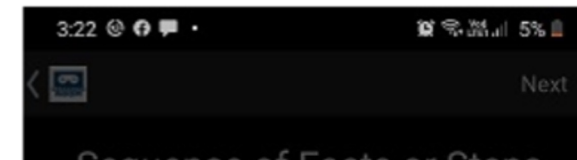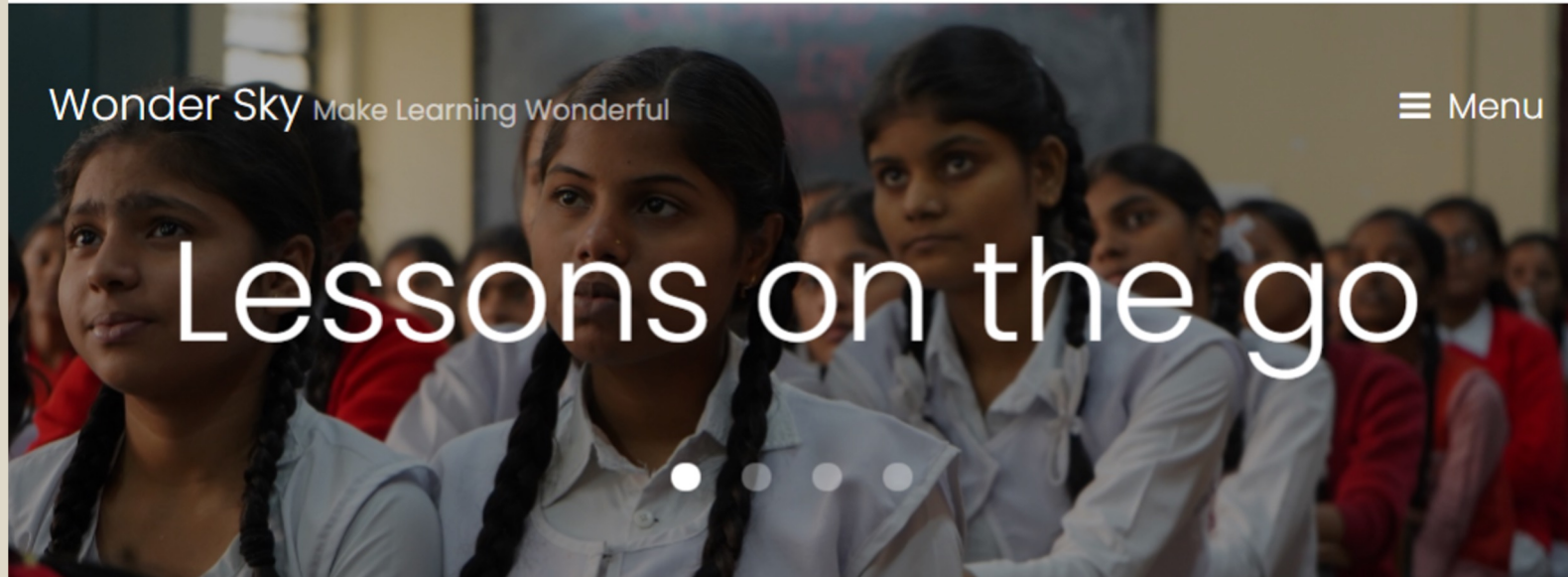
Technology-enabled teaching makes it possible to personalize learning and focus on learners' needs and well-being.

When teachers make content available online and develop lessons and learning assessments for online use, they allow students to adapt their learning to their needs and personalize how and when they learn. While this helps students to learn at their own pace it also improves their well-being.

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Technology-enabled teaching makes it possible to personalize learning and focus on learners' needs and well-being.
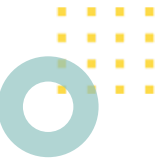
Enseña por Colombia

Enseña por Colombia realized the importance of helping students stay connected to one another around their interests during lockdowns. As a part of their training institute, they created virtual clubs where students could meet and work together with peers who share a common interest (science club, writing club, travel club). While student clubs are not new, the idea of making them virtual to allow for student connection, leadership, and well-being is something worth noting – and possibly worth keeping after the pandemic given the club members can be distributed across the country, or beyond.

Teach For America

Using benchmark data, Teach For America alumna Erica Shoulders-Royster, Principal of Franklin County Early College High School in North Carolina, is working with her team to set informed learning goals for the year and paying attention to students' individual situations and support needed. During school closures, she estimates about 10 percent of her students weren't regularly logging into class. Some live in remote areas where cell service is spotty. Some are feeling overwhelmed and unmotivated. Many older students have increased responsibilities at home, caring for siblings, and taking on part-time work during school hours in order to support family members impacted by unemployment. Erica works closely with teachers to identify students who are disengaged and reaches out personally to let them know that she's someone they can talk to. "I want students to know while I am concerned about your grades. I'm more concerned about you as an individual and as a person. That matters more to me than anything else."

Teach For India

A group of Teach For India teachers developed Wondersky, an interactive app designed to run with 1% of the bandwidth of typical video-based lesson software. This allows students to download the content at minimal cost and to move through content at their own pace. When students input responses, their teacher receives them on the teacher's own device. Wondersky can also be used for presentation of new content by the teacher (replacing slides and chalkboard) which would allow teachers a new medium for introducing content to their classroom and open the door for different groups to have different lessons or for students to be learning at their own pace or level all in the same classroom.

External Research

"A 2018 meta-analysis of dozens of rigorous studies of ed tech, along with the executive summary of a forthcoming update (126 rigorous experiments), indicated that when education technology is used to individualize students' pace of learning, the results overall show "enormous promise." In other words, ed tech can improve learning when used to personalize instruction to each student's pace."

Brookings, *Is technology good or bad for learning?*

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THANK YOU!
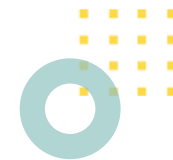
We are deeply grateful to the teachers, alumni, and educators from the Teach For All network organizations who co-created these insights and made these resources possible.

If you are a part of the Teach For All network and are interested in contributing additional stories, case studies, tools, and templates to this resource, contact us at virtual@teachforall.org.

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