

What are we hearing? January 22

Big picture:
- Balancing ongoing "crisis mode" with opportunities for innovation - current focus on rapid return to remote
- External influences/barriers
- policy, funding

Challenges:
- Student engagement
- Assessment
- Staffing
- Quality of instruction

Possibilities:
- Mastery based
- Self-directed learning

observation and coaching

remote learning woes for teachers in practice (not necessarily a resource thing)

instructional - how do we build and account for things not taught (this that have been opted-out by different states)

partners are really struggling - especially membership orgs who depend on conferences or events and those who are solely depending on district contracts. Likely to see some consolidation in the field and potentially big gaps in available

Strike looming in CPS as union does raises major concerns about safety and they do not want simultaneous teaching.

renton eyeing neighboring district's union battle as they try to figure out opening

Districts starting to worry about funding for next year

Lots of early retirement from superintendents according to AASA

We as a sector are already behind in planning for the next school year. Big worry: All planning will be pushed to summer, which is too late for anything to really be different in the fall.

Cleveland is looking at doing away with grade level structures next year to better meet needs of students post-pandemic. Lots of barriers to implementing it but exciting to see this being considered

Iowa offering remote state testing

Planning for reopening in spring is high priority for mastery, who haven't been open since covid. Forcing them to delay SL work for a bit

Biden released EO on opening schools in 100 days (ambitious)

Federal guidance FINALLY. Major implications for school reopening

planning for 100% return in mid-march (my district)

indy has started phased reopening with younger students

Students with needs like dyslexia struggling without in person synchronous reading

ELL students backtracking while remote learning

Big picture:

- Balancing ongoing "crisis mode" with opportunities for innovation - current focus on rapid return to remote
- External influences/barriers - policy, funding

Challenges:

- Student engagement
- Assessment
- Staffing
- Quality of instruction

Possibilities:

- Mastery based
- Self-directed learning

Will next year be different?



Grading/Assessment

Big picture:

- Balancing ongoing "crisis mode" with opportunities for innovation - current focus on rapid return to remote
- External influences/barriers - policy, funding

Challenges:

- Student engagement
- Assessment
- Staffing
- Quality of instruction

Possibilities:

- Mastery based
- Self-directed learning

Teachers are using other fun places to capture strategies like FB - (two groups mentioned - Bitmoji Craze For Educators and Fabulous Fourth Grade Teachers)

Teachers are working more as teams now and leveraging each others expertise more meaningfully with planning and production of materials

Educators who had strong hybrid models are not as stressed going back to remote

Teachers and students desiring connection. Principal encouraged small meetings to be taken outside on a walk, etc

Chicago is doing some serious training of their people system-wide and using this opportunity with remote PD to build better alignment and scale practices (Wednesday Workshops - 45 min take and go)

parents are tired of remote learning, but not all want to be in person necessarily. wide variance in desires [renton]

parents requesting to pull kids from hybrid to full virtual models (when full virtual models are already full) - - shifting support to make this happen

COVID slide not as catastrophic as feared, but not much growth for mid/high performing students [Mastery]

Grading and assessment is still a struggle

Shift from focus on general engagement to focus on achievement [Mastery]

High failure rates - How to "grade" in this environment when having to accommodate whole-child needs (health, trauma, SEL) as well as academics. Really highlighting the limits of traditional grading.

high failure rate, especially in HS. lots of stakeholders seeing, frustrated by. worried about local papers looking at data and raising the issue more publicly [Renton]

Many system-level leaders are rejoining the classroom - KW was an elementary teacher this week - I can send a pic of her as a "deer teacher" with reindeer ears and a mask haha

Shifting structures in central office - really hard given mindset and lack of capacity

post-Thanksgiving shift to remote leading to lack of clarity for future (e.g., are Saturday sports canceled?) [Austin]

closing and reopening due to increased covid numbers.

Whiplash! Schools seeming to rapidly shift between remote and hybrid and in-person (impression but Cedar Rapids right?) +1 (NYC, too)

Schools shutting down even after phased reopenings (Denver)

in-person for SPED students postponed from Dec to Jan due to COVID spike [Monterey]

SEL push focused on performing academically vs. meeting student non-academic needs.

admin frustrated with "mindset" challenges (with leaders and teachers), as explanation for lack of fidelity in programming, challenges with implementation broadly

Teachers are getting stressed about upcoming standards tests - which many are still being asked to do

starting to think about teacher evaluations, looking for examples [Mastery]

virtual walk throughs and coaching supports

Major distrust from teachers on data being reported by state entities. (Mass)

teachers lobbying for accommodations for in-person, <50 accepted; public divide between district/teachers continues... [Austin]

Chicago Teachers Union laid out demands including no simultaneous teaching and building closures if testing rates surpass 3%

1 student is in-person in Renton; teachers union preventing district from allowing 8 more students to be in-person

Union Battles

Full ecosystem view - Dec 11

Professional Service Providers

has the market shifted needs on what assessments needs to be right now? Do the experts know?

How do I respond to sudden demand for mastery based assessments?

District Leaders

How can I use this time to potentially move district to pilot things like mastery based assessments?

what is the QC process for knowing assessments are aligned when not created by the central office?

how do we make assessments more responsive

supporting teachers with planning with assessment in mind.

How do I aggregate data to use data as a measuring stick given all of the caveats.

what do we need to assess to still get funding?

does the assessment measures tell a consistent story?

How so we identify where students are at and which students need additional supports to fill gaps?

do we readjust scope of learning and outcomes?

School Leaders + Coaches

How do I aggregate data to use data as a measuring stick given all of the caveats.

How do we help kids "catch up" ?

How do we administer benchmarks in a way that gets valid results?

How do I build my teachers' understanding and skill to do assessments in these new contexts?

Classroom Teachers

how do I created an assessment that measures what I need?

How so we identify where students are at and which students need additional supports to fill gaps?

How do we reliably assess students in these conditions?

The assessments I have aren't actually aligned to what I am able to teach right now

how does assessment influence what I teach to whom and when

Students

How do I balance grading stress with life during pandemic and other disruptions?

can I take more assessments outside of pen to paper

How am I doing?

what is an assessment? when do I take it?

Parents

What are the assessments and what does it mean?

How can I get my child to take this seriously at home?

how does assessment reflect my child's grade and placement?

Will colleges take into consideration grade fluctuations and/or testing irregularities?

Big picture:
- Balancing ongoing "crisis mode" with opportunities for innovation - current focus on rapid return to remote
- External influences/barriers - policy, funding

Challenges:
- Student engagement
- Assessment
- Staffing
- Quality of instruction

Possibilities:
- Mastery based
- Self-directed learning

bolstering leadership team developments - how can we support principals on day to day
District leaders saying they are at the limit of their knowledge and more in learning mode
Austin district admin managing staffing challenges (moving to on-campus positions, quarantining, etc.)
Cedar rapids has teachers teaching students from multiple schools remotely due to teacher shortage
observations in virtual classrooms (+1 KSK)

staffing / leadership

Virtual notebooks - great way to organize, ensure everyone is on the same page, and give students a doc to look back at while working on content (two highschools - MA and Intrinsic use similar ideas - can share if you want)
Whiteboard chat was named as a great way to do virtual whiteboards - You can invite kiddos and online whiteboard (can save work, can put up a template, and can write on others boards) - Carla (Cedar Rapids)
connection time for students in fun ways build camaraderie (e.g. re-imagine hallway moments) - examples: Intrinsic did virtual among us at "lunch" and 55 students joined, "in-door" recess- cedar rapids (virtual uno and
Verbal assessments for math at Uxbridge were successful! Equally important for relationship building with students

Positive remote practices

strong MTSS support in remote models
There are some teachers and students thriving in remote - who knew?
Fun and positivity (surprise surprise) have been positive threads through effective schedules and class instruction remotely as well as hybrid - (possible strategy name: Positivity Sandwich Schedule - thoughts??)
Highline had high participation in fall diagnostics on i-Ready. They know it's not perfect, but provides them a base to make data informed decisions

ujubrainbreak fun way to take a break - check it out <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOgcrNrtfpo>
Cedar rapids 5th grade teacher said that she is actually closer with her students in the remote space than she ever would have been in person and they are closer to each other! (giving you all some positive today)
districtwide initiative as a result of the need to ensure that all students are contacted and engaged through remote learning. Each educator, leader, para, office staff, etc. has 5 students that are their 1:1 connections they

closure
The politicizing of school reopening bubbling up again...
Milford district shutting down due to high rates of COVID in the community. This is despite very few positive tests of students and staff and no evidence of transmission in schools
county health department facing lawsuit from parents to recommending and pushing school closure.. (+1 KSK happening in Marin too)
Dallas ISD having school closures due to high number of staff quarantined.

next year
Mastery & Phoenix thinking about schedules for next year (considering changes, open to new ideas)
Uncertainty of which model schools will be in for remainder of year makes it hard for people to commit to partnerships with programs (specific example was with a nutrition program)

Teacher collaboration, partnership, PLCS etc have been listed as VITAL to survival and thriving in this space. How can we help push districts and states to build more formal ways to do this?
Educator fatigue like what we are seeing in the medical community - front line/essential workers struggling
benefits of having dedicated teachers for remote vs hybrid. easier to manage work load
One teacher flagged the challenge for introvert teachers in remote teaching - giving students choice boards on how to engage with content has helped because it moved her away from Edu-tainer! (Intrinsic)

teachers

report cards messaging and adjusting parent expectations

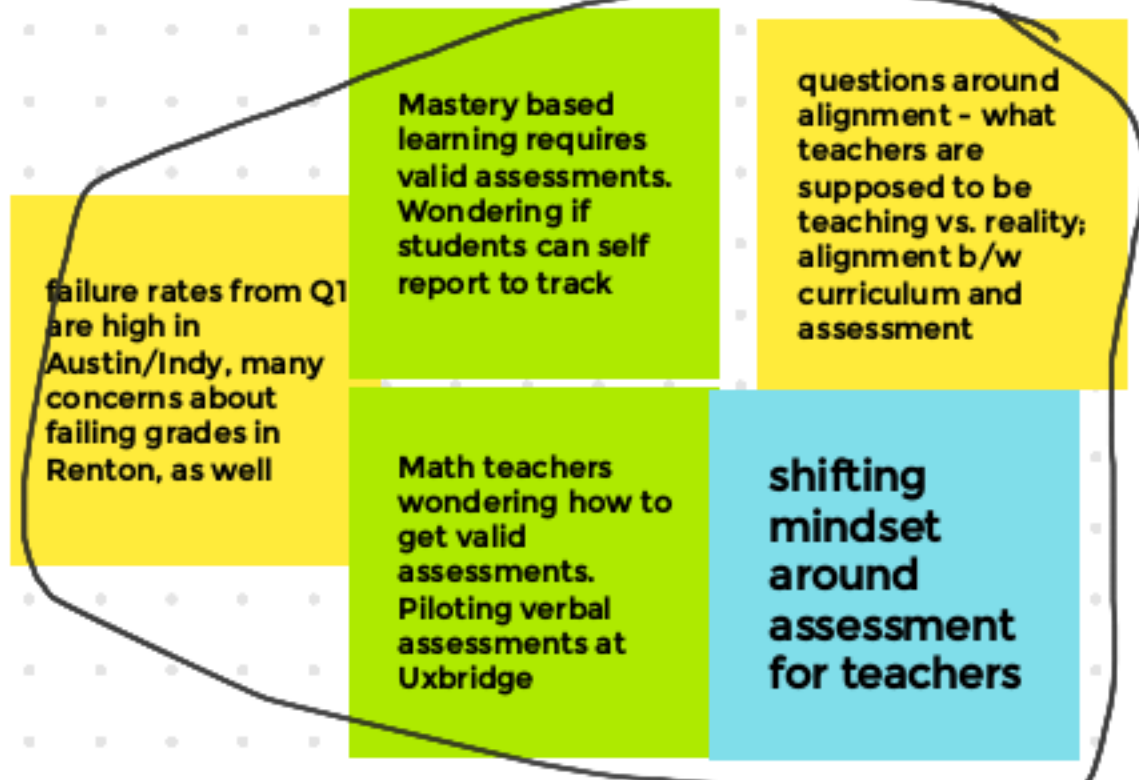
engagement
everyone has sung the praises of go guardian - they use it with their own kids as well. Huge help with supporting students (especially younger ones) virtually and also keeping watch to ensure everyone is on task and understands what to do.
Renton grappling with what does student engagement (it does not = Zoom camera on) and then how do we improve it?
student engagement raised by multiple SL districts as top of mind issue
Phoenix struggling to turn engagement into academic progression with 30% of their students
In some classes, students engage by using chat function. Concern of whether this will get to the deep level of discussion required to learn

Longer-term trends:

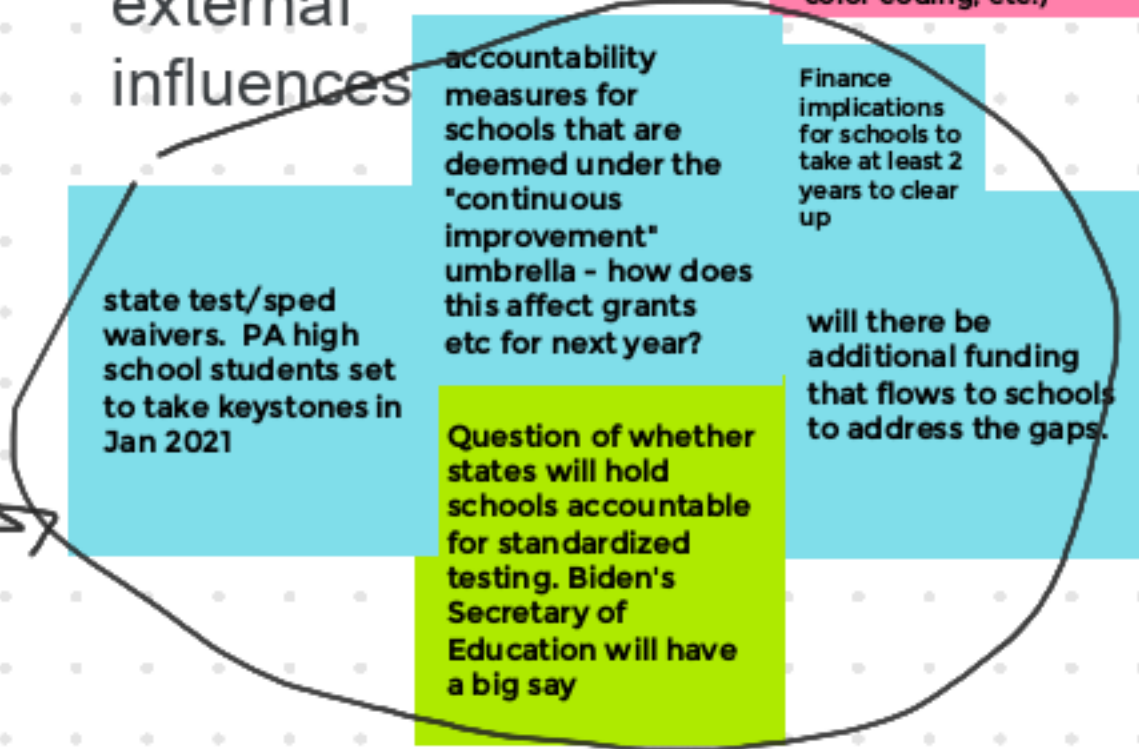
- Balancing ongoing "crisis mode" with opportunities for innovation
- Awareness of external influences
- Staffing
- Assessment
- Quality of instruction
- Self-directed learning
- Student engagement
- Mastery based

Cedar Rapids principals -- not all elementary schools have hotspots for every kid

assessment



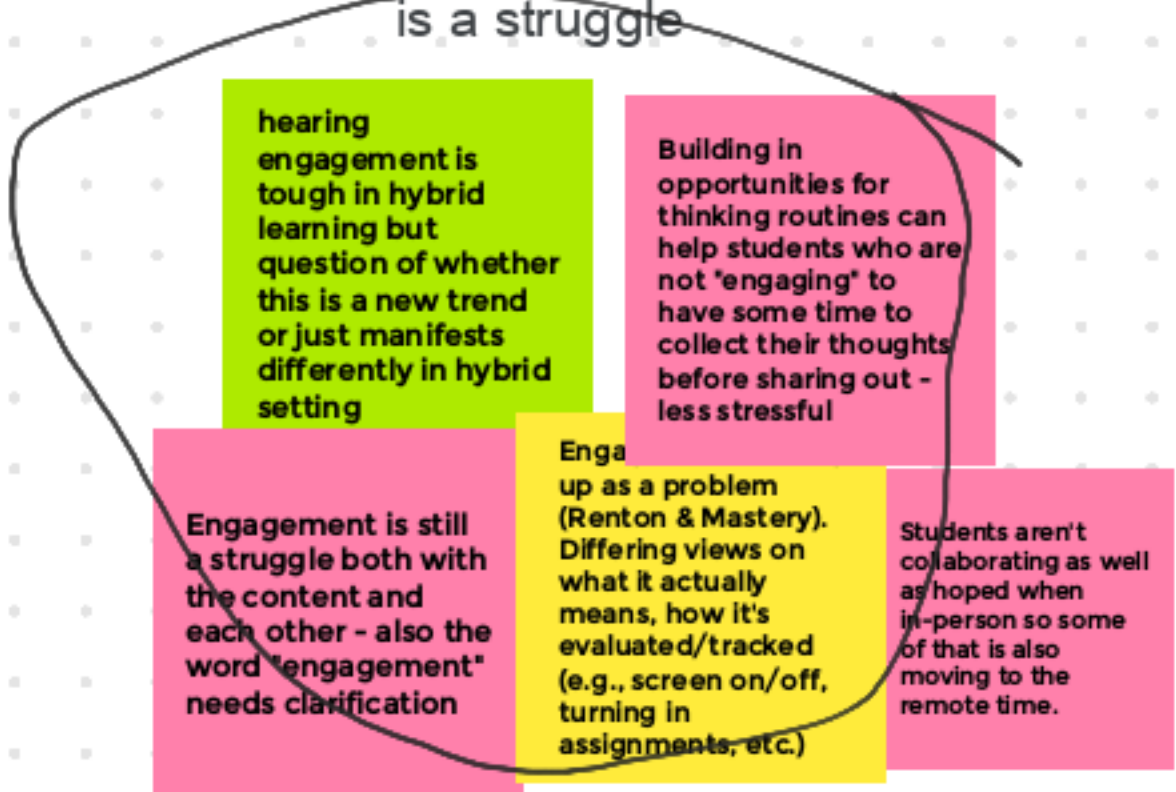
external influences



One thing that is helping educators is building a clear plan and sharing it often and in an open way so students truly know where to go, what to do, when, and how - (e.g. open agenda, googleclassroom, color coding, etc.)

San Diego apparently adopted standards-based grading as equity play recently

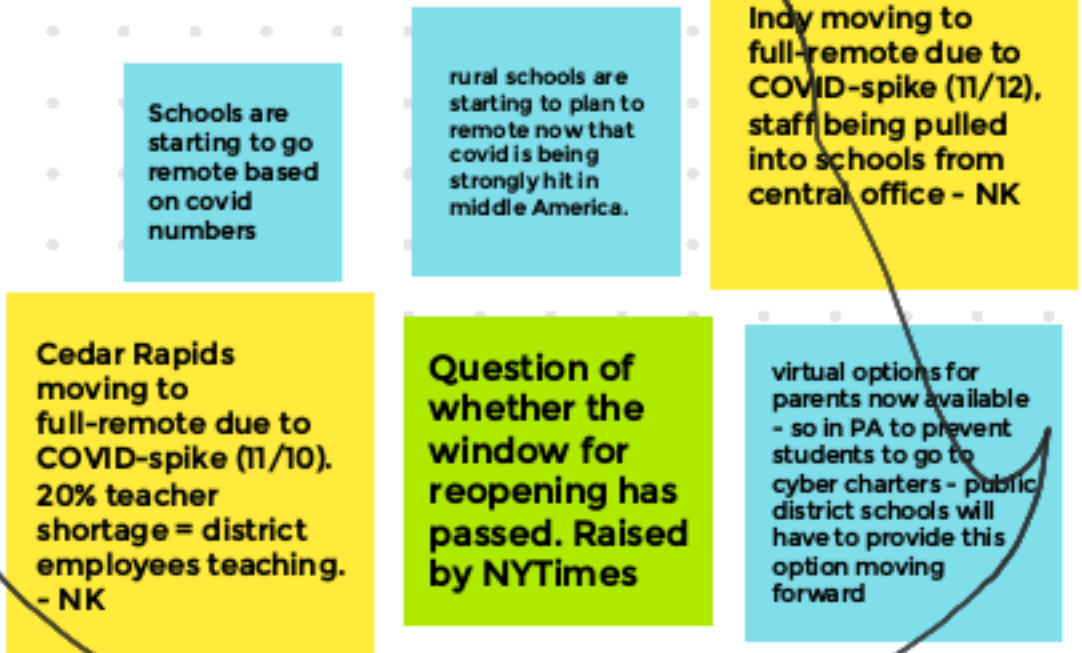
stu engagement is a struggle



Mastery - challenge knitting together discrete initiatives into comprehensive teaching + learning strategy

Mastery picking back up on redesign work that covid paused (HS redesign)

Return to remote as COVID spikes

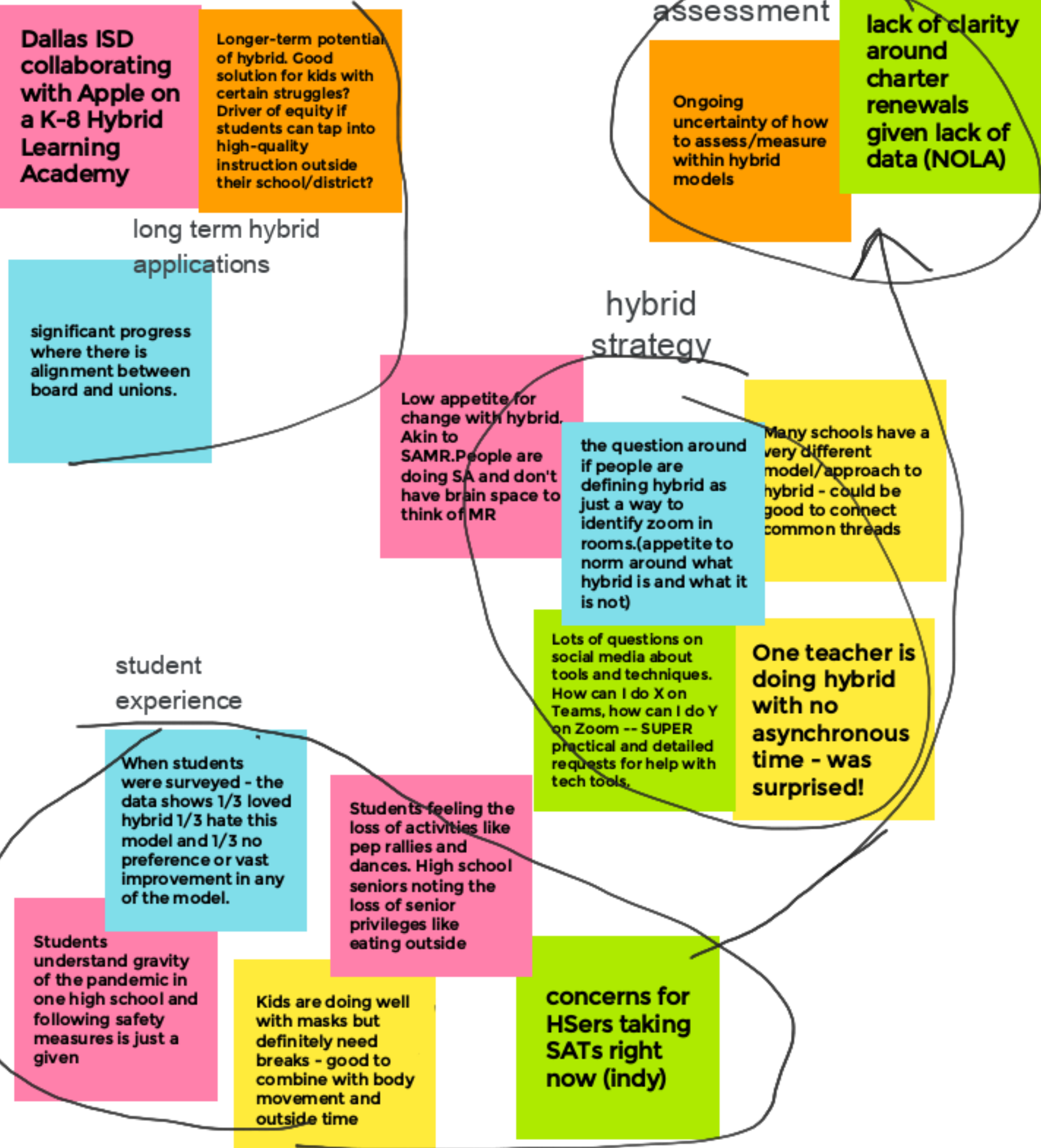


focused and personalized support for teachers is key to effective implementation - even more now! (Dallas one pagers are awesome)

considerations of leveraging district staff to push into schools where possible.

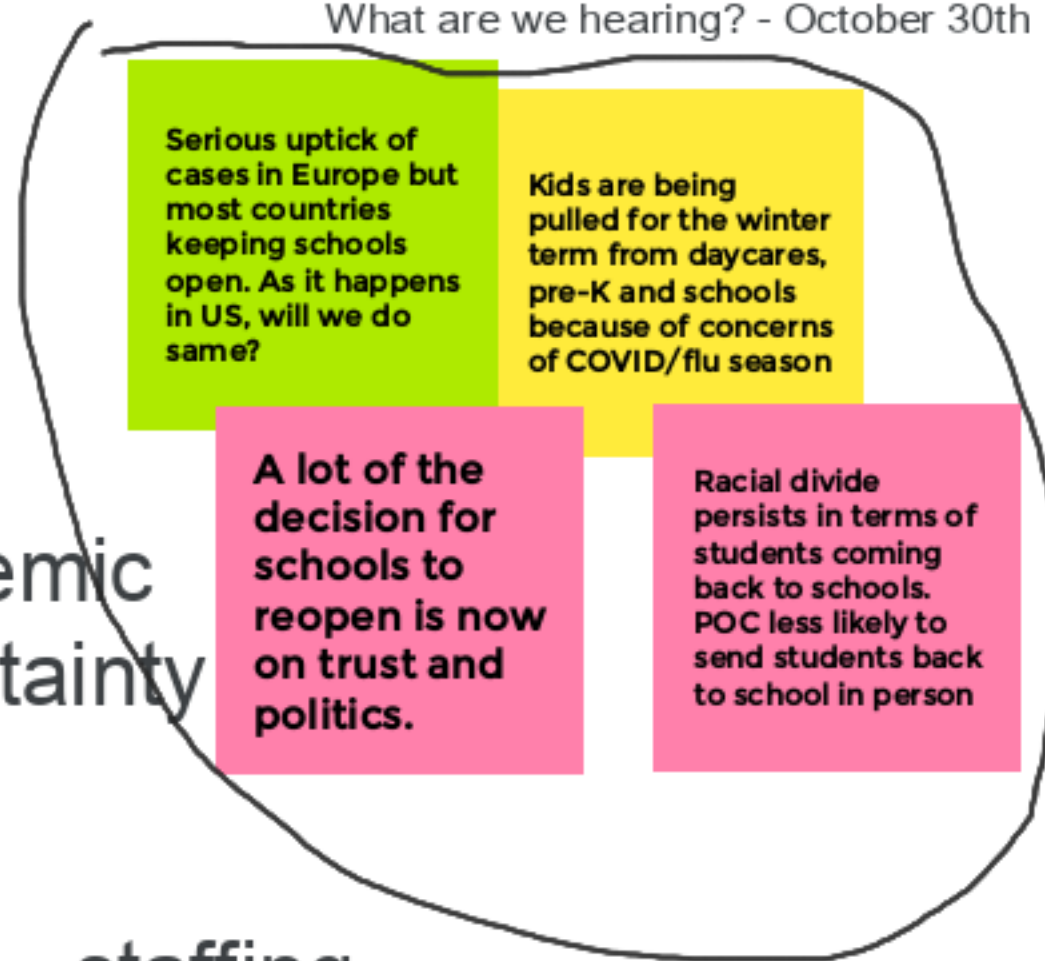
Concourse staffing model allows for teachers to never mix remote and in-person students. This model seems to work well

Cedar Rapids - coming up with robust paper materials as possible. Challenge: People who made those materials are now teaching classes.

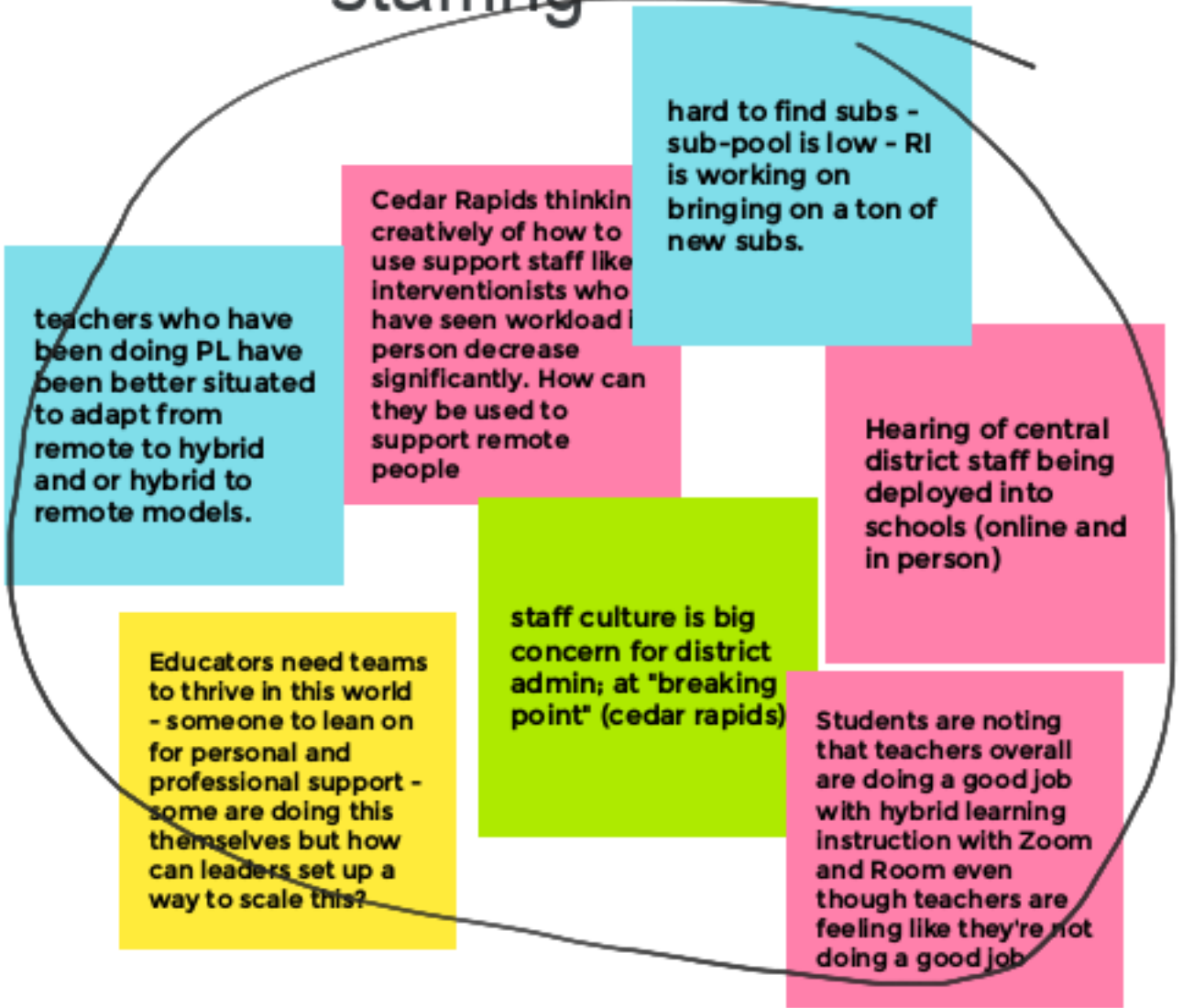


Question across all of our work: Do we actually understand what we mean when we say "leapfrogging"? How can we align and get more specific within different areas of practice + leadership choices?

Pandemic Uncertainty



staffing



Teacher capacity and support

Folks are not aligned on what true asynchronous learning is (vs. homework)

Being thrown into hybrid with no support but lots of limitations (policy, rules, etc. - have you heard about the ABCs of attendance?)

Great quote: "Schools are deciding in about 3 days that hybrid doesn't work."

A lot of students are working at jobs on the days they are remote in order to support their families

A lot of ways schools are coping with hybrid models do not get at root issue that the way they are teaching just does not fit in a hybrid model

Hybrid learning is a completely different context. Not just a model

Taft Early Learning Center's model only works in hybrid

Teachers are (continuing) to be burnt out

The work is REALLY hard for teachers.....many now expected to zoom and room and it is breaking them

Teachers realizing they need to dedicate some in person time to support students develop self directed learning skills so they are successful in remote times

Gaps in self directed learning capacity

Students are craving connection. One group at design charrette brainstormed ways that remote students can interact informally with in person students (think about passing periods, lunch time)

Students are struggling with driving their own learning (as we continue to see) - much needed skill

process of defining student independent learning metrics and adjusting based on grades

equity lens - students who aren't showing up, difference in 'home' environment, avoiding the 'grit/perseverance' narrative

guidance of structure for students are parents for asynchronous learning time

Opportunity to include students in design of hybrid environment (Boston Prep/Norwood High/design charrette)

hybrid

parents

staffing

comms/media

transitions

Interesting call around lunch pick up for remote and in person students at Uxbridge Public Schools. Mix of grab and go and in classroom procedures in schools.

In the media: school board races (NOLA, Monterey), school board/superintende calamities (boston, seattle)

Ongoing need/appetite for the field to create counter narrative to mainstream narratives about education.

A general uptick in mainstream media profiling schools that have reopened or noting that in general schools do not seem to be super spreaders

Parents sympathetic to all that school leaders having to deal with, but also getting SUPER frustrated with what feels like lack of planning and not having kids' best interest first (adult interests first).

So many orgs are having the same comms challenges we are...but bright spot is that there's greater openness to collaboration and appetite for hearing how the field is coming together to respond.

RELATED: Lack confidence in public schools, moves private schools those who can afford it

Milford High School wants to implement success coaches but staffing is tough. In particular want to focus on students who have declined precipitously from last year

low enrollment already leading to potential staffing changes (indy)

district-based staffing (NT)

Cedar Rapids established a centralized virtual academy

staff is being split within models (esp when in hybrid model - bus duty, lunch dty, remote learning facilitation etc.)

significant %age of teachers opting out of in-person teaching (700/5000 in Austin; 40% Boston Prep)

Transitions! From in-person to when there is outbreak, to from in-person to when there is outbreak, etc

Rising cases + push to reopen creating a second wave of 'back-to-school' decisions for leaders

Delaying reopening to rises in cases (Boston)

a lot of folks are starting to work towards hybrid - given lower numbers with COVID

assessment

COVID spread

What are we hearing? - October 16th

opening

From Social Media: Requests for help on assessing kids work that they are doing remotely

Question of how to do "normal" assessments continue to come up. Teachers don't want to use in person time for it. Math is especially a pain point

Austin ISD facing teacher pushback with in-person teaching. 1000 teachers opting-out via health waivers

Atlantic article: Schools aren't super spreaders (Emily Oster)

Dallas ISD shut down after rates rose again

Massachusetts cases are rising so there is now pressure in several districts to shut their buildings down

Resurgence Hall's all remote kindergarten class had record gains (51 kids)

Continued questions about hybrid and requests for examples, schedules, etc. Still feels very operational and logistical, and no one really talking about aligning the location and tech platforms

Schools have done great job with operations planning for reopening. Teachers have expressed that this has largely gone well

Heard about a great schedule and staffing model at Taft Early learning Center but it ONLY works in hybrid. Major concerns of what happens if school has to return to remote

Chicago Public Schools considering bringing preschool and students with IEPs to school buildings

Small group instruction and partner/group work are big question marks for teachers. They noted they are doing more whole group instruction than ever before.

From social: Questions on how to motivate kids to DO the work, or even show up. Incentives for students, building agency

teacher support

Jason Green - need to simplify simplify simplify (re: hybrid) for teachers

From social: From ed leaders, how to help teachers with the stress, the burnout, keep morale up and strong culture of teaming, celebrating small wins, etc.

Districts need a way to help teachers grade more efficiently (could be differently)

Mastery-based

Interest in moving to mastery-based progression

Austin - door opened in COVID for shifting grading to be mastery-based

"COVID Spotlight" - Monterey - COVID shining bright light on inequities in system that they were missing, need to address

Malika Ali - "Whose change is it?" re: inclusivity and user-centered design

Teacher, community, and school capacity for change is LOW. Desire to have normalcy

Austin - COVID revealed cracks in people's resistance to systemic alignment (new desire for common tools/subscriptions LMS, S&S, etc.)

Cedar Rapids - orienting towards more centralized mode, especially in this moment

"blueprint courses Cedar Rapids & Austin both creating digital courses for teachers; response is positive, but unsustainable to continue building over course of year

centralization

Sujata - used metaphor of Roman empire to push idea of ecosystem with minimum required structural pieces needed for interoperability, credentialed learning in system

Timing is everything! Confirmation from experts about reaching districts with the right thing at the right time. Reinforces idea of continuing to push out remote, reopening, other content we already have

Interest in panels/webinars/presentations that feature experts and districts they're working with - seems to be particularly compelling gap

Local anecdote: wealthy parents choosing remote over in-person so can travel, lifestyle, etc. At least until Jan.

crisis mode

Parents are getting frustrated with hybrid and/or the moving back and forth between remote and hybrid - feel like private schools doing better than public - public registrations dropping

Traditional challenges coming up in districts that are reopening: example, Indy transportation issues

insight from Beth Holland - remember how many districts are still addressing fundamental needs and maybe not ready to access remote learning resources. Let's not assume we're 'over remote and moving hybrid.

many are still in crisis mode - it has not changed significantly from march or summer +1

longer runaway of support for more relationship building and hand holding

desire from indy to start thinking critically at how quality their instruction is rather than just logistics of making hybrid

all 5 traditional SL districts are either hybrid or surveying parents about hybrid. both charters are waiting longer, have phase-in plans later in fall

Hybrid Learning

Dallas hybrid learning work & trainings are brilliant. Calling it "simultaneous learning zones" (blended + remote). (KSK QQ: is this the same as "yoked?")

schools are across the spectrum - some and still working on finding students and access while some are leveraging this moment to push systematic change

phoenix: essential needs trump everything

Lot of enthusiasm in coaching network and team conversation about "leap frogging" Curious if we really know what this means and how to get more concrete about specific changes/opportunities to orient around?

monterey thought they were further along w/equity than they were, still very superficial (in their words) (COVID reflection)

Rural districts in CA going hybrid over next 1-3 weeks and really struggling with how to do it.

small school districts in CA ramping up for hybrid learning is 1-3 weeks

poor instruction all around +1 (maybe not all but a lot of poor instruction)

monterey: 'high-variability of capacity in our system, concerned about capacity in our classrooms' to implement quality instruction

Doubling down on some of the more innovation that is being done right now vs. reverting back

Phoenix: systems are in place for mastery-based, adults need to catch up

Renton: pushback/interest in more inclusive design work, want to be part of community not going to community to do research

Everyone is talking about hybrid learning in a different way - really need to focus on clear definition internally and with partners KSK: +1

Educators and leaders alike are still struggling to even understand what means what (remote, online, hybrid, etc.)

seems to be a lack of adjusting instruction given the idea of not losing rigor - but....

monterey supporting leaders more than pre-covid

Finding ways to connect with students virtually continues to be hard for many teachers.

Seattle enrollment dipped by 31,000 (Kinder alone down by 14%) where are all of the kids? How can we help?

phoenix: change management is big concern. 'teachers don't see same system; fear of unknown, lack of clarity

Leaders feel a lack of power to change in bigger districts/CMOs because they have no control over shifting approach (or at least feel like they don't)

Struggling to adjust and think about strategic planning as so many things shifts and unknowns

monterey anxious about school board election that could interrupt progress

comms

instruction



What are we hearing? - October 2nd



There really are trends!

Time to pick our heads up and connect dots, ask questions, push our thinking

making the time to do this

I like that they are on Fridays. Good way to reflect on the week

Knowing we only have a small piece of the picture....our networks, our districts, but how representative of whole country?

longer time horizon

starting by looking at the week before to sense a longer period of time

Pulse

Appreciate hearing updates from the field from across TLA

Deeper understanding of patterns/needs at different altitudes in the system

learning from others, feeling more in tune with what's happening

efficiently unearthing from all voices what we're hearing from the field

cross-learning and connecting multiple data points

Way to capture stories, anecdotes, and other data that may not come out anywhere else

Dedicated time

facilitation +1 (KSK)

Appreciate that Kira and Juliana are here to help provide organization level view to see how individual projects can support to larger initiatives.

Just so impressed with the work you all are doing and have done and what we HAVE learned!

action

Greater ability to make decisions (or to suggest specific actions) based on what we're learning

In debriefs, it seems like there's sometimes a sense that all we can do is add more to our plates. It's not always about doing more but sometimes about how we do what we're already doing in a smarter/better way

Knowing how to go from "Oh here's a trend" to "Here is what we should do"

bias towards action - moving towards doing things about what we're learning where it's possible/makes sense

tighter focus and alignments so we don't go into too many things.

Can we get updates on synthesis and other action items that sprang from this? Could also surface areas where support is needed and collaboration can support

Can we track themes that emerge week to week? More continuity between meetings. Right now, they feel pretty independent

better connections/sense making week-to-week/over time

personal system for writing ideas down has not been effective for me (NK)

getting more specific of the roles involved - (maybe not the intent but can be helpful for us to not generalize)

