WITH E-LEARNING, SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR BETTER LEARNING OUTCOMES

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When Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker ordered schools closed throughout the state in response to the coronavirus pandemic, sending home millions of students to learn remotely, Cicero School District 99 was ready. The K-8 district of 14,000 students, southwest of Chicago, was already five years into its mission, driven by Superintendent Rudy Hernandez, of changing the way it delivers education through technology in the classroom and beyond. Cicero 99 has embraced one-to-one learning, putting computing devices in the hands of all its students. It adopted Google Classroom and the Schoology online learning management system as foundational education tools. And it charted a professional development path for its staff that included Google Educator certification, with nearly 300 teachers certified at Level 1 or 2 so far. When Cicero 99 students and teachers began sheltering at home, they were ready to continue their studies.

"Our students are fortunate because prior to coronavirus, that's how they'd been learning," said Cao Mac, Cicero 99 Chief Information Officer, who worked with partners like LG to create a classroom digital learning framework. "They're still learning in the same manner because we've had that infrastructure in place. Our teachers have been doing this for the last five years, so now we're 100-percent remote learning and we're still seeing our students connected and engaged with our teachers."

K-12 school districts and service providers throughout the country have stepped up heroically to try and facilitate remote learning during the pandemic. By late March, New York City had distributed 175,000 laptops, Apple iPads and Chromebooks to students so they could study from home. Montgomery County, Md., Public Schools set up drive-through distribution days for students needing mobile devices to partici-

pate in the county's new Continuity of Learning initiative. Online conferencing company Zoom gave schools free access to its platform and lifting time restrictions for its basic accounts. Google and Microsoft have also offered free access to their collaboration platforms. And internet service providers such as Comcast are addressing the digital divide by offering free connectivity to low-income families.

To be sure, the current crisis has focused schools' attention on enabling e-learning. When the pandemic subsides, districts that haven't already will likely take a closer look at e-learning and the skills and solutions that make it possible. A study by Deloitte found that educators, students and parents want more and better access to e-learning. Not only does e-learning allow education to continue in times of disruption, whether due to a public health crisis or natural disaster, it creates new opportunities for students and teachers to improve learning outcomes.

During the sea change in U.S. education in the spring of 2020, our education experts reached out to administrators, teachers and parents. Here are a few things school districts will be considering as they explore e-learning — now and in the future:

E-LEARNING IS BASED ON NEW WAYS OF DELIVERING EDUCATION

At Cicero 99, every classroom has an interactive screen, connected to the district's online learning resources. Students are able to wirelessly "cast" what they're seeing on their one-to-one devices to the classroom display in order to share ideas with teachers and classmates. Cicero 99's Sherlock School even has an immersive video wall from LG that lets groups of students experience the subjects they're

learning about. Yes, today's generation of students is already digitally savvy, but experience using technology for education can help ease the transition to e-learning. "Our transition has really been seamless not just for our staff, but also for students, because they've been learning in a 21st-century learning environment," said Mac.

ACCESS IS CRITICAL

School districts have spent years implementing one-to-one learning. Even prior to the coronavirus outbreak, schools made tens of millions of mobile devices available to students. But the device is just one component; Internet access — especially now, when learning is 100-percent online — is equally important. And not every student has access. It's estimated that 98 percent of U.S. schools have high-speed broadband to support e-learning in their buildings, but millions of students don't have the access they need to work from home. Districts can work with internet service providers to help facilitate free or affordable connections. Others, like Cicero 99, offer portable WiFi hotspots with their students' one-to-one devices. Regardless of how students and teachers connect, to the extent e-learning takes place over their networks, districts also need to ensure they have the robust infrastructure needed to deliver increasingly multimedia-rich materials from their learning management systems to students.

SECURITY IS EQUALLY CRITICAL

And when students and teachers take advantage of e-learning, it's incumbent on schools to make data privacy and security a top priority. Especially in challenging times, when schools can expect to see an increase in online scams, phishing attempts and other potential cyberattacks, it's important to have procedures and policies in place that protect students and district networks. Technology such as content filtering, single sign-on authentication and mobile device management can help school districts maintain trusted connections between one-to-one devices and online learning systems. School districts need to work with solution providers to maximize the security settings on their platforms and teach students and facility to be aware of cyberthreats and how to protect themselves online.

When schools get back to normal, it will likely be the "new normal" people talk about. E-learning will help the nation's school districts though the current crisis, and it will also lay the foundation to tap into new classroom technology opportunities, while at the same time enhancing learning outcomes 365 days a year.

"As a district, we have all the key components to ensure that, pedagogically, we've changed our mindset on leveraging technology tools in the classroom. We're seeing the benefits today," said Cicero 99's Cao Mac. "The online enrichment exercises and activities students used to do in class, they're now doing from home."

LG Business Solutions USA is a leading provider of technology solutions for the U.S. education market, from digital signage and desktop monitors to interactive digital white boards and video walls.

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