Business
U.S. Cellular

Three Essentials for
Remote Learning Success

A Closer Look

When it comes to education, communication between students and teachers is essential. Historically, a typical school day has revolved around person-to-person communication not only in classrooms, but during lunch breaks, group meetings, gym class and after-school activities. But recently, we all experienced a rapid and unprecedented transition to remote learning, meaning teachers, students and parents had to adapt to a new learning landscape. This new environment is one that is constantly evolving because, depending on the community, it can include digital tools, distance learning, in-person learning and a hybrid approach combining them.

While distance learning has brought some benefits during this involuntary shift in the educational process, it comes with serious challenges for many. Without access to the right devices, or internet access altogether, there are students who may not be able to fully participate in their school's education program this year. Districts are working through how to keep students connected for these distance learning initiatives.

Making distance learning accessible for all students is a challenge we must meet head-on. Consider these essential solutions to keep classrooms consistently connected, so you can keep students learning.

THESE SOLUTIONS INCLUDE:

- Technology that's reliable and easy to use for students and teachers alike

- A fast and reliable nationwide network

- A technology partner with a local presence in the community

> "Two of the biggest hurdles to moving America's schools online have been an inadequate number of digital devices for students and millions of families' lack of high-speed internet at home.[1]"

Essential #1
Easy-to-use Technology

Yes, remote learning has exploded in growth. And the solutions are continuing to transform as districts grapple with ever-changing environments ranging from remote to hybrid to in-person learning solutions.

This makes it all the more important to have technology that is familiar or easy to use, such as laptops, tablets and mobile hotspots. This removes a barrier for students already struggling with the new challenges, so that they are more likely to enthusiastically participate in their remote learning activities.

Connecting Your School District

Every school district is unique and comes with its own set of challenges. For example, is your district in a rural area? Do your students require help with internet access and devices in order to fully connect their education experience? You want your teachers and students to be able to connect seamlessly; that way, they can focus on the lessons instead of troubleshooting a dropped connection or missing a math class because they had to drive to a coffee shop to use the free Wi-Fi.

HERE ARE TWO VERY USEFUL SOLUTIONS:

MOBILE HOTSPOTS
Mobile hotspots are ready to go right out of the box. You simply plug them in and log on. They also enable multiple students under the same roof to connect. Students can access their curriculum from home and stay connected to their classroom.

CELLULAR TABLETS
Cellular tablets are simple to use and connect via the cellular network, so they don't rely on Wi-Fi for access. If the students in your district have internet access issues and a lack of devices issue, this solution solves both of those challenges at the same time. Students who do not have a computer at home can greatly benefit from the distribution of these devices, which provide the technology and internet connection required for remote learning.

> "'Underconnected' students — those with limited or no internet access at home — may have difficulty doing homework, putting them at risk of falling behind better-connected peers, a condition known as the 'homework gap.'[2]"

Essential #2
Build Your Solution on a Reliable Network

Remote learning can be frustrating, given the interruptions and distractions of being in a home environment, such as pets demanding attention, siblings goofing around or unexpected deliveries disrupting concentration. But it's much worse when you also have to deal with the interruptions of a poor internet connection. In order to provide connectivity to all students in your district, choosing the right network provider as a partner makes all the difference. And a network that offers reliable connections in rural areas as well as in cities is critical to providing equal access for all students and staff.

Keeping Teachers and Students Connected

An important element of a successful remote learning program is maintaining the sense of a one-on-one connection between teachers and students. In a classroom there are countless touchpoints throughout the day when students and teachers need to connect. These include having discussions, reaching out for help, turning in a late assignment, or chatting about an upcoming project. These needs become even more essential in a remote learning situation, as parents don't always know the answers, and kids can suffer from a lack of immediate contact with teachers.

So, whatever your remote learning solution is, it must be supported by reliable connectivity. Because without a reliable network, it's difficult to create a high-quality and consistent learning experience. Choosing a trusted, nationwide network is vital to a successful distance learning program.

" Nearly 18% of school-age children don't have home internet access.[3] "

Essential #3
Local Support

Every school district has unique needs and challenges: large vs. small; rural vs. urban; different budget considerations; and compliance requirements, like the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA). This is why choosing a provider that offers a local support system is crucial. People who actually live and are invested in your community will be able to provide more customized and knowledgeable assistance than anyone sitting at a help desk far from where you are. Having this trusted local support provides confidence that you can receive the help you need: help evaluating what solutions are best for your district, help troubleshooting, and continued support and guidance.

How Do You Go About Choosing the Right Remote Learning Solution?

Having a locally based solutions expert is invaluable. Because they have local knowledge, live and work in the community, and are familiar with other organizations in the area, they have a good understanding of the connection challenges that may exist. They may even have their own children attending school in the district. A local expert can also react quickly to requests or last-minute changes, and is able to provide options that make sense for the needs of your particular student body and your specific technical and budgetary situation.

Do You Have the Right Support Team?

Let's face it: Even though we are all accustomed to using technology on a daily basis, when it comes to setting up a remote learning solution for an entire district, expert help is always appreciated. A local expert from a network provider can be invaluable when it comes to navigating remote learning solutions by helping you set the stage for distance learning success. They can quickly offer technology options based on what your specific communication needs are and assist you in understanding and utilizing the latest wireless technology for schools. And since they're already providing wireless needs in the community, they're better situated to assist with building on current solutions or working with you to set them up.

What if You Have Problems After You Set Up Your Remote Learning Solution?

When a network expert is locally based, you know they'll be there to continue helping even after installation, because they live right in your community. This brings the kind of confidence every school district needs as they build on their remote learning infrastructure.

Conclusion
Remote Learning Continues to Evolve

The growth of remote learning programs has forced every community to adapt to the best of its abilities. Keeping our students connected is the bottom line, and having access to the internet is the foundation for it. What are the next steps for your district? Is your network strong enough in your area? Are you happy with the technology solutions you have? Do you have the expert support you need? Having support from a partner that is part of the community, understands the technology needs and is vested in the success of your area's educational programs is vital. And with the development of 5G, higher speeds and broader coverage are becoming more available, providing even greater opportunities for educational development. Having access to a local expert can help your district stay on top of these evolutions as they occur.

As your distance learning programs grow, consider the three essential solutions that will amplify your programs' success by helping enable the consistency needed to keep students connected to their classrooms:

1 Devices that are easy to use for students and teachers alike, such as tablets and hotspots.

2 A strong connection powered by a fast and reliable network.

3 A local partner that can guide your district through the rapid evolution of remote learning and other education technology.

U.S. Cellular® has extensive experience supporting schools and offers remote learning solutions powered by a nationwide, fast and reliable network. Our team of local Business Solutions Experts is working in your community already and can help you successfully support your distance learning programs and other communication technology for school districts.

For more information on remote learning solutions, call **866-616-5587** or visit **uscellular.com/business/remotelearning**

References

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