# COVID Learning Innovations: What will you keep?

New report compiled by the Ohio STEM Learning Network

April 27, 2021

Ohio STEM Learning Network

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# Introduction

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One of the key functions of the Ohio STEM Learning Network is to collect and share what's working in STEM education. That includes how educators of all kinds respond to new challenges, including the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Early during the school closures, we issued a special report to help schools make successful shifts to online learning.

Every school made changes to react to the pandemic. From online learning to altered cafeteria schedules, educators rethought every piece of the learning experience.

Some of those changes turned out to be improvements. We asked both our principals and readers of website: "What innovations will 'stick' for you as you return to in-person learning?" Read on for their reflections.

# OSLN School Leaders

## What's one change that you've made to your school's approach that you intend to keep for the future? Why?

Virtual parent/teacher conferences have been great. This has been such a wonderful way to keep parents involved and feels so much more personal than the traditional phone calls and emails. I have also really enjoyed seeing the outdoor breaks that teachers have been using and I hope that this continues as we get more students back in the building. The outdoor breaks are useful because our blocked classes are an hour and forty minutes long. Students (and teachers quite honestly) need a break from the work and this opportunity to get up and get moving has been great. The virtual parent/teacher conferences have made communicating with families feel more personal than our traditional communication methods.

**- Scott Bennett, Principal at Reynoldsburg eSTEM**

Multiple cafeteria sessions: More peaceful and calm; Virtual parent teacher conference: More engagement and better results/return on investment; Virtual college and employer visits: Much greater flexibility and decreased travel costs.

**- Patrick Smith, Lead Principal at Springfield High School**

Having a "specials" day, where an entire grade level goes to Specials classes for the entire day. It allows for classroom teachers to have an entire day of PLC time for planning and reflection. It allows for longer specials classes and for teachers to go deeper with content on these days.

**- Felecia Evans, Principal at Lander Elementary**

Virtual guest speakers. This enabled our students to expand their horizons and communicate and collaborate with authors, artists and other professionals outside of their community.

**- Christina Ramsey, Principal at McKinley STEMM Academy**

Entry/Exit procedures. Our 930 students will use three entry/exit points instead of two.

**- Max Lallathin, Principal at Winchester trail**

Virtual conferences allow more flexibility in scheduling for parents and teachers. Learning management system and outdoor education keeps the students healthier if they have learning from home options.

**- Trudi Simpson, Principal at Kinder Garden School, West Chester**

Utilizing applications such a Zoom more often to broaden our reach in terms of partnerships, guest speakers, events. etc. It helps us provide more learning experiences for our students as well as to accommodate our parents in terms of our wide geographic reach.

**- Lindsey McLaughlin, Chief Operating Officer/Principal at Bio-Med Science Academy STEM School**

Possibly our arrival and dismissal procedures, remote and in person teaching at certain points in the school year. While some changes have been a challenge, our dismissal process is much safer for the students now and remote teaching may be valuable during certain times of the year.

- **Anthony Rohr, Principal at St. Sebastian Parish School**

Virtual meetings and guest speakers, when possible. Going virtual provides the teams with more flexibility and opportunities for guest speakers we may not otherwise have access to. This would ideally be handled on a case-by-case basis.

**- Andrea Bobo, Principal at East Elementary**

Teachers move rooms instead of students. Less unstructured time for students. We are also adopting an Asian philosophy that the classroom belongs to the students.

**- David M Thompson Jr., Principal at STEAMM Academy @ Hartford**

Classroom distance to maintain social distance. Keep all sickness and virus transmission limited.

**- David Pancurak, Principal at Saint Paul School, Salem**

We will be keeping block scheduling where our students have extended times for hands on and extended activities each day. Our kids want it. From a survey, 78% of our kids want to keep the block schedule. Allowing for 80 minutes allows our students to take advantage of outdoor ed, PBL, and other extended learning opportunities.

**- Chad Miller, Principal at Shenandoah Elementary**

# Other Ohio Educators

**What's one change that you've made to your school's approach that you intend to keep for the future? Why?**

Our dismissal to parents for pick up at the end of the day. All students have a QR code and when their adult comes to pick them up, they show the QR code and I am in the parking lot with a scanner and laptop to scan each QR code. When scanned, the student's name pops up in the Google sheet that is projected in their classrooms and they know to come out because their ride is there. It is safer and secure in that only family or approved people with a child's QR code can pick up the child. The QR code can be on paper or on a cell phone and scanned. It keeps students distanced in classrooms until it's time to come outside because their ride is ready for them.

**- Dr. Rachel Jones , Principal at Gurney Elementary School**

I was able to use the program Learning Blade for at home online learners. This program is designed for individual as well as interactive users. Students were able to use and reinforce academic and STEM skills using the Learning Blade program at home.

**- Lori Langdon, STEM teacher at Springboro Intermediate**

In 2020, TECH CORPS recognized that many of the students we traditionally serve have limited to no access to the tools (computers and internet access) they would need to access online and virtual learning experiences. As a result, we decided to develop a way to teach students about computer science without using computers, thus TECH CORPS Unplugged. TECH CORPS Unplugged kits included an assortment of unplugged lessons, supplies and TECH CORPS swag. Through engaging activities, students were able to learn about topics ranging from algorithms to virtual reality. The lessons and activities could be used alone or with siblings and family members. In addition to computer science concepts, students also learned valuable 21st-century skills such as teamwork, innovation, problem-solving and critical thinking. TECH CORPS was able to provide 2,590 Unplugged kits to families during the summer. Offering this unplugged opportunity was useful because it allowed us to provide students, who would normally be targeted for in-person programs but had

limited and/or no internet access, an opportunity to participate in high-quality computer science learning experiences without the need for computers or internet access. Given the success of our unplugged kits, TECH CORPS plans to continue and expand our offerings moving forward.

**- Carla Easley, Director of Operations at TECH CORPS**

Combining English II and American History in order to offer more opportunities for students through collaboration. This was in effort to continue to strive towards challenging the traditional learning environment while maximizing what is offered to students through collaboration; even during very challenging and unprecedented times. In order to achieve this vision, both ELA and American History wanted to take on the challenge of combining their curriculum entirely; with the goal of re-framing what collaborative-teaching (co-teaching) looks like. This change was useful because it allowed both instructors to meet the vision of our school which includes integrating literacy, analytical skills, and writing skills across the contents. Additionally, the increased collaboration gave students the opportunity to make connections across multiple types of texts (primary, secondary, literature, informational, poetry, mythology, etc.). Creating these connections increased the students ability to investigate, research, analyze, and write at a much higher depth of knowledge area.

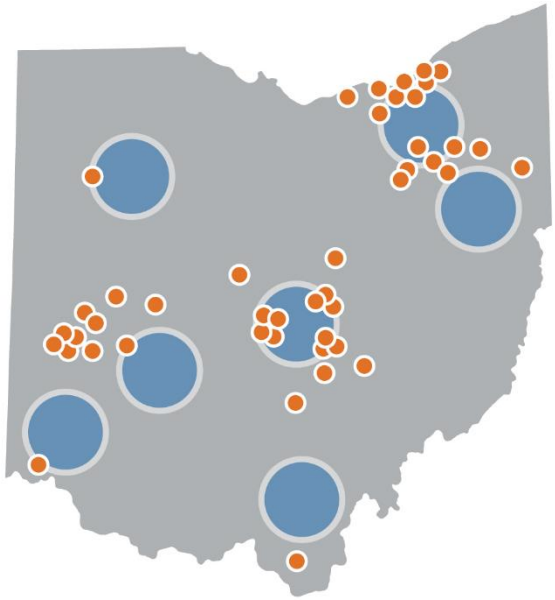
**- Megan Kovach, English Instructor at Valley STEM+ME2 Academy**

## About the Ohio STEM Learning Network

- Connects innovative schools, teachers, and administrators to one another and to national resources
- Supports schools and communities that want to create innovative schools and programs
- Builds community awareness and drives school and industry partnerships.

The Ohio STEM Learning Network is managed by Battelle, a Columbus-based non-profit research institute that supports STEM education as part of the company's commitment to inspiring the next generation of innovators.

### OSLN Schools and Hubs



STEM and STEAM schools are designated by the Ohio STEM Committee, which is supported by the Ohio Department of Education and advised by the Ohio STEM Learning Network.

To learn more about how your school can bring quality STEM to students, sign up for weekly updates from the network at www.osln.org/sign-up.

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